

EDEN VALLEY HERITAGE

Help to keep admission free

Issue Number 37

www.evmt.org.uk

The Eden Valley Museum – everywhere has a story to tell



Eden Valley Heritage - Issue Number 37, 2023
Newsletter of the Eden Valley Museum

CONTENTS

Page

- 3 From the Chair
- 4 *Echoes of the Romans in the Weald* - Part IV by Cheryl Bell
- 6 New Children's Activity Area
- 7 New Acquisitions – Railway Signs
- 7 *The Saga of the Relief Road* by Annette Hards
- 14 *The Little Owl – Athene noctua* by Alan Ford and Joan Varley
- 16 *Jasper Maskelyne, 'War Magician'* By Lyn Layland
- 19 *Ancestral Homes in the Eden Valley* by Stephen Wood
- 22 *The Clandestine Marriage Act of 1753* by Lyn Layland
- 23 *Charles Essenhigh Corke - Photographic Artist* by Joan Varley
- 25 *Heppington Bell* by Hilary Brand
- 26 *French Visit Marks 50 Years of EDTA* by Davina Miller
- 28 Round up of museum activities 2023
- 29 Correspondence from members
- 30 Obituary – Robin Bickers

Editors: Jean French, Helen Jackman, Joan Varley

Newsletter design: John Balean

Front cover: Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, 6 May 2023. © Picture Alliance / TopFoto

Back cover: Collage of coronation party images from around the Valley.

EDEN VALLEY MUSEUM TRUST

The Eden Valley Museum Trust is a Registered Charitable Trust whose objectives are for the advancement of the education of the public in the history of Edenbridge, the Eden Valley and surrounding areas in particular, but not exclusively by the provision and maintenance of a museum. The Trust is led by an Executive Committee and the museum is run almost entirely by volunteers from the local community.

President: Alan Smith

Chair: Alan Smart OBE

Hon. Secretary: Joan Varley

Curatorial Chair: Hilary Brand

House Manager: Martin Frost

FROM THE CHAIR

As I write this the 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' appears to have finally deserted us... the leaves are turning as fast as nature will let them and I'm bringing in my tender plants. *Tempus fugit* and all that.

But we had a great spring and summer as a museum! We started reaching out again to the wider Eden Valley with stalls at both Cowden and Four Elms fetes, and aim to do more next year. We also popped up at the Edenbridge Car Show at Gabriels Farm. As the demographic of our area changes it's great to see that both long established families and people moving into the town and villages are both equally interested in our shared history and heritage.

Just how interested people are in their local history was brought home to me a few weeks ago at a fantastic event held in Cowden Village Hall - helped by EVMT local residents organised a fascinating illustrated 'conversation' between two well-known villagers recorded some years ago. The reminiscences were by turns witty, educational, and charming and made for an event which was very much standing room only - many congratulations to the two chief organisers Sue Shepherd and Bridget Danzelman.

In the museum itself the curatorial team have staged two beautifully curated exhibitions on local industry with more

to follow in the future and with a host of good things to look forward to over the coming months and into 2024, of which you can read more inside.

Thank you to all our members who attended our recent AGM. I hope it demonstrated that we are in good health as a museum although unsurprisingly financial constraints are always something that must be tracked carefully. With this in mind we will be working to expand our membership (both private and corporate) as the year goes on. Fundraising remains a priority despite generous support from various institutions in the town; this notably included our Deputy Chair Alan Layland who in his role as Chairman of Sevenoaks District Council recently hosted a VIP reception at the museum for other Mayors and Council Chairs from across Kent. However, the other crucial factor in our long-term viability is of course boots on the ground! We are a volunteer-based organisation so please do come and join us if you'd like to get involved - I can assure you a very warm welcome!

Finally, my thanks again to the whole museum team who make everything possible - it's a pleasure and privilege working with you.

Alan Smart

ECHOES OF THE ROMANS IN THE WEALD - Part IV

By Cheryl Bell

It was rewarding for the museum and especially myself when we received a letter from Dr Brian Philp last year saying how much he had enjoyed my last three articles on the Romans in the Eden Valley. Dr Philp, Director of the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit, makes it very clear that Edenbridge was extremely important as the second staging-post from Londinium. Roman traffic would therefore have been considerable. This has always been my view but proving this has been extremely hard. In 2019 I began to pull together thoughts on possible Roman connections in the Eden Valley when I wrote 'Echoes of the Romans in the Weald' Part 1. This was followed in 2020 and 2021 by Part II and III in which I tried to sow the seeds that Edenbridge was on a highly busy route used by many Roman travellers over a long period of time.

We now know London was linked with Lewes and its Roman port. The bridging point over the River Eden in Edenbridge provided the Roman road not only with connections to other towns such as the new archaeological discovery of Noviomagus by Dr Philp and his team only 12 miles from Edenbridge, but also a beneficial opening route to the iron furnaces of West Kent and East Sussex. When the iron industry was at its height, this road provided much needed access to the Weald's western area and the

surrounding Forest of Anderida, along which valuable iron commodities could travel from Lewes to London. Dr Philp believes that a riverside settlement existed in Edenbridge to benefit the movement of goods and to keep the area under control. Dr Philp and I both believe the Roman road does not go directly through the High Street. The relief road when built showed little evidence of a road. It's more likely that the old Roman road veers off to the right if you are coming from Den Cross, across the Eden and through the churchyard of St. Peter and St. Paul's church. Because it's a churchyard however, this cannot be verified.

Some thoughts on Penshurst

The following notes are my thoughts only and as in Parts I, II and III there will be question marks. Occupied forts were unnecessary in the Weald, but the Romans still felt the need to keep a military presence to maintain stability as the iron industry was important to them.

Because of the significance of the Rivers Eden and Medway, Edenbridge had become a halfway stop on the London to Lewes highway built about 100 AD. The River Eden which rises in the North Downs above Oxted and Godstone continues past Haxted Mill which lies about two miles west of Edenbridge. There was most probably a corn mill there driven by water-power and useful to the military, so a wooden barracks would have been close by. The Eden then joins the Medway at Penshurst

where it continues to Tonbridge. I believe the Medway was usable for small barges and boats so small settlements would have grown up beside the river. These boats could have reached Penshurst and vice versa and from Tonbridge could have travelled on to Maidstone.

A second century Roman cremation burial was found in the grounds of Culver House in Penshurst, inside a coarse ware olla, another indication that Romans were living in the Penshurst area. Is there a link between Penshurst and Chiddingstone? The coach road could have been a connection between the two places, and it may have continued to Hever.

Some thoughts on Markbeece

The Roman Road at Holtye passes Waystrode then runs along Gillridge and down Spode Lane then left through Cobhambury Woods. When this early road was abandoned, a new stretch was added close to the Queen's Arms on the Hartfield Road. This section was built to Den Cross, then onto Edenbridge and beyond. Does this indicate a better road was needed because of increased traffic? The road opposite the pub leads to the small village of Markbeece and was likely to have been a Roman track, which then led to Chiddingstone.

Roman iron workings have been identified around Markbeece at Mount Noddy and Pilegate. The name noddy is common in Kent and Sussex and can be

seen on tithe surveys. The Mount Noddy I am referring to lies to the right of Blowers Hill close to Cowden Station and the road to Horseshoe Green which when turning left reaches Markbeece. The name noddy could derive from a shrine to the Roman god Nodens who is linked to Mars the god of war and the Roman deity Sylvanus commonly associated with forests.

So, was the crossroads at the Queen's Arms a busy Roman thoroughfare? Finds in the vicinity suggest it was. Two pieces of shard have been discovered which have been verified as ceramic Samian Ware and dated AD 43 - AD 260. They come from the side or body of a thick-walled vessel and are decorated on the outer face with a moulded repeated leaf or floral design. We know they are wheel thrown because of their even surface. Their pale orange colour has glossy orange-red slip on the outside. These are referred to as Terra Sigillata, a Roman pottery mass-produced around the first century AD and made in specific areas of the Roman Empire and then imported in vast quantities into London. This pottery was also produced at various sites across Britain for example the Thames Estuary. The high-quality Roman tableware indicates a high status owner. So possibly a Roman Villa close to the crossroads.

Another local find was a Roman Military folded copper strip engraved with gold called an Armilla. An armband or wristband awarded as a decoration to legionary soldiers for gallantry.

Harness mounts have also been found, incomplete cast copper-alloy decorative horse gear fittings dated AD 12-120 and an amulet, a small piece of jewellery used to protect the wearer from evil. Worn around the neck and associated with the Roman military, it was worn to ward away the evil eye. One of these fascinus amulets, making a 'manus fica' gesture was unearthed at Garden Hill and dated between 1st and 2nd Century AD. I wrote about Garden Hill in Part II.

Conclusion

Hopefully more Roman finds will be unearthed in the near future and new earth marks will appear on satellite photographs on Google Earth. The marks and field patterns of circles, lines and squares, indicating ditches, buried walls and the foundations of houses. What lies beneath the soil may become clearer as summers get hotter and droughts more common. Duncan Mackay in his new book *Echolands* said: *'there are stories to be teased out from soil layers and scraps of pottery that open equally vivid, astonishing little windows. Had I stood here two thousand years ago who can begin to imagine what I might have seen.'*

References

Boyle, Timothy, 1999 *Mark Beech the Unknown Village*, Phillimore & Co Ltd.

Clewley, G. B, Cooper, Philp Dr Brian, 2021, *The Discovery of the Lost Roman Town of Noviomagus at West Wickham Kent*, Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit.

Goodsall, R. H, 1970 *The Medway and its Tributaries*, SR Publishers Ltd.

Hasted, Edward, 1797 *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent Vol 3*, Bristow, W., Canterbury.

Mackay, D, 2023, *Echolands, a journey in search of Boudica*, Hodder and Stoughton.

Williams, John H, 2007, *The Archaeology of Kent to AD 800*, Boudell Press, Kent County Council.

.....

New Children's Activity Area



Children can now have fun dressing up whilst learning about the various historical eras and world events the clothes are associated with, plus many more children's activities in the same gallery.



Images: Joan Varley

New Acquisitions - Railway Signs



In early 2022 the magazine received correspondence from member Peter Winchester in which he offered the museum two railway signs in his possession - Edenbridge Station and Edenbridge Town Station; the museum was very pleased to accept the donation. The signs were quite large and as he no longer lived in Edenbridge my husband and I arranged to collect both signs.

The signs came into his possession in the 1960's. He noticed that the Edenbridge Station signage was being upgraded so he wrote to Croydon and asked if he could purchase the enamel sign, they agreed to sell for 12s 6d! He collected the sign from a signalman at the station sometime later after showing his receipt from Croydon. The Edenbridge Town sign was given to him by a friend later. Both signs are now on display in the High Street bedroom alongside part of a shunting signal which was used to control movement of trains in goods yard.

Jean French

THE SAGA OF THE RELIEF ROAD

By Annette Hards

This article takes as its starting point the gift to the museum, donated by Doug Griffin's family, of a 1960's sketch by Kenneth Browne, showing how The Square in Edenbridge might look if the High Street were to be pedestrianised as a result of the construction of a 'Relief Road'.

After WW2, as Edenbridge grew in size, its historic High Street became increasingly choked with through traffic and not a safe or pleasant place for those on foot. Over the next 50 years there was considerable debate locally about how through traffic might be diverted away from the High Street without scarring the town, alongside how much growth should, or could the town accommodate?

At the end of WW2 Edenbridge had a population of just over 3,000 and was a small market town serving a rural hinterland. The war had seen the destruction of homes in both cities and suburbs, providing opportunities post-war for rebuilding via 'slum clearance' programmes, leading to the creation of New Towns, and 'overspill housing estates' in existing small towns. Employment for these new residents would be provided through the creation of new offices and factories.

London County Council selected Edenbridge to accommodate both new housing and employment, resulting in the creation, in the 1950's and 1960's of two new housing estates: Stangrove and

Spitals Cross, and the associated factory areas either side of the main road between Marlpit Hill and the town centre. In addition to the 'local authority' housing it was thought important to 'balance' this by permitting provision of private housing, and as a result by 1970, the population of the town had more than doubled since the early 1950's. The very nature of the town changed from a small market town, with a tannery and cattle market reflecting its rural economy, to a small town with a light industrial economic base.

However, throughout this period there was opposition to the expansion of the town. On Friday 13 November 1959 the *Edenbridge Chronicle* reported that "*the Parish Council seemed amazed by the number of letters and petition it had received on the subject of development in Edenbridge*" relating to a proposal to build 700 houses on land at Skinners Farm, and the absence of any plan to deal with the resulting increase in traffic.

Just a fortnight later, the *Chronicle* reported on the formation of the Edenbridge and District Residents Association (EDRA) "*with the aim of protecting the interests of the population. The objects of the Association will be to protect the rural character of Edenbridge and District, to preserve its open spaces from encroachment and disfigurement, and to stimulate public consciousness and appreciation of the beauty and rural character of the neighbourhood.*"

This initiative in Edenbridge reflected what was happening across the country,

following the formation in 1957 of the Civic Trust to create a network of voluntary organisations, civic societies, committed to the protection and improvement of the environment. It is also interesting to note that it was in 1958, for the first time, Kent County Council designated any areas of Green Belt, and that as far as Sevenoaks District was concerned, only in the northern part around Sevenoaks, Hextable and Swanley. It wouldn't be until 1967 that the protection afforded by Green Belt designation was extended to the rest of the district including Edenbridge.

Within a month of its founding EDRA was actively campaigning to challenge development applications, with members attending Parish Meetings and preparing plans and sketches to illustrate their arguments, as described in local newspaper articles at the time. One of EDRA's most active members was Edenbridge resident, Doug Griffin, who at the time was training to be an architect. He believed strongly that new development should respect the existing character of its surroundings, and produced sketches, plans and photographs to communicate his ideas.

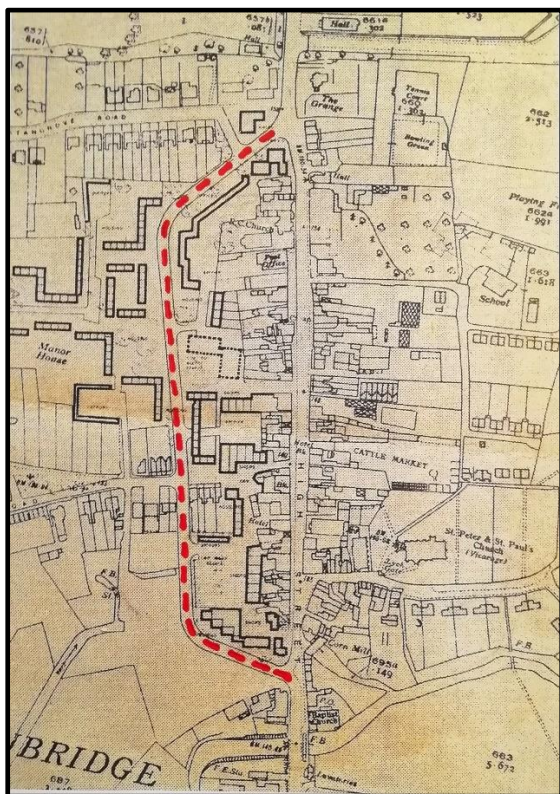
The *Chronicle* in May 1960 reported that EDRA's campaigning had contributed to the blocking, by Kent CC, of several developers' proposals to build a total of over 1000 houses on land in Edenbridge. Their Kent Development Plan proposed that Edenbridge should continue to be a small town serving its surrounding rural community. It also suggested that any

similar development proposals should be likewise rejected until such a time as a 'Town Map' be prepared to guide future development.

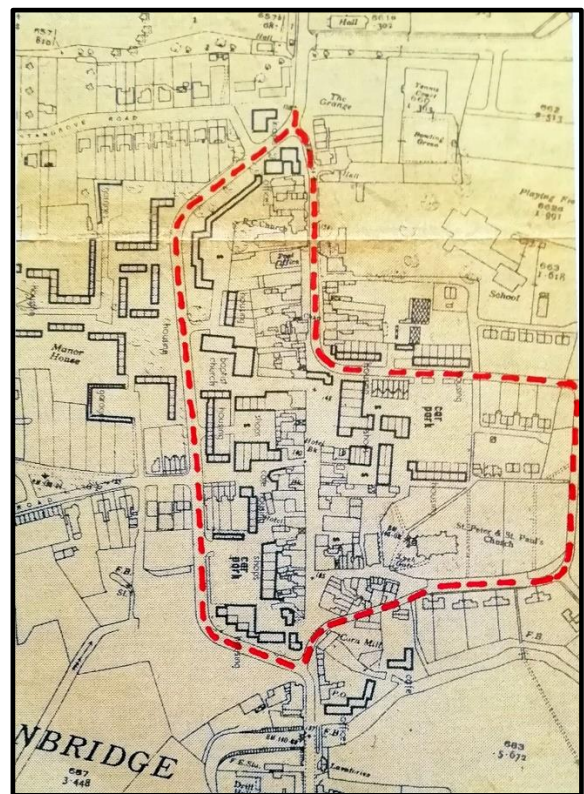
In August 1963, the front page of the *Edenbridge Courier* covered a proposal for the town centre which featured a two stage 'ring road' plan. This proposal had been drawn up by four EDRA Architect members, including Doug Griffin, at the invitation of the Parish Council. This proposal bears some similarities to the Relief Road as finally constructed in the 2000's. It proposed diverting traffic from the High Street, and featured a pedestrian area, and in a second phase diverted traffic around the east side of the High Street past the Parish Church. At this time, it was seen as a relatively short-term

solution until a full scale 'bypass' would be built by the 1980's.

It was in the mid 60's that Doug Griffin invited Kenneth Browne, an architect, town planner and illustrator, to Edenbridge, to look at the High Street and surrounding area and advise on how it might be made more pedestrian-friendly, and not dominated by vehicles and the associated 'clutter' of road signs etc. Kenneth Browne was the Townscape Editor of the *Architectural Review* and was well known within the architectural profession for his lively illustrative and analytical drawings of places, often used to communicate ideas for how a place might be improved. His sketches had illustrated the very influential Buchanan Report, entitled '*Traffic in Towns*' (1963).



EDRA Proposed Stage 1, *Chronicle* Aug. 1963



EDRA Proposed Stage 2, *Chronicle* Aug. 1963

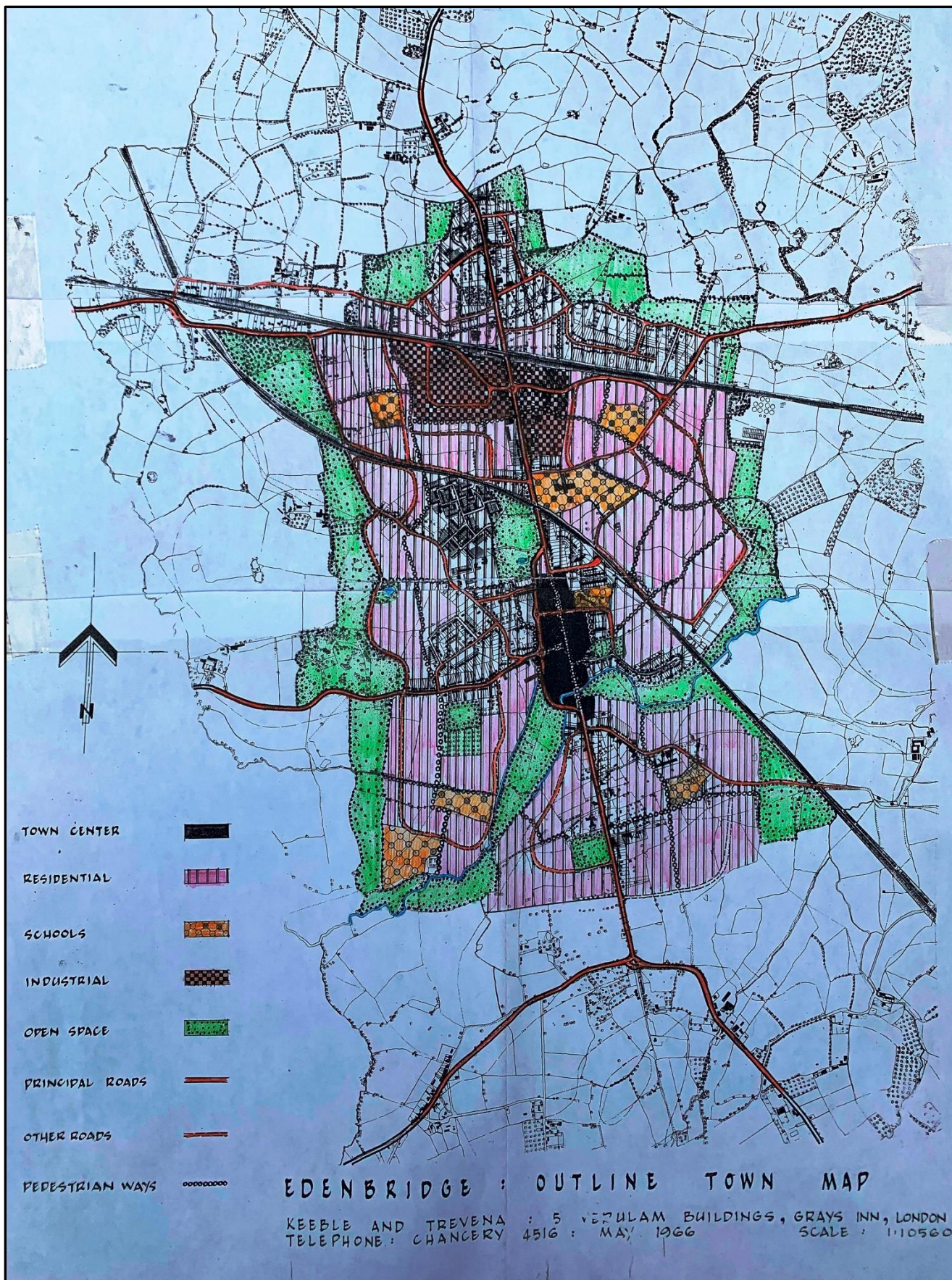


The Pedestrianised Square as imagined by Kenneth Browne EDEVT:1327

His visit to the town was described in a two-page illustrated article in a 1965 edition of the *Architectural Review* magazine, which included the aforementioned sketch gifted to the museum. This drawing shows how Kenneth and Doug envisaged The Square might look if the High Street were to be pedestrianised.

The possible expansion of Edenbridge can be seen on an altogether grander

scale in the proposals drawn up by London practice Keeble and Trevena in May 1966. This plan shows expansion of the town to a size of double its current (2023) size, with sites allocated for seven schools. I have not been able to find out who commissioned this plan, but in all probability it was a developer, and it may be that this plan helped secure the subsequent Green Belt designation for the area around Edenbridge in 1967.



Map of proposed expansion of town by Keeble & Travena, 1966.

From the mid 60's, through to the early 1990's, the idea of a Relief Road to take traffic away from the High Street formed a key part of the overall planning strategy for the town, but only in the sense that the land needed to enable such a scheme to proceed was 'safeguarded' from any development proposals that would get in the way. At no point during this time was there any funding to actually construct such a road - it was simply an aspiration.

The late 1980's saw the revival of the Edenbridge District Residents' Association, prompted in part by the Town Council's commissioning of the Lichfield report into the planning needs of the town, which was described in the local paper in May 1988 as a "*controversial document, produced through consulting all types of organisations and bodies but not the people who live here.*"

It also saw the very first steps being taken towards the construction of a Relief Road. The Tannery site, which had lain derelict for many years following the closure of the business, was sold for development, and final detailed approval was granted for a mixed development to include shops, homes and offices, together with the first part of a Relief Road, the southern end of which would include a new bridge over the River Eden, in December 1989.

The first stage of construction saw the bones of a bridge being built, but then everything ground to a halt as it emerged that there were land ownership issues to be resolved before the rest of the

development could proceed. The result was that for a number of years Edenbridge lived with 'a bridge to nowhere', and a large parcel of derelict and semi-developed land. There's an aerial photograph showing this state of affairs, which ironically was used by Sevenoaks DC in publicity a few years later to encourage people to give their views on the proposals to complete the Relief Road...

The Consultation Draft of the Sevenoaks Rural Areas Local Plan issued in 1991 stated "*The proposed line of the Western relief road is shown on the Proposals Map. Due to financial considerations the Western Relief Road is not programmed for completion during the plan period.*"

This notion of 'safeguarding' the land for a new road was challenged when, in June 1993, the Public Inquiry took place for the Sevenoaks District Rural Areas Draft Plan. The Inspector in charge of the Inquiry concluded that simply safeguarding the land, but not committing the funds to actually build the road resulted in a kind of stalemate where the town would stagnate. He challenged the two authorities, Kent and Sevenoaks to work together to make the road happen or abandon that ambition and release the safeguarded land. As a result, the District Authority, Sevenoaks decided to contribute towards the cost of the road, together with other contributions which would be generated through development, to make the Relief Road a reality.

An article in the local paper in Feb 1998 headlined ‘Relief Road Saga Looks Set to End’ and picturing the then Town Clerk, Mike Downing together with Town Councillor Vic Jennings sitting on the structure of the half-built bridge, sums up the frustration that the town had to bear during the nineties.

In 1995 Sevenoaks DC had commissioned Clague, a well-respected firm of Canterbury-based Architects, to prepare guidance on the future development and investment in the centre of Edenbridge in relation to the proposed Relief Road. Their work included public consultations and the creation of design guidance in relation to the infill development opportunities and possible pedestrianisation.

Throughout the nineties Doug Griffin, now retired, continued to play a very active role in challenging Kent, Sevenoaks, and Edenbridge Councils in relation to the detailed proposals for the Relief Road and High Street, through illustrated talks and copious correspondence.

The detailed design of the Relief Road generated heated debate in the late nineties, with many column inches in the local paper being devoted to correspondence on this subject. The final approval of the new road was granted in mid-2001 and construction eventually started in early 2003. The completed Relief Road finally opened to traffic in 2004, and the High Street underwent

improvements which were completed in 2008.

The debate still continues as to whether the Relief Road has improved the High Street - does ‘by-passing’ the High Street take away passing trade, should the central part of the High Street have been ‘properly’ pedestrianised, are the three sets of traffic lights along the Relief Road really necessary etc. The unsightly boarded up shop units between Waitrose and the High Street certainly do nothing to encourage pedestrian movement between these two parts of the town. However, we do now have the opportunity to make the High Street a pedestrian area for special events, and the green areas beside the through road have now matured and provide safe walking routes. Edenbridge continues to be a small town that is home to an active and engaged population.

.....



Children’s weaving activity session at the museum, Summer 2023. Image: Alan Smart

THE 'OWL OF ATHENA'

By Alan Ford and Joan Varley

Edmund Gustavus Bloomfield Meade-Waldo (8 February 1855 - 24 February 1934) was an English ornithologist and conservationist. He was born in Hever Castle, educated at Cambridge and spent his life managing the family's country estate, Stonewall Park, Chiddingstone. He was an active member of the RSPB and other conservation groups, taking part in fieldwork in various parts of the world, but is perhaps best known for his efforts to preserve the Red Kite in Wales. In 1874 he introduced the Little Owl to the UK at Stonewall Park.

In Greek mythology, a Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) traditionally represents or accompanies Athena, the virgin goddess of wisdom (or Minerva in Roman mythology). Because of this association, the bird is often referred to as the "Owl of Athena" (or the "Owl of Minerva")



The Little Owl impressed on a Greek Euro coin.

Image: Joan Varley

and has been used as a symbol of knowledge and wisdom throughout the Western world. This association continues today with the 'Owl of Athena' represented on a Greek Euro coin.

The Little Owl is not native to Britain, rather it was successfully introduced into

the Eden Valley by Edmund Meade-Waldo:

"Between 1874 and 1880 about 40 good birds went off. We knew of one nest in 1879. In 1896 and again in 1900, I "backed off" about twenty-five. Since then, they have been comparatively abundant throughout our district, which is roughly between Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks" quote from Meade-Waldo (Ticehurst, 1909).

This little bird went on to rapidly colonise England and Wales and its successful colonisation has been explained by there being an empty niche in our countryside for a largely insectivorous small bird of prey.



Little Owl by Basil Ede (1931-2016)

Image courtesy of Jane Higgs.

The museum was fortunate in the summer to be loaned a painting of a Little Owl by Basil Ede (1931-2016), an acknowledged master of wild bird painting. The painting, as well as being delightful is also unusual in that it depicts

a side view, whereas owls are most commonly depicted full face.

The little owl lives up to its name, standing at only 20cm. It has piercing yellow eyes, mottled brown and cream covering across its head and body, and a short tail. It remains the smallest owl in the UK. The little owl is monogamous, often staying with the same partner for life. It is ready to breed at one year old. It favours holes in trees as nest sites, but also adopts nest boxes or sometimes, surprisingly, disused rabbit burrows. They generally produce clutches of between two and five white eggs, laid late March or early April with incubation taking 7-28 days. Much of their hunting is done on foot, with the birds running actively to capture their prey. It has a typical life span of three years, however ringing records have recorded the oldest bird as 13 years 20 months.

The museum has several wildlife reports from local resident E.J. Eade who monitored wildlife in a well-defined area south-west of the town during the late 1990's and early 2000's. All four reports in the museum's collection record sightings of the Little Owl. In 1998 two pairs were present in this area during the spring and the summer and sightings were recorded in all months. In 2002 1-2 were seen regularly at the west end of the meadows until June and a single bird regularly till the end of the year. In 2003 there were sightings early and late in the year, and 2004 saw multiple sightings

from February, and almost consistently through to December.

Little owls can be active during the day. Look for them particularly in the early morning or at dusk, perched on poles or fence posts. Listen for their strange mewling call or the male's 'hoo-eet' song on summer evenings.

Sadly, the UK's Little Owl population is in rapid decline. Data generated from British Trust for Ornithology bird surveys indicate that the Little Owl has declined by 65% over a 25-year period; this decline has accelerated since 2002.



Little Owl at Bough Beech, 1982.
Image: P2023.3880.

Its current UK population size is an estimated 5,700 breeding pairs. The Little Owl has also declined in mainland Europe and is listed as a Species of European Conservation Concern.

References

Eade, S.J. 1998, 2002-2004. *Wildlife in Edenbridge*. EVMT Archives.

Kent Bird Report 2019.

Little Owl Project, www.littleowlproject.uk

Ticehurst, N.F. 1909. *A History of the Birds of Kent*, Witherby & Co., London.

JASPER MASKELYNE, 'WAR MAGICIAN' By Lyn Layland



Jasper Maskelyne was born to John Nevil Maskelyne and Ada Mary Ardley on 29 September 1902 and christened on 13 November 1902 at St. Mary Magdalene, Wandsworth

Common, London. Jasper was one of six children but sadly the first child Archie died soon after he was born. From the five children who survived childhood, Jasper only had one sister Mary.

Jasper's father, known professionally as Nevil Maskelyne, was a magician and inventor. Nevil was the first vice-president of the Magic Circle and took over as president in 1906¹.

Jasper's grandfather was the first Maskelyne magician and started the family dynasty in magic. He was very well known in Victorian times for his magic illusions and travelled extensively all over England. He set up a magic theatre at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly in London in 1873 and in 1905 he moved this to St. George's Hall in Langham Place, London.

Both of Jasper's maternal grandparents had died before he was born and when he was two years old in July of 1911, his paternal grandmother Elizabeth also died.

Why Jasper's mother and father decided to move their family to Edenbridge is not known but the Headmaster of the National School, Church Street, Edenbridge from 1905 to 1946, was William Ernest Weaver² whose father married Mary Maskelyne, Jasper's great-aunt.

When William Ernest Weaver died on the 24 February 1950 the obituary in *The Courier* on the 3 March that year read³:

People from all walks of life and varied ages, attended the funeral at Edenbridge Parish Church on Tuesday of Mr. William Ernest Weaver of the School House, Church Street, Edenbridge.'

It goes on to say:

He was also well-known as a former organist and choirmaster. Under his direction the parish church choir reached such a high standard that it was once featured in a broadcast service.'

The first mention of Jasper and his family living in Edenbridge comes from a piece in the *Daily Mirror* of the 24 December 1909 under 'Pudding Club Subscribers' where Jasper and his sister Mary sent a Christmas pudding to a national 'Pudding Fund for Poor Children'.⁴ Their address was given as Oak Lodge, Edenbridge.

Oak Lodge still stands in Edenbridge and is a substantial building and the 1911 census lists the Maskelyne family as well as 3 servants. The name of the house has now been changed.

It was likely that Jasper attended the local National School under the care of his

cousin William Ernest Weaver. He may have gone on to attend Stangrove House School run by the Misses Eedes as suggested in *Aspects of Edenbridge* no.11 (Schools and School days).⁵

There is no doubt that the Maskelyne family entered into village life. Jasper's father Nevil entertained a packed crowd at the Oddfellows Hall, Edenbridge in 1913 with a night of magic. The funds from which were going to the Men's Club.⁶ Nevil also held other evenings of entertainment raising funds for various charities.

It was known that Jasper sang in the choir at Edenbridge Church under the Choir Master, William Ernest Weaver and it is likely that he joined the scout group which was founded in Edenbridge in 1908.

Jasper's first arranged appearance into the world of entertainment came at the first ever Royal Command Performance held on 1 July 1912 at London's Palace Theatre.⁷ Attending were His Majesty King George V with his wife Her Majesty Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales. Jasper assisted David Devant, one of the greatest ever magicians, with his daughter Vida in a performance 'Boy, Girl and Eggs'. David Devant had started a partnership with John Nevil Maskelyne (Jasper's grandfather) in 1905.

Jasper's grandfather, John Nevil Maskelyne died in 1917. This may have precipitated the Maskelyne's move from Edenbridge back to St. Georges Hall, Langham Place, Regents Street in

London where his grandfather had lived in a flat above the hall as there is no evidence of the Maskelyne family living in Edenbridge after 1917.

According to *White Magic*, a book subtitled *The Story of the Maskelynes*, (1936)⁸ upon leaving school Jasper was asked by his father what he proposed to do for a living. When Jasper replied 'a wizard' his father dismissed the idea. Asked again, he replied 'a farmer'. At 18yrs he secured a place at Bradley Court Agricultural College, Forest of Dean and on graduating he worked on farms in Gloucestershire and Essex. However, in 1923 Jasper's father persuaded him to join the family business as a magician.

On the 24th of June 1926, Jasper married Evelyn Enid Mary Home-Douglas, one of his on-stage assistants. In 1927 they had a son called Alistair and in 1928 a daughter called Jasmine.



By WW2 Jasper had worked as a professional magician for 15 years. When war broke out he joined the Royal Engineers, thinking that his skills could be used in camouflage. Jasper was trained at the Camouflage Development and Training Centre at Farnham Castle in 1940.⁹ Early in 1941 he boarded a



troopship called R.M.S. Samaria with several thousand other men bound for North Africa.¹⁰

During the nine-week voyage, with little else to do, Jasper took to entertaining the troops with variety shows with the help of some of the other soldiers.

Jasper spent 1941 and early 1942 heading up the Camouflage Experimental Section, inventing/designing camouflage devices based in Cairo. In late-1942, he started working for Dudley Clarke's A Force, lecturing on escape and evasion, and working on other deception operations. The aim of MI9 was to aid escapers by providing them with tools and training to escape, evade, travel, and glean intelligence. Whilst in Cairo, Jasper also trained RAF crews and staff and lectured to various army units in training for undercover missions.¹¹

In *Magic Top Secret*, the autobiography of Jasper's wartime experiences, (thought to have been assisted by a ghost writer), he beguiles readers with stories of his inventions which included dummy tanks and guns, dummy submarines and a battleship, concealed Naval harbours and fleets and camouflage.¹²

During his lifetime Jasper featured in a number of TV appearances including - Magic, Mirth and Music, Christmas Cabaret and Christmas Magic and was a technical advisor for magic scenes.¹³ He

also starred in a number of films. After the death of his wife Evelyn in 1947, Jasper married Evelyn Mary Scotcher the following year.

Jasper and his second wife, known as Mary, emigrated to Nairobi in Kenya in 1950 where he managed Kenya's first national theatre for a few years. He also joined the Kenya Police Reserve during the Mau Mau uprising. Jasper died on the 15 March 1973 at Nairobi, Kenya.

In recent years there have been reports that Benedict Cumberbatch will play the starring role in the film telling the story of the illusionist Jasper Maskelyne who used his magic to defeat Erwin Rommel in WW2. The drama called 'War Magician' is based on the book of the same name by David Fisher, however, as yet the date for the release of the film is unknown.

I am indebted to James Green, a member of The Magic Circle, for his help with information on Jasper Maskelyne, his life, and achievements.

References

¹The Magic Circle. *About our History*. themagiccircle.co.uk/about/history/ : accessed 2 October 2022.

²Hillman, Brenda, ed. (1997) *Aspects of Edenbridge, Schools and School days*. No. 11. EDHS. p.15.

³Death announcements. (1950) *Kent and Sussex Courier*. 03 March. WEAVER, William Ernest. p.7d. British Newspapers, 1700-2023. www.findmypast.co.uk : accessed 4 October 2023.

⁴pudding Club Subscribers. *Daily Mirror*. 24 December 1909. p.13d. www.findmypast.co.uk : accessed 5 October 2022.

⁵Hillman, Brenda, ed. (1997) *Aspects of Edenbridge, Schools and School days*. No. 11. EDHS. p.86.

⁶Entertainment. *Kent and Sussex Courier*. 12 December (1913). p.10d. www.findmypast.co.uk : accessed 5 October 2022.

King & Queen's Music Hall Visit. ⁷*Nottingham Evening Post*. (1912). 1 July. p.5c. www.findmypast.co.uk : accessed 2 August 2023.

⁸Maskelyne, Jasper. (1936) *White Magic*. London. Stanley Paul & Co. Ltd. p.134. archive.org/details/whitemagicstoryo00maskiala/page/n7/mode/2up : accessed 2 December 2022.

⁹Fisher, David (1983) *The War Magician*. New York. Coward-McCann. p.16. archive.org/details/warmagician00fish : accessed 20 September 2022.

¹⁰Green, James. Jasper Maskelyne. *RMS Samaria: sailing off to war*. www.jaspermaskelyne.com/post/rms-samaria-sailing-off-to-war : accessed 3 September 2022

¹¹Green, James. Jasper Maskelyne. *How to escape and evade*. www.jaspermaskelyne.com/post/how-to-escape-and-evade : accessed 3 September 2022.

¹²Green, James. Jasper Maskelyne. *Magic Top Secret*. www.jaspermaskelyne.com/post/magic-top-secret-press-reviews : accessed 3 October 2022.

¹³Green, James. Jasper Maskelyne. *TV appearances*. www.jaspermaskelyne.com/films : accessed 2 August 2023.

Online sources: www.ancestry.co.uk, www.gro.gov.uk, www.findmypast.co.uk, www.gro.gov.uk, and census records. For a detailed list please contact the museum.

ANCESTRAL HOMES IN THE EDEN VALLEY

By Stephen Wood

This article explores the lives of my Wood ancestors and some of the properties in the Eden Valley where they resided.

Richard Wood (my 4x great grandfather) 25yrs and Ester Norman 23yrs travelled from Godstone to London in 1753 and were married at the Fleet Prison which housed debtors. Clandestine marriages were carried out there, or in a local tavern by incarcerated clergy for a fee, enough to pay for tobacco or brandy with no questions asked.

In 1786 their son William married Elizabeth (Bet) Durtnell in Edenbridge and they moved to Medhurst Row Farm, a 15th century two storey house in Prettymans Lane, Edenbridge. In 1787, 1790 and 1793 William is recorded as a tenant farmer of John Cronk of Lockhurst paying a land tax of £12 (£1083 today). In 1796 and 1799 he is listed as a tenant of Joseph Henry Streatfeild of Lockhurst, now paying a land tax of £25 (£1290 today).



How Green Farm, 20th century.
Image: annescountrygallery.co.uk

The couple had eight children and around 1805 they moved to How Green Farm, a 16th century two storey brick and tile hung house in How Green Lane, Hever.

William and Bet had two more children and he became overseer of the poor supplying faggots and flour, surveyor, and a church warden. Sadly, during their time at How Green Farm three of their teenage children died, possibly during a measles epidemic. They are buried in Hever Churchyard.

In 1817 their daughter Sarah gave birth to a 'base' daughter¹ Emma who was supported by the Parish in 1819 to the sum of £6-3s (£415 today) and then in 1820 by John Smith who paid £13-16s (£927 today), considerable sums at the time.

William died in 1820 and is buried in Hever Churchyard. Bet at some point moved to Lyndhurst in Edenbridge, the home of William Glover, a farmer. She died of Bronchitis in 1842 and is buried with William.

In 1808 William and Bet's son, another William, married Frances Leany from Crowhurst in Surrey and they had two children. William married Mary Doubell in May 1819 (although Frances' death was recorded as October that year?). William and Mary went on to have nine children and in about 1830 moved to Hilders Farm, a 16th century two-storey brick and tile hung house in Hilders Lane, Edenbridge. William is recorded as being a tenant farmer of Mrs Ann

Fisher, farming 134 acres and paying £42 land tax (£3330 today). He became overseer to the poor and also signed the churchwarden's accounts. Mary died of dysentery in 1842 and is buried in Hever Churchyard. By 1846 William had been appointed Special Constable for the



Hilders Farm, Hilders Lane, Edenbridge, c.1900. Image: P2006.1383

village and in 1849 became the owner of houses in The Street. He died of angina in 1856, the day after making his will at the house of his brother, Thomas in Marlpit Hill.

In 1851, their son Henry married Anne Simmons at Painshill Chapel, Limpsfield and they moved to Capers Farm, Grants Lane, Edenbridge.



Capers Farm, Grants Lane, Edenbridge, 20th century. Image courtesy of John Barratt (former resident)

Henry is also a farmer. Sadly, Anne dies giving birth to their second child in

March 1856. In July the same year he marries Marion Wells. Henry has now become a plate layer on the railway, possibly because around this time tenant farms were being amalgamated into large farms employing labourers.

By 1871, because of their reduced income, they had to move to a much smaller property in The Limes, Edenbridge.

The Limes was a row of two-storey weather boarded terraced cottages in Pound Lane (now Lingfield Road). Henry is still working on the railway; they now have six children. James Edward, his brother and a carpenter by trade is also living in one of the cottages which are owned by James Arnold.



The Limes, Lingfield Road, Edenbridge, 1978. Image: P2015.2798

Henry dies of tuberculosis in 1875. Marion is now a widow and takes in laundry to support the family. The end cottage in The Limes is called Old Laundry Cottage today. In 1879 her eldest daughter Emma gave birth at age 16yrs to an illegitimate son, Sydney English at Leighs Yard, Mill Hill, Edenbridge. He was brought up as her brother to avoid any scandal.



Hope Cottage, Pound Lane (Lingfield Road), Edenbridge, c.1930. Image: P2019.3654

By about 1910, Marion and her children were better off, and they purchased Hope Cottage, a two-storey brick detached house in Pound Lane. She and her daughters Emma and Rose are all laundresses and grandson Sydney is an

ironmongers' assistant at Charles Cheals shop in the High Street. Marion died in 1925, Emma and Rose continued to take in washing.

In November 1945 my father writes from his army camp in Germany "*how are they in Edenbridge – I suppose they will keep on washing till they die rather than leave off, but what else could they do?*"

Emma died in 1947 and Rose and Sydney both died in January 1960 still believing they were brother and sister.

I recall visits in the late 1950's when they still had no gas or electricity and relied solely on paraffin for cooking and lighting, and they still had their Victorian box mangle in the laundry room.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries various other family members resided at Troy Town, Marlpit Hill, Crouch House Green, Hole Farm, Prettymans Lane, and at Holly Cottage in Crouch House Road.

Notes

¹ When an incumbent of a church baptized an illegitimate child, he would record the baptism in the register with the name of the child and according to the incumbents' feelings on the subject, included 'base-born (b.b.), illegitimate, or bastard in the register. Source: IHGS, Genealogy & Family History, Parish Registers. Lecture 5, p.12. accessed 11 May 2023.

References

ancestry.org.uk

Census Returns

EVMT Archives

Historic England

theweald.org

.....



Children's Mr Men and Little Miss activity session at the museum, Summer 2023.

Image: Richard Johnson



Children's Metal Detecting activity session, Summer 2023. Image: Richard Johnson

THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE ACT OF 1753

By Lyn Layland



Fleet Marriages-Scene in the Fleet Prison during the Reign of George II
Cassell's Illustrated History of England

Before The Clandestine Marriages Act of 1753, popularly known as Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, a valid marriage was governed by Canon Law which stipulated that bans should be called, or a marriage licence obtained, and the marriage should take place in at least one of the parishes where the bride or groom resided. These conditions were directory rather than mandatory.

A marriage was valid without either bans or licence provided that both parties consented to the marriage. The marriage did not have to take place in a church, but it had to be conducted by an ordained Anglican clergyman. However, the priest conducting the marriage was open to reprimand and heavy penalties, however it would have been of no consequence to a priest with no benefice

and liberty such as those found in the Fleet prison.

This led to many marriages in and around the Fleet prison and many were conducted where at least one of the partners was underage which encouraged the practice of secret marriages, particularly those from wealthy backgrounds, and often bigamous. These clandestine and scandalous marriages could also be conducted in churches or chapels where they were exempted from the jurisdiction of the bishop or pretended to be.

To stop this practice the Clandestine Marriage Act of 1753 put an end to irregular marriages.

On the 25 March 1754 Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act came into force:

- All marriages to be solemnized by either banns or licences.
- All marriages to be performed in the home parish of one of the parties.
- All marriage records to be kept on printed forms.
- Space provided for signatures of the priest, both parties and all witnesses.

References:

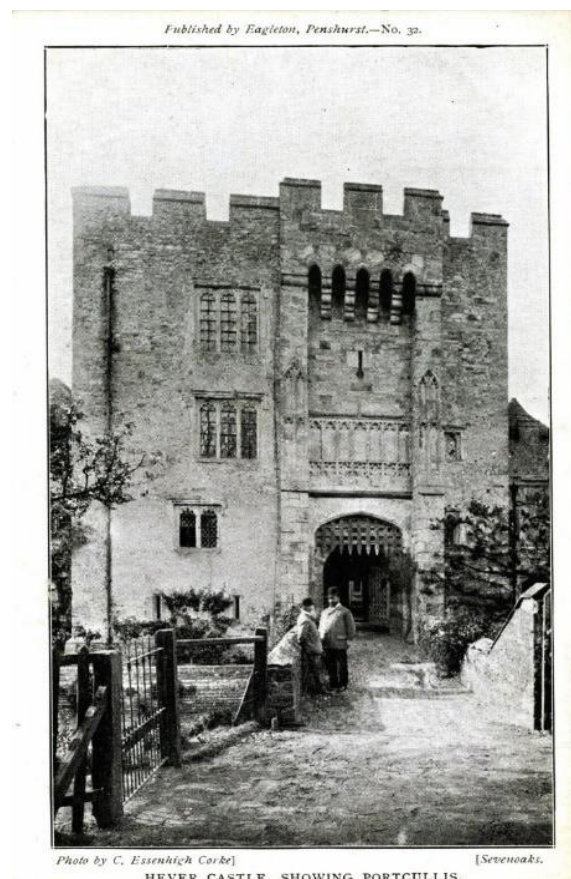
IHGS, Genealogy & Family History, Parish Registers. Lecture 5, p.7: accessed 11 May 2023.

Wikipedia. Clandestine Marriage Act 1753, en.wikipedia.org: accessed 11 May 2023.

UK Parliament, The Law of Marriage. www.parliament.uk: accessed 11 May 2023.

CHARLES ESSENHIGH CORKE - PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTIST

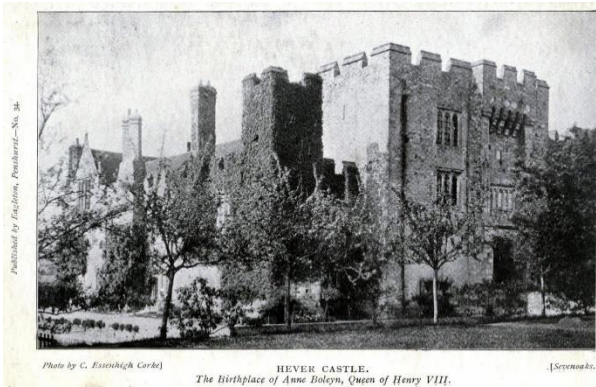
By Joan Varley



Hever Castle looking across the bridge towards the portcullis, c.1910. Postcard. Photographer: Charles Essenhigh Corke. Image: P2001.1.159

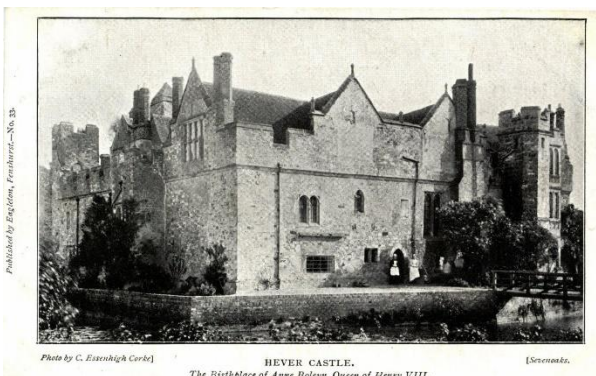
The museum is fortunate to have in its collection several postcards bearing photographs taken by Charles Essenhigh Corke (1852–1922), and some with reproductions of his original paintings, the latter much sought after by postcard collectors today.

Corke was born in Sevenoaks in 1852. He was a professional studio photographer who enjoyed painting in his spare time.



Hever Castle, c.1910. Postcard.
 Photographer: Charles Essenhigh Corke.
 Image: P2001.1.160

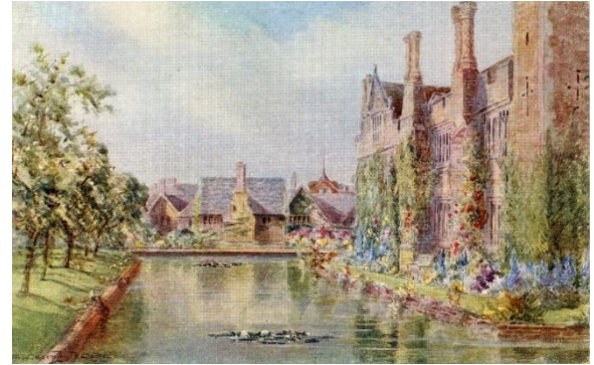
His photography studio was at 39 London Road, Sevenoaks. He joined the Royal Photographic Society in 1889 and by 1891 was describing himself as a photographic artist.



Hever Castle, Northwest elevation, c.1910.
 Postcard. Photographer: Charles Essenhigh Corke. Image: P2001.1.158

The first three postcards re-produced for this article are of Hever Castle and were published by Eagleton, Penshurst. From other postcards in our collection, it appears to have been common for local retail businesses to publish series of postcards from images provided or sold to them, acknowledging the photographer. Charles Duly Eagleton was a Postmaster and Stationer in Penshurst.

As a painter, Corke's preferred subjects were the great houses and gardens of west Kent, including Hever Castle and Penshurst Place.



The moat and castle at Hever, c.1890.
 Postcard of an original painting by Charles Essenhigh Corke. Image: P2011.1909

Sevenoaks was also the home of the printer and bookseller Joseph Salmon, who's stationer's shop at 85 High Street was just round the corner from Corke's studio. Joseph Salmon Jnr became interested in the commercial printing and publishing of pictorial postcards and, in the 1890's, the firm produced a small collection of coloured postcards of some of the great houses in West Kent and their gardens, including a series by Corke.



View across the moat to the mock Tudor village at Hever Castle, c.1890. Postcard of an original painting by Charles Essenhigh Corke. Image: P2008.1577

Corke's relationship with Salmon progressed in 1909 to publishing *English Homes and Villages* by Elizabeth Reid Hope, which was illustrated largely with his paintings, many of which were also turned into postcards. He also painted a series of the exterior views and the gardens of Penshurst Place; his illustrations were used in *The Official Guide to Sevenoaks and the Neighbourhood* in 1919.

Given his profession, Corke seems to have been rather shy of being the subject of photographs himself, however there is one of him in his artist's studio in *A Photographic Perambulation of Sevenoaks and District*, by Edwin Thompson along with another photograph of the shop front at 39 London Road.

References

Charles Essenhig Corke. Posted on 23/04/2016 by The Gardens Trust <https://thegardenstrust.blog/2016/04/23/charles-essenhigh-corke/> Accessed: 12 July 2022

Charles Essenhig Corke (1852–1922) <https://www.doaks.org/research/library-archives/dumbarton-oaks-archives/collections/ephemera/names/charles-essenhigh-corke> Accessed: 12 July 2022

Hope, Elizabeth Reid, 1909. *English Homes and Villages (Kent & Sussex)*. J. Salmon, Sevenoaks. <https://archive.org/details/englishhomesvill00hope> Accessed: 12 July 2022

Thompson, Edwin. 1994. *A Photographic Perambulation of Sevenoaks and District*. Circa Publishing, Sevenoaks. EVM Collection.

THE HEPPINGTON BELL

By Hilary Brand

A monument to the folly of too much collecting?



EDEVT: L101

We began our 2023 season with a fascinating object currently on loan to the museum – The Heppington Bell. The Bell is featured on our website as our Object of the Month for February 2023 but we felt that such a magnificent object deserved to be featured in EVH with a fuller description and history.

The Heppington Bell is cast entirely from ancient Roman bronze and silver coins. The coins belonged to 18th century Kentish antiquarian and clergyman, Bryan Faussett and is made from duplicate coins and illegible pieces from his collection of over 5000 coins. Made in 1766 and weighing 70kg the Latin inscription on the bell reads: 'Hear what Roman antiquity says to you through Roman bronze'.

Bryan Faussett, F.S.A. (1720-1776) of Heppington House, Nackington, near

Canterbury, was a vicar, antiquary, genealogist and revolutionary archaeologist. In a decade of excavating some 700 Anglo-Saxon barrows around east Kent, using methods of excavation and recording two hundred years ahead of his time, he accumulated what would be at the time of his death the world's most stupendous collection of seventh-century jewellery and artefacts, crowned by the magnificent Kingston brooch, the largest known Anglo-Saxon composite brooch, discovered on the North Downs above the village of Kingston, Kent on 5 August 1771. (National Museums of Liverpool).

He also researched and wrote up his many years of work into Kentish pedigrees, and also of monumental inscriptions in about 150 churches around the Diocese of Canterbury.

Alongside coins and pottery, his collection also included over 400 brooches and jewels, some of which are now held in the World Museum in Liverpool. He also researched all the churches in his local area, noting all their monuments and artefacts, including the bells. He was an expert in heraldry and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Descendants of the Faussett family still live in the Eden Valley.

The bell was found and retrieved for the museum by Christopher Gibbs, a distinguished antiquarian and brother of our past President Elizabeth Fleming. He gave it to her saying *"it ought to be returned to Kent, the place of its birth."*

FRENCH VISIT MARKS 50 YEARS OF EDENBRIDGE AND DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION by Davina Miller

The Edenbridge & District Twinning Association celebrated its 50th Anniversary (and final year), with French Twinners from Mont St. Aignan over the weekend of 12-14 May 2023.



Edenbridge & District Twinning Association with French visitors.

A public event was held at Rickards Hall on Saturday morning where guests enjoyed entertainment from the ever-popular Edenbridge Town Band as well as A Capella Singers and the loud and colourful Marlings Morris clog dancers! Pupils from Edenbridge Primary School gave a rendition of Frère Jacques. Among the attendees was local MP Tom Tugendhat, as well as Town, District and County Councillors. Speeches were made and gifts were exchanged, including a piece of art made out of locally sourced

oak with a golden centre, symbolic of the Golden Anniversary.



Cllr Bob Todd presents gift to Etienne Rousseau, Founder Member of EDTA.

Cllr Bob Todd, said: *“The aims of the Charter linking our two towns – to develop mutual understanding and friendship – are as relevant today as they were in 1973. But times have changed, quite dramatically in the past few years, so sadly this is our last year of Twinning. Yet the connections between us will remain a legacy and part of our history.”*

Following the morning’s celebrations, guests visited The World Garden at Lullingstone and completed their trip with a fish ‘n’ chip supper in Edenbridge.



Sun Dial gifted to Edenbridge near the Great Stone Bridge.

On the Sunday, there was an opportunity to walk around the town and see items gifted to the town by our French friends, including:



An oak tree planted in 1973 at Pound Green, Edenbridge.



French Postbox at the Council Offices.

The final stop was at St Peter and St Paul’s churchyard where a bed of yellow/gold roses has been created with a commemorative plaque.



New rose bed at St Peter and St Paul’s Church.

The weekend was a great success, and in no small part due to the hard work of the Association’s Chairman, Lindsey Eaton, and Secretary Caroline Mercer.

Images courtesy of ETC.

ROUND UP OF MUSEUM ACTIVITIES 2023

It's been another busy year at the museum, with valuable contributions from many volunteers old and new. The year began with a flurry of activity behind the scenes during January, sorting and clearing out of outdated materials and equipment. March saw the Great History Quiz, which drew a full house in the WI hall and raised £2,700 towards our funds.

Our first new display was focussed round our new acquisition of a letter from Clementine Churchill to the vicar of Crockham Hill, telling the story of controversial support for Communist Russia during WW2. Some other new acquisitions feature on pp. 7 and 25.

Beginning in April were two new displays: one on Royal Celebrations in the Eden valley with photos and memorabilia going back to Queen Victoria's Jubilee, and one on Town Twinning to coincide with the 50th anniversary of our links with Mont St Aignan. Our new displays in July were 'Compasses and Cricket balls', featuring the work of local manufacturer Francis Barker, plus a revamp of the display on Dukes Cricket factory.

Another popular new addition has been a rail of children's dressing-up clothes with accompanying information on Tudors, Romans and two World Wars aimed at younger visitors (see images on p. 6.) Children's activities have resumed during school holidays (see pp. 13 and 22), and at other events such as the Christmas

extravaganza and Craft Fair. Activities have included leather work, weaving, mosaics, Mr Men creations in clay, book binding, metal detecting and Christmas decorations.

This year's craft fair in June included a local folk band and ploughman's lunches, with beer donated by Larkins Brewery. There was a wide variety of stalls, including wood-turning, beekeeping and demonstrations of traditional sewing techniques from local company Aztec Threads.

Museum outreach included a visit to Edenbridge Manor care home, two to Roman Court sheltered housing, and talks at the CAMEO group and WI. We had stalls at local fetes at Hever, Four Elms and Cowden and at the September motor show. Three Town Trails run during the summer months.

We've also been chronicling some local history as it happens, with interviews and photos of local Ukranian refugees and their host families.

Behind the scenes work has continued creating interesting material for the new touch screen and new exhibitions planned for 2024 include 'Edenbridge Players 75th anniversary', and 'Local Health Care' to coincide with the opening of the new Health Centre.

Another less welcome but necessary activity next year is the treating of the entire building for woodworm. We hope that this may all take place in our normal closure month of January without causing too much disruption!

CORRESPONDENCE FROM MEMBERS

From Brenda Hillman (*née* Leigh)

Thank you for all the hard work you and others put into producing the museum magazine. It made interesting reading.

Re. The cloth making etc did you know that there is an entry in Somers Cocks p117 recording that in 1697 Obedentia Leigh of Browns Manor was buried in linen, contrary to the act of Parliament. I remember because of the shared surname. I doubt that she could have been an ancestor but my sister, who was about seven at the time, declared that as our parents had neglected to choose a middle name for her, she should in future be known as Shirley Obedentia Leigh. Needless to say, she soon grew out of it!

.....

From Jean French

Memories of the Albion Hotel

In the early 80's I remember being in the Albion Hotel with my husband. I remember it because it was the first time I'd seen a mobile phone! One person in the group had one with her in case her husband (he was babysitting) needed to contact her. Another reason it sticks in my mind is the fact that it was huge, so she was carrying it in a wicker basket! How things have changed.

But why were we meeting there? It was called a hotel, so not a pub that we frequented in our youth, we saw it as a place for older people. It was also at the

end of the road where I lived with my parents, so not an obvious choice! My husband reminded me we were there because it was the last clue on a car treasure hunt.

I worked in the town at a company called Ennia, later renamed Aegon, where Roman Court now stands. It was run by a board of directors one of whom was keen on social activities. There was table tennis on the 1st floor and a dart board, and we often played Bridge at lunchtime. Each year we had a mini horticultural show. We had darts matches and for at least three years we had a car treasure hunt in the summer. A maximum of four people to a car followed clues that journeyed around the Kent, Surrey and Sussex countryside ending up at a hostelry somewhere. Local knowledge came in very handy, although could sometimes mislead you! Anyway, the last one that I remember, had the Albion Hotel as the last port of call. Different people put the clues together each year so you could never be sure where you might end up, and yes, some did get very lost! At the Albion we would have had refreshments and, after awards, probably spent the rest of the evening drinking and debating the clues!

.....

Thank you to all our readers who sent us such nice comments on the last issue of Eden Valley Heritage. We are always pleased to receive feedback and we hope you enjoy this issue just as much. Eds.

OBITUARY

ROBIN BICKERS

1945 - 2023



Image: P2018.3537

It is with great sadness we record the death of the museum's first Chairman.

Robin and Anne Bickers were initially involved in the exhibition, organised by the Edenbridge and District Historical Society, to celebrate the centenary of Edenbridge Town Council in 1995. This exhibition became the inspiration for a museum in the town and when the Eden Valley Museum Trust was established in 1997 Robin joined the executive, initially as the council representative and then as the first Chairman, a role he held until 2001. Anne came on board at the same time to represent education.

Robin worked closely with the Project Director, Don Garman, over the next three years to realise the project. This involved liaising closely with the Town Council, achieving a lease, applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to establish the Museum, working with the national museum's organisations, ensuring security of the museum, starting the accreditation process, building up the

collection, appointing a curator and taking every opportunity to promote the museum project. A very busy three years.

Robin's wife Anne was involved in the collections group and in establishing and running the Friends of the Museum. Members enjoyed several visits and activities she arranged.

The restoration programme was delayed which meant that the time available to complete the display infrastructure was reduced if the opening date was to be achieved. Robin and Anne became very 'hands on' joining the evening shift to help set up the museum. On one hot evening Robin was to be seen wrestling with the mannequins installing their internal speakers. The hop lady proved very difficult as one of her legs kept falling off!

Robin provided excellent leadership to the Trust in its early days giving generously of his time and expertise and providing great support for the Project Director and the teams of volunteers. Robin's contribution as the first Chair of the Eden Valley Museum Trust will not be forgotten - an architect by profession, and one of the architects of the current museum.

VOLUNTEERING

If you'd like to join our happy band of volunteers why not call into the museum when it's open or email:
curator@evmt.org.uk

THANK YOU

The Eden Valley Museum Trust is a membership organisation and as such our grateful thanks goes to all of our members - individuals, couples, and families, as well as to our corporate members, donors, regular sponsors, and friends of the museum. Your support allows us to continue to preserve the heritage of the Eden Valley through the collection and storage of objects, images, and a wide variety of documents; and use the aforementioned to mount regular displays and exhibitions and organise events and activities that serve to educate and inspire future generations. Thank you.

Regular Sponsors / Supporters

AirBorn International Ltd

Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce

Edenbridge and Westerham Rotary Club

Edenbridge Bonfire Society

Edenbridge Town Council

Great Stone Bridge Trust

Kent Photo Archive

Lennox Cato Antiques

Sevenoaks District Council

Stonewall Park Charitable Trust

TopFoto

Warren Meadows Charitable Trust

Corporate Members

Edenbridge and District Historical Society

Edenbridge Magazine

Hever Parish Council

Chiddingstone Parish Council

Cowden Parish Council

Penshurst Parish Council

EDEN VALLEY MUSEUM

OPENING TIMES

February to December

Wednesday and Friday 2 to 4.30pm
Thursday and Saturday 10am to 4.30pm

Last Entry 4pm

GUIDED WALKS

Free guided walks around the historic centre of Edenbridge take place during the summer months – visit www.evmt.org.uk to find out more.

BECOME A MEMBER

Annual individual membership £14

Annual household membership £24

Annual corporate membership £120

DONATIONS

You can support the museum by making a donation via our website: www.evmt.org.uk or by sending a cheque to:

The Treasurer, Eden Valley Museum, Church House, 72 High Street, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 5AR. Cheques to be made payable to:

Eden Valley Museum Trust

You can also donate online via the Charities Aid Foundation: go to: www.cafonline.org and search using our charity number: 1065466.

You can also support the museum by selecting Eden Valley Museum Trust as the charity you wish to support when using www.easyfundraising.org.uk.

FIND US ONLINE

Website: www.evmt.org.uk

Twitter: [@EdenMuseumKent](https://twitter.com/EdenMuseumKent)

Facebook: www.facebook.com

Instagram [#evmtrust](https://www.instagram.com/evmtrust)

Kent Photo Archive: www.kentphotoarchive.org.uk

Leaving a legacy in your Will to the Eden Valley Museum is a gift to future generations.

If you would like to discuss leaving a legacy, please contact: The Treasurer, Eden Valley Museum, Church House, 72 High Street, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 5AR



©2023 Published by EVMT, Church House, 72 High Street, Edenbridge, TN8 5AR. Telephone 01732 868102 - Charity Registration Number: 1065466. Permission must be sought from EVMT before any material can be reproduced. Printed by Design to Print UK Ltd.