

# **LONG DITTON IN HISTORY**

**Some notes by Peter Fussell**

## **Pre-History**

Geologists tell us that, on that part of the world's surface which we know as SE England, clay and chalk deposits were put down under the sea on to the rock bed below during the period 160-50 million years ago. Violent movements of the earth's surface, known as the Alpine Fold, at that period resulted in the formation of the east-west features which characterize SE England today, ie the troughs of the Thames Valley and the English Channel with the ridge of the Downs and Weald in between. Erosion of the central ridge and the in-filling, by sedimentation, of the Thames Valley basin has given rise to the geological structure which exists today.

Insofar as Long Ditton is concerned the surface structure consists basically of a 300 ft thick layer of London clay (laid down before the Alpine Fold period) with a topping of brickearth in the zone bounded today by the Thames and the railway line with a southern extension of the brickearth cover in an area bounded by Ditton Hill Road, Bankside Drive and an E-W line through Rectory Close. (Brickearth is a loess-type earth deposited by wind-action during the Ice-Age some 200,000 years ago).

## **Early Man**

The brickearth areas, being more or less at river level, became marshy (compare with the area presently around Rushett Farm near Chessington Zoo) whilst the upper levels of Ditton Hill and Southborough developed into heavily-wooded areas. Such was the terrain when early man first settled in these parts and, since he would have chosen the upper levels away from the marshy river area on which to settle, it is likely that the format of the present-day roads (Rectory Lane, Ditton Hill Road, Ewell Road) was decided by the footpaths hacked out in those distant days to provide access from the river to the early settlements on the lee-side of the hill.

## **Roman Times**

No remains of early man's habitation in Ditton exist, apart from some Bronze Age spear heads and daggers found in the Thames during excavations at the Surbiton Water Works, and virtually no remains exist either of the Roman occupation (AD 43-409) even though a substantial Roman settlement existed at Kingston for most of that period. (The late Mr Bischoff once told a former rector that Roman bricks had been found among the foundations of the old church which, if true, could make our church an ancient site indeed).

## **Anglo-Saxon Times**

With the departure of the Romans in AD 409, after nearly 400 years of occupation, the stage was set for the founding of 'England' and for the entrance of 'Surrey' onto the national scene. The process of the conquest of Britain by the Jutes (circa AD 455), the Saxons (c. AD 520) and the Angles is obscure but certainly by the late 7<sup>th</sup> century Southern Britain was thoroughly anglicised and Suthri-ge (i.e. Southern Kingdom or Surrey) had its own king, Frithwald, with his seat at Kingston.

Nearly all traces of the Roman occupation were obliterated by the Anglo-Saxons and the Surrey landscape of today is almost entirely the product of the last 1,500 years starting with the earliest villages of the Anglo-Saxon period. Likewise the majority of place names stem

from Anglo-Saxon, Ditton included which derives from the two elements 'Dic' (a ditch, chiefly an excavated one whose purpose was either defensive or- for drainage) and 'Tun' (an enclosure, farmstead or village). Thus 'Ditton' implies 'enclosure within a ditch' or 'farm near a dyke'.

The spelling of the name Ditton has varied down the ages from Ditone and Ditune, though Duttone and Dythen to its present-day form; a description of the bounds of Dittone, dating from AD 1005 and written in Anglo-Saxon, mentions 'Emenam' (the Mole), 'Haranwydre' (Hareworth) and 'Cwicelmeswyrthe' (Living-elms farm). Not many living elms today, though.

The basic unit of land was the 'tithing' (from the association of ten families working the unit of land for a living) and one or more tithings formed a manor. Each manor had its lord of the manor who, with the spread of Christianity throughout the kingdom, would build a church in the manor and endow a priest. Thus the parochial and manorial systems developed side-by-side with the lord holding both the manorial rights and the advowson (ie the right to present a priest for institution to a living) without restriction on inheritance so that both would pass automatically to his heir.

### **Norman Invasion**

Events in 1066 had a devastating effect on the fortunes of Ditton in that William the Conqueror's invading army, having arrived at the southern extremes of London, turned westwards through Surrey to Winchester. Now a large army living off the country through which it passes necessarily moves on a wide front and so leaves a broad strip of ravaged countryside in its wake, and from the Domesday records (see below) it can be concluded that Ditton was in the path of William's army.

Wadard, one of the Norman knights who accompanied William in his conquest and subsequently was given one of the two manors of Ditton as a reward for his services, is depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry and is singled-out by name with the inscription 'Hic est Wadard'. Since only seven Normans are thus identified on the whole 231ft length of the Tapestry he must have been a figure of special note to those for whom the Tapestry was made. Wadard is shown supervising the commandeering of livestock and foodstuff from the English countryside - in Ditton, one wonders?

### **Domesday Survey**

1036 saw the compilation of the Domesday Survey; William proposed that in one survey would be a record of all the lands and wealth of his feudal vassals which, whilst settling the controversies relating to title of land and enabling a checklist of wealth -to be prepared for future taxation purposes, provided for the first time a complete analysis of the economic resources immediately available to the king in the event of an emergency.

The organisation of the Survey appears to have been based on the collection by the King's commissioners when they visited each shire, of the required information from statements given on oath by the sheriff, the barons and their tenants by the court of every hundred and by the priest, reeve and six villeins from each village. The questions asked about each manor were:-

What is its name?

Who holds it?

How many hides of land are there?  
How many plough teams?  
How many inhabitants?  
How much woodland, meadow and pasture?  
How many mills?  
How much is the whole worth?

Moreover the questions relating to values had to be answered in triplicate, viz in respect of the time of King Edward (immediately before the Conquest, in AD 1065), the time when William first granted the land to one of his Norman knights (c AD 1070) and at the time of the Survey (AD 1086).

### **Domesday Manors of Ditton**

Two manors in Ditton are recorded, both in the Hundred of Kingston. The first is listed under the lands of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, as being held by Wadard; the second appears under the lands of Richard fitz Gilbert, as being held by Picot.

The Wadard manor was of six hides in size before the Conquest, had meadow and woodland and a mill. It was valued at £4 in 1086 but the tenant paid Wadard a fifty-shilling rent and the service of one man-at-arms (the only knight-service recorded for Surrey).

The Picot manor was slightly smaller at five hides, had a mill and woodland and was worth fifty shillings in 1086; however the tenant paid a rent of £4 despite the fact that Picot received an annual payment of 500 herrings from a house in Southwark (for what reason Domesday remains silent). Most important, though, the Picot manor had a church; in Edward's reign the advowson of this church was held by a Saxon earl named Almar, the lord of the manor, but it passed to Picot who was ancestor to the Robert Picot who was instituted as Rector in 1166.

Bishop Odo was King William's half-brother; Richard fitz Gilbert and William had a common ancestor in Richard I, Duke of Normandy. Both Odo and Richard were well-endowed with lands by William, not only in Surrey but elsewhere, Odo being created Earl of Kent and Richard Earl of Clare (in Suffolk). In fact William gave so much of Surrey to Richard that William found it necessary to appoint another Norman, William de Warenne, as Earl of Surrey in an attempt to counteract Richard's overgrown power in Surrey; this set the stage for a feudal rivalry between the two families that was to continue for the next two and a half centuries down to the Wars of the Roses when descendants of the two families were on opposing sides. Needless to say, Surrey suffered from the squabbles.

An interesting side-issue stemming from the statistics in the Domesday Survey is the relative size of the values quoted for any given manor for 1065 and 1070. Where the second figure is substantially lower than the first it can be assumed that the manor had suffered as a result of the passage of William's army during the Conquest; this certainly applied to the two Ditton manors which suffered a 50% drop in worth.

### **Merton Priory**

Up to the time of the Conquest the only religious order in England was the Benedictine order, represented in Surrey by the great abbey at Chertsey. On the continent, however, other orders had developed and, in the wake of the Norman Invasion, there came a spate of new monastic building in England. One such institution was that of Merton Priory, one of five Augustinian

houses to be sited in Surrey. Founded in 1117 by Gilbert Norman, High Sheriff of the county, on a 60-acre site on the banks of the river Wandle its prior had a seat in Parliament as a mitred abbot. Through the munificence of its founder and subsequent benefactors it increased in importance and, by the time of the Dissolution in 1536, was enjoying a yearly revenue of nearly £1,000.

Its founding was of some importance to the people of Ditton at that time and of significance to us today in the interpretation of certain historic facts.

Firstly, the records of the priory indicate that the church of Long Ditton and the church of Kingston, with its four chapelries of Molesey, Petersham, Sheen and Thames Ditton, were granted to the priory as a source of revenue. However, Long Ditton was granted in 1174, nearly 50 years before the grant of Kingston, which would indicate that the Picot manor is to be identified with Long Ditton and not Thames Ditton.

(Chapels of Ease were erected for the convenience and ease of the people who lived in small hamlets at some distance from their parish church).

Secondly, because of the copious records kept by the Priory in respect of its activities and properties, we have documentary evidence for our Rectors dating back to 1166, in which year none other than one Robert Pycot was instituted on the presentation of William Mandeville.

### **Assize of the Forest**

Good deeds by the Normans, as evidenced by the founding of religious houses were, however, tempered by activities of less beneficence. Of particular hatefulness to the inhabitants of Surrey was the afforestation of the whole of the county, firstly by Henry I and then confirmed by Henry II in the Assize of the Forest, 1184. By this declaration the whole area was declared forest-land ie a region placed 'outside' (Latin: foris) the jurisdiction of common law. The professed object was to preserve the wild beasts of the land but the afforested areas provided good hunting and plenteous meat supply for the royal household. The inhabitants were allowed to stay on their land but were expressly forbidden to hew wood, poach animals, hunt or pasture farm animals except at certain times of the year; moreover they had to suffer in silence as the protected wild animals roamed into their growing crops. The villagers of Long Ditton must have had a difficult time during this period which lasted up to the signing of Magna Carta in 1215 by King John who himself is recorded as having passed through Ditton in 1212 on his way to Guildford; local carts were commandeered to carry his wardrobe and his hounds and huntsmen were housed overnight in local cottages.

### **Black Death**

The plague which swept across Europe in 1348/49 and killed almost half the population almost certainly affected Ditton if slender evidence is noted. Firstly, the number of clergy instituted in Surrey in 1348/49 was ten times that of normal years - and Ditton had a new Rector in John de Totteforde. Secondly the religious hospital foundation at Sandon (ie Sandown) was completely wiped out by the plague in 1349 - an outbreak of sufficient importance to be recorded, and on the border of the parish.

### **Hundred Years War**

In the period 1365 - 1466 (ie the period coinciding more-or-less with the long war between England and France) 15 Rectors were instituted in Long Ditton. If one excludes Edward

Prentys, who was Rector from 1407 to 1436, the others held their benefices for an average of about 5 years each, a figure far lower than the average of 16 years each for the whole period from 1166 to the present day.

### **Royal Palaces**

The proximity of Surrey to the capital and the attractions of the countryside inspired the monarchs to build royal palaces in the county; no less than six such residences were in active use by Tudor times, at Guildford, Woking, Oatlands, Nonsuch and Richmond with Hampton Court just over the river in Middlesex. Ditton no doubt experienced the mixed blessings which the proximity of these palaces bestowed on the county. In particular Ditton, with surrounding parishes, was swallowed up in the vast 'Hampton Court Chase' created by Henry VIII in 1518 by Act of Parliament as a hunting ground based on Hampton Court Palace - a return to afforestation with a vengeance.

### **John Haymer**

On the south wall of the chancel, of the present church, next to the organ, is a brass plate which is the oldest monumental brass in the church. Originally it was set on a grave-stone under an effigy of the priest whose death in 1500 it commemorates. The inscription reads:

‘Here lieth Master John Haymer, M. of Artes, and late Parson of this Church, of whose Goods was despend an C. Markes among Pore People, and upon High-Wayes nere unto this town and within the same. On whose Soule Jhesu have Mercy.’

The brass has suffered some surface damage in attempts to obliterate the sentiments expressed, probably Puritans to whom they would be unacceptable.

### **Robert Castleton**

A second brass, almost as old as the Haymer brass is situated by the vestry door and commemorates Robert and Elizabeth Castleton. Sir Robert was a local landowner and JP and both he and his wife are depicted on the brass in the costume of the period, as are his six daughters (only the indent remains for the representation of his five sons). The inscription, in Latin, translates to:

‘here lieth Robert Castleton, lately knight and justice of the peace and clerk of the pleas in the Exchequer at Westminster, and Elizabeth his wife. Which Robert died on 27 December 1527. On whose soul may God be propitious. Amen.’

### **Dissolution and Richard Benese**

During the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the Church and Religious Foundations, for the most part, had become secular and corrupt. The monastic houses had accumulated an excessive amount of wealth and power in the realm, their days of usefulness were over and the time for their reformation had come. Nevertheless, Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries was the drastic solution to a problem which, though of considerable magnitude, did not warrant the ecclesiastical upheaval which resulted.

The Deed of Surrender to Henry VIII of Merton Priory was signed by the Canons of the Priory, one of whom was The Rev Sir Richard Benese MA, BCL(Oxon) Succentor of the

Abbey. Little is known of his early life but, after a period as Canon and Precentor at Hereford Cathedral, he moved to Merton Priory. During his long stay at Merton he became interested in surveying, possibly from the production of estate plans for the Priory whose lands were extensive, and in 1537 he published a book (which subsequently went through five editions) which has been called the earliest English textbook of geometrical survey and area measurement. In his book "The Measuryng of Lande" Benese describes ".....the maner of measuryng of Lande ..... and comptyng the true nombre of Acres of the same".

After the dissolution of the Priory in 1538 he became Rector of Beddington and subsequently, in 1541, Rector of Long Ditton. He died in 1546 and was buried in Long Ditton churchyard, in accordance with a request in his will.

Benese is thought to have been the builder of the old Rectory, in Rectory Lane, which was demolished in 1938. This Rectory was L-shaped in plan, the main portion lying east-west (ie at right angles to the Lane) with a wing containing the kitchen and servants quarters extending southwards at the east end. The walls were half-timbered and the south front had curved timber brackets brought out to support an overhanging first floor. Considerable modifications to the original 16<sup>th</sup> century building were made in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the tithe barn remained unaltered until its demolition with the main building. The Rectory stood in substantial grounds with a lake, a summer house, an ancient yew tree (still standing) and what is thought to be a late-medieval ice-house into which ice, brought from the Thames in winter, would be packed to provide a food cold-store for the summer months. The remains of this latter facility lay in the garden of 16 Rectory Close, one of the houses of the estate built in 1939 on the Rectory site, but was demolished by the house owner in the 1980s.

### **James Hatton**

James Hatton succeeded Benese as Rector and stayed until 1572. In his 26 years at Ditton he lived through a period fraught with ecclesiastical changes; in common with many other priests he learned to be Protestant under Edward VI, Catholic under Mary I and anything or nothing under Elizabeth I. 1549 saw the introduction of the first English prayer book; 1552 its revision. In 1553 with the Accession of Mary there was a return to Latin services whilst Elizabeth's accession in 1558 brought back the English prayer book. Truly a continuity of the Church through the vicissitudes of temporal power.

### **Church Records**

The church possesses several registers of baptisms, marriages and burials covering the period 1564 to 1812. Just before the turn of this century, when the oldest registers were in a sad state of repair, they were carefully re-bound at the expense of Mr WJ Evelyn, whose ancestors once were Lords of the Manor.

The first entry in the earliest book records the baptism, in May 1564, of a little girl named Alicia.

### **Ditton on the Map**

Christopher Saxton (1542-1611) was a cartographer on the staff of Thomas Seckford, Surveyor of the Court of Wards to Elizabeth I. Seckford perceived the uses to which an accurate cartographic survey of England could be put and entrusted the task to Saxton, who

completed the survey in six years. The Surrey map was published in 1575 and it is on this sheet that the name 'Ditton' appears on a map for the first time. A contemporary of Saxton John Nordern (1548-1626) was an attorney by profession but cartography was his hobby. He proposed to undertake a series of county maps which would be more detailed than Saxton's; in particular they were to show roads. Nordern, however, had none of the financial assistance bestowed on Saxton and managed to produce maps for only six counties. On the Surrey map of 1594, appear the words 'Long Ditton' for the first time.

### **Lords of the Manor**

It will be remembered that there were two Ditton manors one held by Picot and the other by Wadard at the time of the Domesday survey.

The lordship of the 'Picot' manor descended via the Clare, Despenser, Beauchamp and Nevill families and Anne Neville conveyed the manor to Henry VII. In 1553 Edward VI granted the manor to David Vincent, a groom of the Privy Chamber, in exchange for lands at Richmond. David Vincent's daughter married John Evelyn of Kingston, and their son George, born in 1526, became bailiff of Kingston in 1566. The previous year Elizabeth I granted George a monopoly for the manufacture of gunpowder; up to the time of the Spanish Armada England had imported her gunpowder from Flanders but this source of supply was insufficient for the modern weapons then being devised. Charcoal, was required for gunpowder manufacture, Surrey had plenty of wood and George was at hand to provide the expertise. He set up gunpowder mills on the Hogsmill Stream at Tolworth (then part of Ditton) and at Godstone and from these successful ventures purchased large estates in long Ditton and Wotton; by James I's reign the Evelyn mills were employing over 1,000 workpeople and providing the king with over £10,000 worth of gunpowder per year. In 1567 the Vincent family sold their manor to George Evelyn, who thus became Lord of the Manor,

George married Rose, daughter of Thomas Williams, in 1550 and they had sixteen children, most of whom died young. Two of the children who survived into adulthood are of more than passing interest, Mary and Thomas.

Mary married Richard Hatton in 1566; the effigies above the vestry door of the present church commemorate Richard and Mary. The inscription which accompanied the brasses has long been lost but Aubrey, writing in 1719 in his 'Antiquities of Surrey', records the Latin text which translated read:

'Here lies Richard Hatton and his wife Mary, daughter of George Evelyn, esquire, by his wife Rose. Which Richard led in marriage the aforesaid Mary on Monday 7 October 1566 and had as off spring three sons and six daughters. Thereafter the aforesaid Mary died on Tuesday 29 September 1612 aged 63. And the aforesaid Richard died on Tuesday 28 January 1616 aged 61. Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; For I was hungry and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in.'

Matth. 8vv 34, 35.

Thomas married Francisca Moore in 1577 and their son Thomas was knighted in 1617. Thomas had inherited the manor of Long Ditton from his father in 1603 and Sir Thomas, in due course, became Lord of the Manor. Sir Thomas married Ann, daughter of Anne Gould.

(It is interesting to note that, on the death of Rose, George Evelyn married a second time. His second wife was Joan Stint and they had eight children. Of the two who survived childhood Richard, the father of the diarist John Evelyn, was born in 1579 and Catherine was baptized in 1582).

Meanwhile the 'Wadard manor descended, somewhat less illustriously, through the Arsic, Brademere, Pembroke, Gravesend, Harveles, Stone Fenrother and Rede families and, in 1576, was conveyed to William Nottle whose grandson Thomas sold the manor to Anne Gould. At her death in 1629 the 'Wadard' manor passed to her daughter Ann, wife of Sir Thomas Evelyn, by whom the two manors of Ditton became vested in the same family.

The two manors subsequently passed, via the Alston family, to the Lovelace family.

### **Richard Byfield**

During the period 1627-1662, a period almost coincident with the lordship of Sir Thomas Evelyn and which embraced the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell, Richard Byfield was Rector of the parish. Byfield was a Presbyterian whereas Sir Thomas was High Church and had his own chaplain who used the Book of Common Prayer, forbidden in Cromwell's days. Edmund Calamy, the nonconformist historian, gives an account of the quarrel which arose in 1657 between Byfield and Evelyn over repairs to the church. Byfield claimed that money had been collected in 1641/42 for the rebuilding of the church and that this money had remained in Sir Thomas's hands while, meantime, the church was falling down. Moreover, claimed Byfield, Sir Thomas entertained a prelatial household chaplain who used the Common Prayer Book and who gathered a concourse of people of like views and who thus invaded the parson's rights. The Protector, to whom Byfield's petition had been addressed, brought the two together to reconcile them. After hearing the accusations Cromwell is reported as saying "I doubt there is something indeed amiss. The word of God is penetrating and finds you out. Search your ways". Apparently Cromwell spoke these words with such feeling and sincerity that both Sir Thomas and Byfield and the rest that were present fell to weeping.

When Cromwell first rose to power Byfield became a member of the Westminster Assembly and was appointed one of the Assistant Commissioners for Surrey, under the Ordinance of June 29, 1654, for the ejection of scandalous Ministers and Schoolmasters. He claimed to be Reformer of the Church of Superstitions, plucking up the steps leading to the Altar in Long Ditton church and denying the Sacrament to his parishioners unless they would take it in any way except kneeling.

No wonder, therefore, when the Act of Uniformity was passed in 1662 after the Restoration, by which he was required to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles and use only the Book of Common Prayer, he refused to comply and was ejected. He retired to Mortlake where, not being allowed to preach in church, delivered to his family two sermons every Sunday in his home. He was the author of several devotional works in one of which, entitled 'The Power of the Christ of God', he describes himself as Pastor of Long Ditton, not Rector, and roundly denounces Bishops, Archbishops, Deans and Archdeacons.

He died in 1664 and a memorial tablet to him in Kew Church runs: 'Here lyeth the body of Richard Byfield, Rector of Long Ditton in this County for 35 years who, having painfully and

constantly taught and kept the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, finished his course December 26, 1664 aged 67 years. To live in Christ and to die is gain’.

### **Robert Pocock**

After Byfield was turned out of the living in 1662 Henry Hesketh became Rector for four years, after which Robert Pocock was instituted and stayed as Rector for 55 years until 1721. Pocock shares with William Pennicott (1753-1813) the honour of serving as Rector for the longest period in the 900 or so years since the Conquest. It would appear, from the inventories made of church belongings in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, that Pocock made generous contributions to the church. Thus the inventory lists, dating from 1680-1696, record :

‘A large coffin, the gift of Mr. Ro. Pocock, rector.

A faire green velvet cushion for the pulpit, the gift of Mrs. Sarah Pocock, wife of the rector.

A faire piece of plate to put the Communion on, in the fashion of a patten or Pattison, being the gift of Mrs. Sarah Pocock, wife of Mr. Robert Pocock, the present rector.’

### **Advowson**

At the Conquest the advowson of the church was granted by William to Roger Picot, Lord of the Manor, who later granted the same to Merton Priory. The Priors exercised their rights until the Dissolution when Henry VIII seized the advowson; it remained with the Crown until 1553 when Edward VI sold it to David Vincent (ie at the same time as he gave the manor to Vincent), who in turn sold it to George Evelyn. After over 130 years in the Evelyn family the advowson was sold to Sir James Clarke of Ockley in 1700 whose son Joseph was instituted Rector in 1721; it was then sold to Mrs. Pennicott (her son William Pennicott being the other 55-year holder of the Rectorship, 1758-1813) who later sold to New College, Oxford. After possessing it for over 120 years the College sold the advowson to Mrs. Masterman in 1889, after which it passed to Mr. Thomas Hughes and seven Trustees in 1903. The last of the seven trustees was Canon Tom Halliwell who recently decided to relinquish his claim on the advowson which is now vested in the Bishop of the Diocese.

### **New Church Building, 1780**

We do not know how long the Saxon church, mentioned in the Domesday Survey, lasted but certainly in medieval times at least one new stone structure was erected (possibly only one) and by the mid-1600’s was reported to be in a sad state of repair (see the Byfield/Evelyn saga). We possess a picture of this building, as it appeared in 1720, and it looks quite a sound structure; presumably Sir Thomas arranged for its repair after all! It had a single nave, double transept and a spire.

Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the building again fell into disrepair and it was decided that a new one should be built. The old building was pulled down in 1776 and the new church was finished in 1780 at a cost of £2,030.

This church, the ruins of which now form the Garden of Rest in the southern portion of the churchyard, was a brick building in the form of a Greek cross and, apparently, very ugly to look at until it became covered with ivy. It was 63 feet long, east-west, and the transepts were

46 feet end-to-end. The intersection of the vaulting was crowned with a dome, over the west door was a gallery (inside) and at the east end were two Corinthian pillars.

It had a three-decker pulpit with a sounding board above and the high pews were of mahogany. Music was provided by a barrel organ which could play only a select number of hymns. There were four bells but none of them were hung since the building, for lack of funds, was never completed. The font and Communion Table were the gift of the Rector, The Rev William Pennicott.

### **The Lovelace Family**

In 1720/21 Sir Evelyn Alston, a descendant of the Evelyn family through Sir Edward Evelyn's daughter (and heiress) Penelope, sold the manors to Sir Peter King of Ockham who was Lord High Chancellor (1725-1733) and created Lord King, Baron of Ockham in 1725. A great-great-grandson, William, the 8<sup>th</sup> Lord King was created Viscount Ockham and Earl of Lovelace in 1838, the latter title reviving an honour which had commenced with the creation of the Barony of Lovelace in 1627 but which had become extinct in 1736. William married Augusta, daughter of the poet Byron, in 1835 and their son Ralph inherited the Barony of Wentworth from his maternal grandmother Anne, the 11<sup>th</sup> Baroness. Augusta died in 1865 and William later married, in 1865, Jane Crawford; their great-grandson Peter is the present 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Lovelace.

Soon after the first Sir Peter King purchased the Long Ditton manors in 1720/21 he engaged Richard Crabtree, a noted cartographer of the time, to survey and map all his lands. One result of this commission was a delightful parchment entitled "A Map of Lands in the Parishes of Long Ditton, Thames Ditton and Kingston belonging to the Rt. Hon. Peter Lord King". Dated 1725, it shows the parish to be mainly enclosed fields, all of them numbered and identified, insofar as tenants, on a separate schedule. The road system, such as it was, comprised the north-south route of what are now Ewell Road, Rectory Lane and Woodstock Lane linking the Portsmouth Road to Stokes Heath (by Claygate) with only two other routes, one that is now Ditton Hill Road and Ditton Hill, the other being Fleece Road and Seething Wells Lane. The ordinary country lanes such as these, at this time hardly differed in surface or quality from the clay soil through which they passed. Thus a footpath, linking the Toll house with what is now the War Memorial intersection and so avoiding the deep defile of Ditton Hill is depicted as is the footpath linking the top of Rectory lane to St Leonards Farm in what is now Sugden Road; both paths avoided sections of road which were notorious for their badness in winter.

The only houses were the Manor House, Woodstock, The Rectory, a farm at the top of Rectory Lane, a few houses clustered round the Plough and Harrow, The Toll House at the top of Ditton Hill and Pound Farm.

This map is the first detailed map of Long Ditton ever to be produced and, apart from the enclosure of the fields, probably represents fairly accurately the layout of the area in Norman times also since for most country areas, the basic pattern of the countryside changed but little in the 650 years between the Norman Conquest and the Industrial Revolution.

## **Rocque Map, 1754**

Less than thirty years after Crabtree, John Rocque produced his county maps and that covering Long Ditton shows the village substantially as in 1725 with the exception that there are a few more properties (Upper Ditton House, for example, has appeared in Ditton Hill Road) and the by-passing footpath for the Ditton Hill defile has developed into a lane in its own right.

## **Ordnance Survey**

Just over 60 years after Rocque comes the first ever Ordnance Survey map of Surrey and Long Ditton still looks more or less the same as was shown on Crabtree's 1725 map.

The Ordnance Survey dates from 1784 when it was decided to effect a partial triangulation of Kent in order to determine accurately the difference in longitude between the observatories at Greenwich and Paris. Provision was made in 1791 for the Trigonometrical Survey to be continued under the auspices of the Board of Ordnance; hence the popular title 'Ordnance Survey'. The principal triangulation of Great Britain lasted from 1791 to 1852 and the Surrey 1816 map was one product of this gigantic task.

In 1875 an even more detailed map was issued by the Ordnance Survey for Surrey and the Long Ditton section reveals a wealth of new information, the most obvious of which is the London and South Western Railway striding across the parish, with its single branch line to Hampton Court (the Guildford Line was to come later).

## **Schools**

The National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church was formed in 1811 and established a considerable number of schools throughout the land so that, by 1851, it controlled over 17,000 schools. The Society set up a School in Long Ditton in 1840, on a site in Ditton Hill Road mid-way between Chalcott House and the Plough and Harrow Inn.

The Government, in 1870, passed the Education Act which provided that England be divided into education districts and that schools be set up in areas where the existing education provision was insufficient. Boards were set up to manage these districts and were thus the first local education authorities to be set up in a State system of education. The schools were to be secular and non-denominational but a later amendment to the Act allowed Boards to provide religious instruction. The passing of the Act led to a rapid decline in the fortunes of the National Society.

The Act must have inspired the good folk of Long Ditton for, in 1872, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lovelace and his son Ralph were co-signatories to a Deed of Grant which provided the church with a freehold plot of land in Rushett Road for the building of a village school. That school was opened in 1875; it catered for children of all ages until 1911 when the younger element was transferred to the new County Infants School in Ditton Hill Road (built on the site of Upper Ditton House). In 1939 the older children were transferred to the new Hinchley Wood Secondary School thus leaving St Mary's School as a Junior School for the 7 - 11 age range.

It was most appropriate that 100 years after the opening of the village school, at the official opening of the new buildings in Sugden Road for St Mary's Church of England School, the

great-grandson of the donor of the original plot of land was present (in the person of the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Lovelace) to participate in the ceremony.

### **New Church Building, 1880**

The 1780 church, as noted above, was not completed due to lack of funds (in particular it carried a temporary roof) so it is not surprising that, after nearly a hundred years of service, it had fallen into decay. A new building was commissioned, therefore, from the notable architect George Edmund Street (1824-1881).

At the outset of his career Street spent five years in the design office of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, the famous exponent of Decorated Gothic in the heyday of High Victorian ecclesiastical building. In 1849 Street set up his own practice; imbued with Scott's Gothic revivalism he enjoyed a highly successful career both at home and abroad in church building and church restoration, specializing in the style of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The author of two books on the architecture of Italy and of Spain he is best known, perhaps, for his Law Courts in the Strand, the commission for which he won in open competition in 1866. Our St Mary's Church was one of the last of his works.

The church is a building of Godalming stone on a site a hundred or so yards to the north-east of the earlier churches, purchased as an extension to the old churchyard. The foundation stone was laid by Charles Corkran Esq JP on 22 July 1878 and the church was dedicated two years later, the total cost (including land) being in the order of £6,000. The wrought iron chancel screen was added in 1898, the lych-gate in 1901 and the reredos behind the altar in 1930. The church was extensively damaged by a flying bomb in June 1944 but has since been completely restored, although many of the original stained glass windows were destroyed. Although their loss is regretted the white glass which replaces them certainly brightens the interior.

The East window is a post-war design striking in its theme and colouring, whereas the West window is original and has the fourth virtue of 'Purity' additional to the usual 'Faith, Hope and Charity'. The Nave windows were erected in memory of Charles and Georgia Corkran (of the Manor house) and of George and Harriet Vesey (of Woodstock) but were damaged during the war and replaced with white glass; two have since been replaced with stained glass.

The clerestory windows were planned to illustrate the verses of the Te Deum but most of these suffered war damage and have been replaced.

The South Transept window is original, to commemorate the diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria whilst the North Transept window, originally in memory of Allan and Jane Stoneham, has been refurbished to the text 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel' following war damage.

Apart from the three historic brasses mentioned earlier in these notes there are many of more recent origin; a Hanoverian Coat of Arms is mounted on the West wall.

The site of the original churches has been landscaped into a Garden of Rest; the outline of the 1780 building has been preserved and parts of the Sanctuary walls left in their original state. Some of the floor slabs and mural monuments have been left in their original places in the

18<sup>th</sup> century remains. The earliest is a slab to Thomas Evelyn, 1659; others commemorate Sir Edward Evelyn (1692), Mary Evelyn (1696), Anne Evelyn (1699), Anthony Balam (1691) and Mary Glynne (1692).

### **Parish Hall and Working Men's Club**

A workmen's club was established in 1883 and a two-storey building erected in 1888 by public subscription on ground given to the parish. The lower floor was used by the club and the upper floor as a Parish Room. Following the considerable use of these facilities an appeal was launched in 1905 for more funds to build a large Parish Hall adjacent to and connecting with, the two-storey building; this Hall was opened in 1907.

The control of the Hall, Parish Room and Working Men's Club was vested in Trustees appointed locally under the auspices of the Charity Commissioners and the buildings are not part of the Church.

### **In Conclusion**

Long Ditton has never been a large or important place neither has it played a prominent or distinctive role in the history of our country. Nevertheless it has a long record of inhabitation as a village and many, many thousands of people have toiled their worldly life within its bounds down the ages. But the true history of a Parish and its Church ".... does not depend on great events or famous men, it is made by the quiet work of undistinguished people .... carrying on from year to year the varied activities of Parish life".