

ANOTHER LOOK AT LOCAL PLACE NAMES

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A couple of months ago we looked at some of the place names of the Woking area from before the Norman Conquest. Now I want to bring the story a little more up to date by looking at some of the later medieval place names of the district.



Above: At some stage in the later 13th century people forgot that 'Knap' meant top of the hill, and added an extra 'hill' just in case.

Below: The makers of the village sign were certainly hedging their bets.

The 'Mayford' (either the ford where Mayweed grew or the 'main ford'), which as the crossing point of roads from Chertsey (first recorded in 675) to Guildford (889) and from Farnham (688) to Woking (708-715), was probably in use since Saxon times - although the earliest record to survive dates from about 1210-12.

In the time of King John a Geoffrey de Pourton apparently held the estate in 'grand sergenty' - that is he held the land by service to the king by attending any of his wars within the realm of England for forty days (either in person or by a substitute), armed with something like a hauberk or a lance.

Robert de Pourton, his successor, died in 1226 and the property was then divided between his two heirs, Henry de Kinton and Walter de Langford, but not long after this we know from the records that a John de Gatesden held the estate, possibly illegally as the ownership of the land had to be settled by Henry III. After this it appears that Fulk Basset, the Bishop of London, purchased the estate and incorporated it into his Manor of Woking.

Moving back to the early 13th century we know that both Brookwood and Knaphill were first recorded in about 1225. 'Knap' (or La Cnapp as it was first recorded) apparently means in Old English the 'top of the hill', a fact that was later evidently forgotten when the second 'hill' was added to the name.

Brookwood (originally Brocwude) could have derived from either 'broc' (as in badger) or brook (as in a stream) - the latter probably



being the more likely as a later reference to the name appears in a document that also records the Coresbrook, which drains the district into the Bourne upstream of Mayford at Crastock (first recorded in 1178 – the farm or ‘stoc’ frequented by crows).

Another place name that first appears about this time is Goldsworth, or la Goldhorde, which was recorded in 1229 when Alan Bassett made an agreement with William de la Rude regarding ‘certain land and moor which Thomas la Goldhord’ had held of the manor of Woking in exchange for some recently enclosed land adjoining the road from Herisull (Horsell) to Sithwod (Sythwood at Knaphill), and extending from beyond Parlingeford (Parley on Littlewick Road).

Alan Basset was obviously consolidating his lands in Woking at this time as also in 1229 we find an agreement between him and Geoffrey de Ho releasing to Alan certain lands including his ‘plantation on the bank of the Waye’ in exchange for the ‘meadow between Hobourne and Kingswarthe, lately held by Gery de la Rune’.

‘Ho’ (or Hoo) in Old English means a ‘spur of land’ (possibly the ridge where the Hoebridge Golf Course is now), with the ‘Hobourne’ being what we now know as the Hoe Stream, but where the ‘king’s wharf’ was I do not know.

The same place-name element can be found in Hook Heath (another spur of high ground) that in 1280 was described as ‘la Hok moor’, with the Assize Records in 1294 simply noting it as

‘la Hoke’ – with Elmbridge (across the Hoe Stream between Hook Heath and Kingfield) being called ‘Thelebrygge’ and in the other direction ‘Brokewodeshetth’ obviously being the name for the heathland around the Brookwood area.

Runtley Wood (in the Wey Valley between Sutton Green and Fishers Farm at Old Woking) was also first recorded at that time as ‘Rontele’ (the name probably deriving from ‘runt leah’ meaning a wood with old decayed stumps) along with a Ralph de Apeworth (Aper’s worp) his homestead later being recorded in the street name ‘Apers Avenue’ at Westfield.

Naming places after previous occupants of the area is obviously not new.

The original ‘Goldhord’ of Goldsworth included most of what is now Goldsworth Park, as well as parts of St Johns and the Goldsworth Road area of Woking.



BEESWAX FROM THE BUSH GROVE OF BISLEY

The ‘ley’ part of Bisley (and other similar names) is thought to mean a ‘glade or clearing within a wood’, with the first element in Bisley’s case being a corruption of the Old English for ‘bushes’ – in other words a glade overgrown by shrubs.

There are a few of Bisley’s in the country (notably the one near Stroud in Gloucestershire), but ‘our’ Bisley was not recorded until 1283 – the land before evidently being part of Chobham and owned by the Abbey at Chertsey.

In fact the first reference to the village relates to a dispute between ‘Thomas’ the rector of Bisley and the Abbot of Chertsey over some bodies that were buried at Bisley, but which should have been taken to the Abbey for burial. The dispute was eventually settled by Bisley agreeing to pay a ‘tax’ of 3lb of candle wax to the Abbey for the right to bury their own dead (and for the church to take the dues).



THE OLD BRIDGE OF ELM



The new bridge over the Hoe Stream at Elmbridge is just the latest in a long line of bridges on that site. The one shown here was built in 1892 by a local builder called James Whitburn (a stone on the downstream side used to proudly proclaim his name). He was paid £670 by Guildford Rural Highways Board to replace the old wooden bridge that was only 12ft wide and evidently falling apart.

There are a number of Elmbridges in Surrey (if not the rest of the country) and most are thought to have originally been wooden plank bridges – possibly made of Elm as it is a good wood for use in wet conditions.



It is amazing how quickly you can forget what was there before when it has gone. The old Elmbridges, built in the 1890's for horse drawn carriages, were not really wide enough for modern motorised transport and had to be replaced. They were swept away by the Hoe Valley Flood Relief Scheme, along with the Community Buildings (many of which were first erected soon after the Second World War), and the Allotments, built on the site of Woking's former municipal dump.

