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There are three recordings of this presentation:

[011 Smugglers of Albury by Mrs Jean Kirby, read by Bertram Caton, Study of Weston House, Version1of3, 28 April 1982, 1H2min.mp3](#)

[014 Smugglers of Albury by Mrs Jean Kirby, read by Bertram Caton, Master Version3of3, 1999, MD 39min.mp3](#)

[081 Smugglers of Albury by Mrs Jean Kirby, read by Bertram Caton at Shere HS, Version2of3, 10 May1983, 39min.mp3](#)

There is a set of 37 slides for this talk.

SMUGGLING THROUGH SURREY

①

Up in Farley Green there was a house called Smuggler's Way, it seemed rather a fanciful name, as smuggling is usually thought of in connection with the sea. Anyway, Mrs. Evatt, who lived there was asked about it, and she said that her husband had given the house that name, because he understood that Kipling's poem, 'A Smuggler's Song' had been written about the hidden lane which runs behind the house - that is, Ryde Lane.

②

It's rather a long poem, but it has a splendid rollicking chorus. I expect you all know your Kipling by heart, but in case I'm not the only one who doesn't, I'll just read one verse

If you wake at midnight, and hear a horses feet,
Don't go drawing back the blind, or looking in the street,
Them as asks no questions isn't told a lie.
Watch the wall, my darling, while the gentlemen go by!
Five and twenty ponies
Trotting through the dark -
Brandy for the Parson,
Baccy for the Clerk;
Laces for a lady, letters for a spy,
And watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!

③

Then on another occasion, a neighbour Mr. Martin happened to mention that on a clear day (or indeed night) you can see right down to Shoreham Gap from the Windmill Inn above Ewhurst, and this he said, had been a signalling point for smugglers, that the stuff was on its way. So there must be something in this business of smuggling up in Farley Green, and one might be able to follow some of the routes through the area.

The first snag was the very first sentence, in the very first book that was found on the subject. "It is noticeable", it said, "that as soon as the smuggler has eluded the coastguard, he passes as quietly and expeditiously as possible up the country, intent only on getting his goods to the best market. Publicity is no aid to his labours, and it is not surprising that few records exist of his passage or resting places.

Not very encouraging! But luckily we find that he does leave records of a sort, even if they can't always be proved, for what is certainly lacking in documentation, is richly made up for in legend and hearsay, and local traditions - and of course, place names. The southern counties of England are criss-crossed with lanes and tracks actually called 'Smugglers Way', & the late Mr. Day of Albury affirmed that we have one of these, coming across from Blackheath and up Sandy Lane, which was always known as Smuggler's Way. And then there are more specific place names such as 'Packway' and 'Searchwood Copse', which no doubt refer to dramas of long ago that can easily be imagined. Wherever these tracks and places occur, there are usually people living nearby who remember their Fathers and Grandfathers telling tales, of things they had heard of, or actually seen, stories that can take us back by word of mouth, way back over a hundred years, right into the hey day of the smuggling trade.

The Smugglers started from many different ports and coves, they used only pack horses for transport, and weretherefore very flexible in their movements. For obvious reasons they kept shifting and changing their tracks. Sometimes two would run parallel, or branch out simultaneously in two different directions, to join up again later, and we may suppose that a hitherto friendly cottage, suddenly became unfriendly or dangerous, or a whole area came under suspicion from the Excisemen, and was by-passed for a time.

But however the ways changed, there is considerable agreement in all the writers, and all the legends, that a goodly group of smugglers certainly passed through this area.

"They would come up from the coast, through our own lanes on the way to London and you would think it possible to draw a little map of the route, but this presents a problem for if we can do it then doubtless an expert Exciseman could have done it with much greater ease 100 or so years ago

and put paid to the smugglers trade in no time at all.

④ Never-the-less they would ride up into the Hurtwood the same night",
writes Gertrude Jekyll, "twenty-five miles as the Crow flies", and
⑤ goodness knows how many more as the smuggler lurks. "They got up to
⑥ ⑦ the wooded ^ehights, either by Jelley's Hollow, or Horseblock Hollow,
⑧ or up by the Windmill Inn, which was a favourite meeting place in the
middle of many tracks. This Inn was then known as the New Inn, and
⑨ it had a false roof for hiding smuggled goods. The whole area" she
says, "was a very wild and lonely place." If you lived in a remote
cottage around the Hurtwood in those days, and heard an odd thumping
and bumping past your door in the night, it might well be a keg of
brandy come loose from the pack, and rolling down from the ^ehights,
and you'd do better not to look out of the window, for there would
certainly be a man come soon afterwards to look for it.

Or if you noticed an unusually fat man riding by awkwardly on
his horse, you could make a guess that he had yards and yards of
contraband silk wound round his middle.

From the Windmill the tracks continued either West through

⑩ Farley Green by Lockhurst Hatch.....
⑪ ⑫ down Dilton Lane..... *
⑬ and Pond's Farm.....
⑭ or by Hound House.....
⑮ from which a tunnel was reputed to lead across country.....
⑯ to Quakers a house above Peaslake.....
⑰ then by Lawbrook.....
⑱ over Shere Heath.....
⑲ and along Dark Lane.....

and then they met up

with another track that must have come from another port (possibly
Hayling Island, where two-thirds of the population were known to be

engaged in, or at least in sympathy with the smuggler's trade). This track came through Godalming, by way of Holloway Hill, over Blackheath, up Sandy Lane and across the top of Albury Park. There are doubtless many more tracks, some remembered, some lost and long disappeared - but as you can tell, the tracks in this area, from whatever direction, all seem to be heading for Shere.

(20) The White Horse Inn in Shere seems to have provided a most congenial atmosphere for the weary smugglers on their first leg up to London. It was frequented by sheep-stealers, poachers, and other friendly folk with whom they could feel relaxed and at home, and more or less safe from sudden attack. R J Askew, author of "Walks and Talks about Shere", remembers in his book some of the names and doings of these wild folk--

(21) "Billy Hicks who lived in Chantry Lane cut off his donkey's ears and tail,
(22) and also his goat's"--I can't imagine why, it doesn't seem a very practical thing to do, but perhaps he had been celebrating a good haul. Anyway, he ended up by hanging himself. Then there was "Black Jack, and the Bristows, at least one of whom was transported to Australia for sheep stealing".

Mr. Askew

(had himself talked to an old man, who had actually seen the smugglers ride by his house in the night, with kegs slung over the saddle.

Not only was the White Horse Inn a friendly place, but almost the whole of Shere village seems to have been most cooperative, and many of
(23) the old houses in Upper Street, have cellars disproportionately large
(24) for their size, and these were most likely specially constructed for the
(25) convenience of the smugglers.

"In case somebody might think that this is only hearsay, let me remind you that as recently as 1955 whilst the brewers were delivering
(26) casks into the cellars at The White Horse in the normal fashion via the chute, one cask hit the adjacent wall and caused some structural damage.

The nature of the damage was such that it lead to the discovery of the
(27) second cellar which had been bricked-up for at least 200 years, possibly

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as long as 250 years. Within this old cellar they found many casks of Brandy - almost certainly smuggled and dating from around 1720!

Of course there were a few honest people, even around Shere, Peaceful, farming folk, not looking for trouble, and if one of these came by chance upon the hiding place of a smuggling haul, it was the custom for him to put a chalk mark on two or three items, and these items would be left behind when the smugglers moved on next day. This was an understood bargain, in consideration of the find not being reported. But I think it was more of a goodwill gesture really, because few would have taken the risk of informing anyway. It was too well known that the smugglers had nasty little ways of making you not talk ! Such as being found floating face down in the mill pond next day.

I should pause a moment here perhaps to say that this tale could be called the Smugglers of Shere, Peaslake, Ewhurst, Cranleigh, Farley Green - but nowhere is there a mention of Albury. Whether they were a more virtuous and law-abiding lot than the rest of us I don't know, but they seem to have been constantly by-passed in favour of the wild people of Shere, and more particularly the perfectly dreadful people of Peaslake. "A hundred years ago" says Gertrude Jekyll, writing at the turn of the century, "it was a very rough and lawless set of people that lived in the hamlet of Peaslake, that lies in the north hollow of the Hurtwood, and in the scattered cottages of the neighbouring forestland - a track from six to seven miles long. They were descendants of wandering gypsy people: all smugglers and poachers and the terror of the quiet farm people round about". They were known to be so awful, that if the law were after a malefactor, "it were wiser to give up the pursuit should he reach Peaslake, for there abide such a wild population of smugglers, poachers and sheep-stealers herded together, that it were

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not safe for an honest citizen to come near." The father of the late Mr. Chennel of Farley Green, remembered his father telling him he'd better not try talking to a Peaslake man, or he's likely get his face slapped. And of course it's by no means sure that the people of Peaslake have mended their ways, for it's not so many years ago, that it was to unrepentant Peaslake that erring suffragettes fled to hide out from the law !

(30)

Mackies Hill House at Peaslake is particularly interesting in that the original part of the house which dates back to approx. 1610, still has a large cellar & a hide-hole which, apart from its early association with smuggling, in more recent years is reputed to have served as a refuge for Emily Pankhurst & other members of the Suffragete movement.

I should imagine that Shere was the convivial gathering place and business centre, where loads could be assessed and subdivided, where news of the situation further up the road could be brought, and possible markets and deals negotiated. And if any sudden trouble blew up, the smugglers could quickly scatter, and take refuge with the Peaslake people, where they were pretty sure no excise man in his right mind would follow.

This area must have been one of the last havens on the road to London. Another such exists at Newdiate, where the ^{SIX}~~Bell~~ Inn has large cellars, which can still be approached by tunnels from outside, and this can be said of many old Inns in the area, some of the tunnels running a fair way right out into the surrounding heath or woodland.

Some time ago there was a programme on Blue Peter, children's

(30B)

television, all about 'The Talbot' at Ripley, which still has a smugglers

(30c)

hide and an escape tunnel; and the camera followed along the hidden passages, with suitable music and pictures of smugglers, and it was all very realistic and dramatic.

The nearer the Gentlemen and their contraband get to London, the greater the risks become, and the better organised the men of the law. Here the paths split up, in deference I suppose to demand as well as danger. Now loads had to be split up into even smaller units, destined for specific buyers, and a more sophisticated organisation, afforded the smugglers facilities on big estates and houses, and even palaces. When the old Palace of Nonesuch was destroyed, a maze of tunnels was laid open, leading from the surrounding woods into the enormous cellars where the big business of smuggling was known to have been carried on. There are many weird stories of galloping horsemen on misty nights being hotly pursued right up to the very gates of some fine house, and then simply disappearing into thin air.....

Or a crowd of riders, again with the law behind them, clattering into one end of a main street, but never coming out the other. We may draw our own conclusions as to the supernatural explanations of these goings on, and also about the honesty of the local citizens and even their Lord of the Manor!

(31) It suited the smugglers very well to keep their reputation as spooky as possible. A story is told about Cranleigh Churchyard, that kegs of brandy were often hidden there, in a large altar tomb. One night a band of brave fellows decided to keep watch, and hid themselves in the church porch. But what with the long wait, and the eerie night, by the time the sounds of what might be smugglers were heard, they were too terrified to look, let alone move to apprehend the villains. And when they did look again, the loot was gone.

To say a little bit in general about 'the trade' as it was known, the smugglers of our particular area must be seen as part of a chain; a chain so loosely linked, and forged of such doubtful material, that it is incredible how efficiently, and for how great a time - well over two hundred years - it functioned.

The whole business divided itself into two distinct halves: the professionals, and the part-time workers, and neither could have operated without the other. Down at the coast were the actual sailing smugglers, the typical seamen, whose business ended the moment the stuff was safely ashore, and stored in temporary hiding places. They were really not so brave and daring as you might imagine, because they were protected by hoards of 'Riders', who were simply none too fussy local lads, who turned out for the occasion armed with every kind of bloodthirsty weapon, short of firearms - the penalty if caught with the latter was death. It was well nigh impossible for a lonely exciseman, patrolling the coast, to get near and stay healthy. And if he rode off for help, by the time he got back it was all over.

From the sea shore the regular land gangs took over, loaded the goods onto pack horses, and travelled with them up country, all the way, till they were finally sold. These in their turn, were supported and protected by local people, in every region that the contraband passed through. And so it may be seen that by far the largest groups in the smuggling chain, were the amateurs, and among these none were more spirited than ours.

The eagerness of ordinary country people to join in this dangerous, illegal sport is not really so surprising. In the early 1800's there were whole sections of the community who could hardly have survived without poaching and smuggling. These were the farm labourers, whose conditions of life were so depressed, that without the little they made on the side, helping the smugglers, they would almost certainly have starved.

A bad landlord could, if he wished, lay off his labourers after the harvest, and leave them for the winter without even the few pence they normally earned. Around this time the population of Surrey was about 270,000 souls, and of this 270,000 there were 40,000 paupers on parish relief. That is, almost 15%. You can tell how desperate these poor people were, when you recall that the punishment for poaching a rabbit or stealing a sheep, could be life imprisonment, deportation, or worse.

The conditions hereabouts that made it a haven for smugglers, led eventually to the mob rising of 1830, when a great crowd of starving local labourers poured into Dorking, burning ricks, attacking houses and people, and then went storming on to Guildford, to the Town Hall, demanding justice.

In following the actual smugglers' paths further, it is noticeable that many times they lay through great Parks and Estates, running close by the house itself, which must have afforded them considerable protection. One such is Lyne House, at Capel, home, then

of the Broadwood family, where a special stone receptacle still stands, on which the grateful passing smuggler would leave a keg. One wonders why such people, who were not exactly hard up for a gallon of brandy, should give such protection to the trade. It might well have been out of sympathy for the hard lot of the people, and indeed this particular family does seem to have been of a humane turn of mind, for it was a magistrate Broadwood, who, by his gentle persuasion and the high esteem in which the people held him, managed to quell the mob uprising of 1830 without more harm being done.

While many had sympathy for, as well as considerable financial interest in, the smugglers, no one seems to have had a kind word to say for the unfortunate excise man. Dr Johnson in his dictionary, has one of his famous censorious definitions on the subject - "Excise". He says: "A hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but by wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid". Which was hardly just, considering the lonely and dangerous job the Excise man was doing, usually against impossible odds, and many of these unlucky officers of the law, suffered most horribly at the hands of the worser gangs, if it seemed they were getting over-curious.

There were two main groups of smuggling gangs along the south coast, and it would be nice to tell you that our lot were more pleasant than the others. But alas ! I'm afraid this is far from the case !

"In England", writes Percy Lane Oliver in an old copy of the Surrey magazine, "there were in those days, two distinct sets of smugglers: the Devon and Cornwall group, and the Kent, Surrey, Sussex bands, between whose methods a wide difference existed, which difference all good Surrey men will regret to hear was not to the credit of the Eastern system and its adherents."

"To the credit of the Cornishmen", says another writer, "let it be recorded that smuggling was conducted in a far more chivalrous spirit, than that which characterised the trade further east.. There was none of that reckless disregard for life which produced so much bloodshed along the coasts of Kent and Sussex. While Cornish smugglers never disgraced their manhood by acts of brutal and ruffianly outrage, such as those which, alas!, disfigured the annals of certain Eastern counties." And he gives two examples, the first of which, he says, "is completely authentic, the writer having had it from an old tar in a south Cornish town." It goes thus:

"One of the above gentry (a preventive officer), who had rendered himself particularly obnoxious, had, in an unguarded moment, ventured to strike up a chat with two strapping fisher lasses. On parting he shook hands with one, who returned his pressure so warmly (employing an old Cornish wrestling dodge) that he suddenly found himself lying on his face with 12 stone of blushing maidenhood sitting on his back. The men of the village were not far off, and the poor prisoner, bound, gagged, and blindfold, soon had the doubtful pleasure of hearing his coming fate discussed in bloodthirsty language. This was soon decided, and he learned with despair that he was to be allowed to hang (by his hands) until he dropped from a cliff shelving inwards, down onto the rocks eighty feet below, to certain death. Guessing that appeals would be

useless, he determined to die game, and presently found himself dangling in mid air, by a precarious hold on the herbiage growing on the cliff edge. A short lifetime passed by, and his strength being exhausted, he was at length forced to leave go, and fell - a drop of only 18 inches."

"It had been a got up job all through, but it had its effect, for he never showed his face in that town again."

This story contrasts most favourably with one told of the notorious Hawkhurst gang, which passed back and forth frequently through our area here.

"Two men, William Galley, a Customs House Officer, and one Daniel Chater a shoemaker, and witness to a recent smuggling outrage, alighted one evening at the White Hart Inn, and called for refreshments. They never did a more ill-advised thing in their lives, but they added to their foolishness by chatting to Mrs Payne the Landlady, and enquiring the way to the Notary, where they were to swear out information. Widow Payne's suspicions being aroused, she sent for her two sons, who were themselves wholly addicted to smuggling, and the village was aroused.

Then the mens fate was decided upon. They were made drunk, and put to bed till dark. Then they were taken out, and set on the back of a horse, their feet tied under its belly. The character of their captors was now made manifest. These fiends commenced to lash them with heavy whips, til they swooned, and so often as they fell over, striking their heads against the horses hooves, so were they picked up and forced to continue. At length, finding them too weak to stay upright any longer, they were undone and laid across the horses in front of the riders who.... tortured them to such a degree that Galley in vain implored them several times to shoot him through the head.

Reaching a village they buried Galley in a sandpit, and there was revealed later, strong evidence that he was still alive at the time.

Chater's sufferings, however, were not yet at an end." There are many versions of this part of the story, and I'm afraid none of them is fit to

read out. Let us just say that quite the kindest thing they did to poor Daniel Chater was finally to throw him head first down a well, and chuck rocks and pieces of timber on top of him, "until every sign of life was hushed. Then they rode away".

This then was called the 'Golden Age of Smuggling', the running of contraband had become just about the largest business in the South of England, and those engaged in it, exercised a total tyranny in the peaceful countryside, impervious to the law. And it lasted all of 200 years, almost into the 20th Century.

And it all began in England in a very small way, back in the 13th Century, when Edward the First had the bright idea of raising a little cash on just a few items coming into the country. It really got under way during the wars with France when normal trade between the two countries came to a standstill - English men and women still wanted their brandy and silks, regardless of patriotism. And furthermore, the French still wanted our wool; for this smuggling was a two-way affair, and throughout the history of smuggling there was a steady trade in English wool. Some of our most attractive West Surrey towns, such as Odiham, were 'wool towns', built on the wealth from this illegal trade. After the wars, instead of resuming free trade, even more tariffs were imposed to pay for it all, until finally the situation became absurd, and by the middle of the 18th Century, 12,000 items were dutiable. In fact there had almost ceased to be any normal trade at all in most of these commodities. For instance, the duty on brandy was 7s. a gallon. But you could buy the stuff anywhere around here for only 3s. a gallon, which doesn't make much sense. Similarly, the East India Company, which technically had the Tea trade monopoly, sold £6 million worth of tea in 20 years, but we were actually drinking £7 million worth in one year ----- which means that 95% of tea entering the country was smuggled.

Since in the end the Government was losing more than it gained, trying to protect its revenue, something had to give. And so, with the growth of Free Trade, the duties were gradually removed or diminished, until by the end of the 19th. Century the 12,000 items were down to barely a dozen of the ones we are familiar with today. Luckily the decline of smuggling coincided with a slightly more enlightened attitude to workers' wages, or the poor folk of Shere and Peaslake would have found themselves in a very sorry fix.

If you want to pick out smugglers' tracks when you are walking about this area, you have only to remember that they were always on the lookout for two conditions: quiet going, and good quick hiding places --- and the heath fulfills both these pressing needs beautifully, because it is wild and remote, and because much of it is based on sandstone.

Horses hooves make very little sound on sandstone, and it's soft enough to hollow out small caves, or even enlarge rabbit and fox holes, to stuff down a few kegs in an emergency. There's a hollow in the bank up in Ryde Lane, which has been used by generations of local children to play in. It's just about big enough for two or three smallish children to crouch in, and the entrance used to be quite well concealed. This may or may not be a genuine hide, but there are other well-attended ones at Compton and Losely, and further afield at Godstone and Reigate Hill. The splendid Miss Jekyll writes: "Some four miles from my home ... a ... set of old pack horse tracks passes near a remarkable smugglers' lair and hiding place. It lies off the track, well concealed in a wood, in private property. It is a region of caves, evidently made by human hands, though probably begun by foxes, in the sandy soil just south of the chalk ridge. Roomy galleries 8 feet high and as much wide, ramble about underground with ramifications to right and left.... Sometimes a glimmer of light shows at the end of one of these, and is accounted for by a deep hollow... and a hole among the trees above. The labyrinth below has a floor of soft sand, and feels warm and dry even in winter.

No doubt it had a second practicable exit, and bold indeed must have been the excise man of a hundred years age, who ventured down into its depths, when they were held by an armed smuggling gang".

Similarly, if you know an old house with an unusually large cellar, concealed attic, or space up a big old chimney, there's sure to be a reason for it. (32) Shophouse Farm, in Farley Green, had a false attic, it was quite small and difficult to get into from a little passage behind a cupboard, and nobody knew what it was doing there. But it seems very likely that this was a hide. The house is certainly old enough, being mentioned in Domesday, and it backs right (33) on to Ryde Lane, and as there is a very similar attic, at Middle Farm, not half a mile away the evidence seems fairly convincing.

Ryde Lane is a typical smugglers' track. And if you come upon two or even more of these sunken lanes running parallel, this is a likely sign, for when one of these 'soft paths' as they were called, became impassable or too deep for safety, they would simply start another beside it, and even a third.

Another sign that is unaccountable was remarked upon by old Mr Donkin who (34) lived at Winterfold Cottage, he said that the big yew tree outside the cottage was a sure sign of smugglers. Similarly the two yews by Dilton's Farm where there used to be a gate. 'Where there are Yews' he said, 'There have been smugglers'. Maybe somebody here knows why this should be so. Mrs. Donkin also, always said, that Winterfold Cottage was an overnightstop for smugglers, and (35) certainly the old chimney there has a big concealed bake oven inside of it still, and may well have had other hidden cavities before modernisation.

The most exciting tale, however, was told to us by a Mr Evans, about his (36) cottage Pippins, up Mackies Hill in Peaselake. The cottage is perhaps 400 years old, and sometime after he and his wife moved in, they began to notice from time to time a strong smell of fish. Not just vaguely all over the house, but very distinct, sometimes in one place sometimes another, and always where the smell was, was also a patch of cold, cold air. Sometimes the smell was just fish, sometimes fish and tobacco. Neither Mr Evans nor his wife smoked, and

they seldom ate fish. Now Mr Evans is an architect, and not at all a fanciful man, and if he had a fishy smell, he was well placed to find out where it was coming from. He was in fact, in the process of doing some improvements to the house, and upon investigating in the cellars, he came across the entrance to a tunnel, and this tunnel, like so many others in this neighbourhood, led from the cellar right out as far as he could follow it under the woods and into the countryside.

Now one of the improvements that Mr Evans had made in the old cottage, was to put a big picture window over the sink, and so, when it was dark outside, most of the kitchen could be seen reflected in this window.

One Evening, as Mrs Evans was washing up, she felt suddenly cold, and smelt fish, and tobacco, and she kept quite still, because she could see something moving behind her, reflected in the window. Obviously Mrs Evans was not a nervous or fanciful person either, because she said, she kept quite still as she didn't want to frighten it away. After a while she turned her head very gently, and there standing behind her, dressed head to foot in the manner of 100 years before, was a sailor. And the smell of fish and tobacco was very strong indeed. It was all over in a matter of moments, but Mrs Evans had seen him so clearly, that she was able to describe his clothes in perfect detail: pea-jacket, close-fitting peaked cap, and all.

And we wondered if he might not be the same sailor that haunts

(37) High House here in Shere, the poor ghost that got himself cut in half due to a floor level being altered.

There's not much smuggling in these parts now, I suppose----- and yet, there's still something rather mysterious up in Winterfold and Farley Green. And you may have noticed that when there's something on, like the Great Train Robbery --or the more recent Brinksmatt bullion robbery at London Airport--out come the helicopters & the police cars, & thats where they start searching, as if old custom leads them to suppose, that up in our

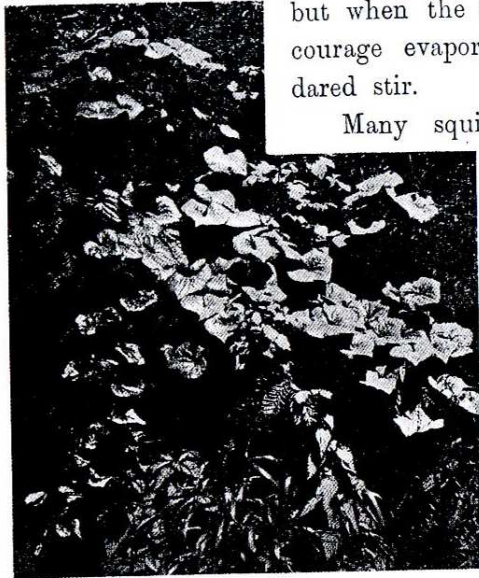
woods & heathlands, is the right & proper place for anyone wishing to keep out of the way of the law to be hiding - even to this day.

Finally how did the ^{smugglers} leave this area on their way up to London? Most

(38) probably by London Lane. Now it is a track-way that leads North from the centre of Shere, under the modern by-pass road and on up the hillside to Netley Heath.

also that his father used to tell her how, when a man riding looked very stout, he could make a pretty good guess that he had yards and yards of smuggled silk wound round him.

Another remembered how kegs of brandy were often hid inside an altar-tomb in Cranleigh Churchyard. One night some men concealed themselves in the church porch to watch for and catch the smugglers, but when the smugglers came, their courage evaporated, and not a man dared stir.



BLACK BRYONY

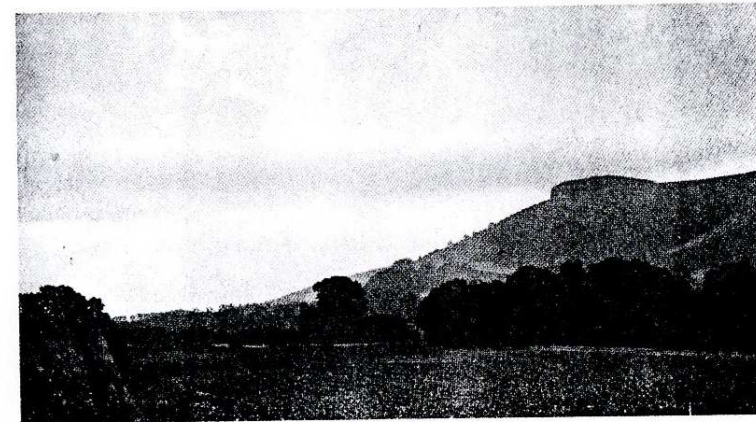
Many squires and yeomen were friendly with the smugglers, and it was known that kegs of brandy were often left on the doorstep at Barhatch in the time of the last of the Ticknor family, whose ancestors built the house in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Here there is also a dog-

gate at the stair-foot; another, a few miles away, is shown at p. 34.

An old shepherd who worked on the chalk downs a few miles to the north, who was eighty-two years of age in 1889, told how smugglers used to bring their pack-loads of brandy up Combe Bottom and hide them among the thickets of juniper, thorn, and bramble.

They came up from Shoreham Water, riding into the sea at high tide and loading the horses straight from the boats.

They passed just behind this shoulder of the Downs, and would ride up into the Hurtwood the same night—right across Sussex and a few miles over. As the crow flies it is twenty-five miles, and who knows how much more by the devious ways they had to follow. They got



A SHOULDER OF THE DOWNS

up to the wooded heights either by Jelley's Hollow or Horseblock Hollow, or up by the 'Windmill' Inn.

This inn, originally a lonely cottage, was a favourite resort of theirs. It was first known as the 'New Inn.' To this day it has the false roof for hiding smuggled goods.

A hundred years ago it was a very rough and lawless set of people that lived in the hamlet of Peaslake, that lies in a northern hollow of the Hurtwood, and in the scattered cottages in the neighbouring forest land—a tract



from six to seven miles long. They were descendants of wandering gipsy people; all smugglers and poachers, and the terror of the quiet farm people about Ewhurst.

An old woman, who died in 1888 at the age of eighty-two, related how, when she was a girl, when smoke was



OLD TRACK, NOW A GOOD ROAD

seen rising from a certain empty cottage on the heath-covered slopes above, they all knew that 'the Peaslake men were having a night of it;' feasting on a stolen pig or poultry, and they 'lay trembling in their beds.' These rough people seem to have been the natural enemies of the agricultural folk below.



As late as the year 1891 there was an old man living in a neighbouring village who in his youth had been transported for smuggling. Another man at about the same time, also transported, left his locked box at his master's, who had it nailed down to the floor with hoop-iron. It was never claimed.

Now that the district has become so much more populous, there are good roads where formerly there was only the roughest lane or forest track. The one in the picture has only become a well-kept road within my recollection.

When the country people discovered the hiding-place of contraband goods, the result of a successful 'run,' it was customary for the finder to put a chalk mark on a small proportion of the number of articles. When the smugglers went again to collect their kegs, the marked ones were left. This was well understood as a bargain, in consideration of the discovery not being reported.

A squire, new to the country, came to live at a place in the hills near Dorking in the early part of the nineteenth century. One morning, before he was dressed, his valet brought him an urgent message from the bailiff to say that he wished to see him. The master said he must wait, as he was not dressed. The message came again, still more pressingly worded.

'Well, send the fellow up,' said the unfinished squire.

The man came in with a mysterious air and watched the servant out of the room, and then said in a hoarse half-whisper: '*There was a run last night, sir, and I've marked four.*'

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The Heathers



THE HIGH LAND between Ewhurst and Shere has little to offer the farmer. The sandy, infertile soils support birch and bracken, however, and also the hurts – known elsewhere as whortleberries or bilberries – which give their name to the Hurtwood. Heath also thrives in these inhospitable uplands and this, too, lent its name in days past to the wild, lawless inhabitants of the heathland – the Heathers.

The Heathers (pronounced 'Heethers') had a bad reputation. They could not earn a living honestly in the woodlands where they built their squatter's cottages. The dwellers in the valleys below, in Shere and Gomshall, in Cranleigh and Ewhurst, viewed them with unconcealed suspicion for being a Heather. Peaslake, no more than a scattered hamlet in those days, was the nearest thing to a village in the Hurtwood, and until the narrow lanes were improved in Victorian times the whole area was largely cut off from the rest of Surrey. No wonder, then, if poachers and petty thieves found it a safe refuge from the law; and no wonder if the settled farming-folk around feared them. A young girl in Ewhurst in the early years of the last

century saw smoke rising one evening from an abandoned cottage on the hillside above her home. She knew that 'the Peaslake men were having a night of it', roasting a stolen pig, or chickens, perhaps, and the whole family lay trembling in their beds.

The crime in which the Heathers were suspected of being most deeply involved was smuggling – indeed, if it was called a crime in old Surrey. Many, perhaps most, people in 18th century England considered the high import duties on tea, brandy, and other luxury goods to be iniquitous. The smugglers were more often thought of as 'free traders' (the name they always called themselves) than as criminals.

Smugglers were divided into two distinct groups: the seamen and the landsmen. The seamen were specialists, not only in the exacting technicalities of handling vessels under sail but also in the skills needed to evade the Revenue cutters and land their cargoes undetected. It was here that the landsmen took over, 'running' the contraband goods to their final market – a market which included many of the most wealthy and influential people in the land. This being so, the principal destination was London, and one of the established routes from the coast west of Shoreham ran through the Hurtwood.

The landsmen needed just as much specialist knowledge as the seamen, for they had to know the countryside well enough to be able to lead their pack-ponies through side-roads and tracks in the dark, varying the route at times to avoid any particular one being too well known by outsiders. So skilled were these 'runners' that they could pick up a cargo on the beach after dusk and be in the Hurtwood by sunrise. This might involve thirty miles or more of winding paths and trackless heathland, but all concerned knew that their efforts would be well rewarded. Before daylight the contraband would be well hidden – perhaps in hollows dug out of the soft sand, or concealed among the thorns and brambles at the top of Combe Bottom. On more than

one occasion a hollow tomb in Cranleigh churchyard was used as a hiding place. Some of the villagers found out about this and lay in wait in the porch nearby one night. Sure enough, the smugglers arrived but the Cranleigh men's courage failed them and they allowed the dreaded Heathers to creep away unapprehended.

The Windmill Inn, near the Ewhurst windmill itself, was a favourite gathering place for the smugglers after a successful 'run'. There they might relax till night fell again when they reclaimed their hidden contraband to take it on to London or possibly more local markets. It was rare for the few underpaid, and overworked, Revenue men then to intervene, although 'Bloody Banks', the name given to the track leading up into the Huntwood from Hoe Farm, is said to have been the scene of a battle between smugglers and enforcement officers. The goods seem to have been concealed more from local people and other smugglers than from the few Revenue men. If a stranger did happen to come across a smugglers' cache of brandy-kegs, it was the recognised practice to mark one or two with a chalk cross. The marked kegs would then be left behind when the smugglers returned, to be collected later by the finder as the price for his silence.

When the heavy import duties were abolished in the last century, smuggling ceased to be profitable. The ill-feeling between the Heathers and the lowland villagers continued nevertheless. The first policeman appointed at Peaslake in the opening years of this century had the job of putting an end to the annual fight between the Peaslakers and the Gomshall boys. There was also a 'battle' arranged on every Whit Monday at the Boy and Donkey Inn in Knowle Lane outside Cranleigh. There are conflicting accounts as to the combatants: certainly the youths of Cranleigh fought as one side, against the young men of Ewhurst, or Coneyhurst Hill, or Pitch Hill. It would seem from this that, to Cranleigh folk at least, the Ewhursters counted as Heathers. No description of this annual 'battle' survives,

and it seems to have been discontinued before 1870. (The local tradition is that the battle commemorates a skirmish during the Civil Wars, when a body of cavalry was ambushed and defeated in Horseblock Hollow. As is often the case, local tradition is wrong. There was no such skirmish and the story was probably suggested by the place-name.) The nick-names given to either side in the Whit Monday battle are still not completely forgotten, though. Ewhursters are still known as 'Roundheads' to some, and Cranleigh men as 'Diamond Tops'. Whether or not these refer to the supposed shape of their respective heads is unclear, but these local jibes may be the last vestiges of the antagonism which existed before the Hurtwood became the civilised and respectable place it is today.





Secret Tunnels



There is something mysterious and appealing about secret tunnels and, like ghosts, tales of them can be found in every part of the county. While these stories are widely believed, however, little thought seems to be given as to why these tunnels should have been built. Usually they are blamed on smugglers. A good example is the shaft leading down from the wine cellars under Victoria Terrace in Dorking. Steps go down deep into the earth and end at the bank of an underground river, complete with a sunken boat said to have been used by smugglers to row secretly to the river Mole.

Many of these tunnel stories have a grain of truth in them, like the sand in an oyster, around which the fantasy is constructed. A good example of this is the short tunnel built by John Evelyn through the hillside at Albury Park towards Shere as part of his garden landscaping. The story grew up in the centuries that followed that this led over 17 miles to Carshalton, and that an army had once marched through it! Perhaps the most common discovery that starts off secret tunnel tales is that of Tudor drains. These were brick-lined and often large enough to allow a man to pass down them to clean them. One, for example, led from the now-vanished Byfleet Manor to the river nearby, and the tunnel discovered at Baynards Station near Cranleigh, and supposed to link the Manor with the Park, is probably another Tudor drain.

A legitimate reason for tunnelling is to dig out minerals, and imagination has extended and elaborated these old workings. In Reigate, for example, there is a network of tunnels and caves dug to obtain the fine silver sand used in the past for blotting ink and scattering on flagstone floors. The tunnels, however, are rumoured to connect the Priory with Reigate Castle, and a large excavation under the castle has been named the Barons' Cave, and is supposed to be the scene of a secret meeting of barons

conspiring against bad King John. The same kind of exaggeration has happened at Guildford. Under part of the castle there run mediaeval chalk mines that very probably supplied the hard chalk used for the castle buildings. Usually called the Caverns, these were open to the public before the last war but were later closed and sealed off as unsafe. These and other old chalk workings in the town have given rise to tales of a fantastic network of tunnels running to places all over the surrounding area. If all were true, then Guildford would have a better underground system than London. The most persistent story is of a tunnel linking the castle with the Friary, passing through the two mediaeval undercrofts on either side of the High Street. No positive trace of this has ever been revealed, however.

This story is typical in that tunnels are very frequently supposed to link castles with the nearest monastery or priory. A large water conduit running down Castle Street in Farnham may have prompted the idea that an underground passage ran from the castle to Waverley Abbey over two miles away. There is no castle near Newark Priory, which stood by the river Wey near Ripley. The myth-makers had to invent a convent at Ockham, and relate how the canons of Newark dug a tunnel under the river so that they could have clandestine, and romantic, meetings with the nuns of Ockham. The river, however, burst through the roof of the tunnel and drowned the lustful monks. Slandorous tales such as this were common at the time of the Reformation, put about to discredit the old church and particularly the monks. Surely, though, the people at that time would have known there was never a nunnery at Ockham? The tunnel said to connect the monastery at Chilworth with the nunnery on St. Catherine's Hill is doubly untrue — *neither* establishment existed.

If the locality could not rise to a castle or a monastery, then the manor house and the church would have to do. Many tales are told of tunnels connecting the parish church with a house nearby, such as the Crown Inn at Chiddingfold, the old house at Tatsfield known as Colegates, and the Old Manor House at Caterham. Ancient or unusual buildings of any kind are likely to attract tunnel stories. The Obelisk at Camberley, for example, built by

the notorious Regency rake Sir John Dashwood, is rumoured to be linked by a tunnel to the school at the bottom of the Knoll.

It is not unlikely that many of these rumours are started by wine-bins. These are alcoves built into the walls of many Georgian and Victorian cellars to store wine bottles at an even temperature. They often take the form of a shallow, arched tunnel leading off the cellar, and often are only a few feet deep with a rear wall of brick. It is easy to see how these could give the impression of a blocked-off tunnel.

The tales, though, are many and fantastical. The distances the secret passages are supposed to run are often incredible and the courses they take frequently pose difficulties even a modern civil engineer would find hard to overcome. Marshes, rivers, and soft sand ridges are regularly credited with subterranean passages. But the question rarely answered is why these tunnels should ever have been built in the first place. A great amount of awkward work is needed for even a short tunnel and a smuggler sweating away in a mile-long burrow might reasonably have asked himself whether this hard labour was worth the easy money he hoped to gain by it. Smugglers, love-sick monks, and anybody else would find it easier to make a secret journey overland by night. Nevertheless, secret tunnel stories are told, and will doubtless continue to be told as part of the rich folklore of Surrey.



Have you a contribution for a feature?

The days when windmills had a more sinister side

CLEARING out some old papers, Advertiser reader Mrs WV Seear, of Linden Court, Leatherhead, came across the following article that she wrote more than 60 years ago, revealing the links between smugglers and local windmills.

"I think I wrote it for the South

Holmwood Church magazine," said Mrs Seear, who is now in her nineties. "Whether the vicar used it, I can't remember.

"The old Mr Smith mentioned in the article was one of the grand old men of the Holmwoods. He was born in about 1860. I used to talk to him

a lot about the old days.

"He was then living with his son in South Holmwood village. Almost next door lived his grandson, Billie Smith, who was the local greengrocer, newsagent and occasional grave digger.

"Billie Smith was much liked. He died about 10 years ago."

AT first thought there may seem to be little connection between flour-milling and smuggling. But in the "good old days", when smuggling was a lively and prosperous business, there was a direct connection between them.

A few of the windmills were hand in glove with the smugglers and Ewhurst Mill was one of them.

This dark old windmill, standing on the spur of Pitch Hill looking right across the Sussex Weald to the sea, has a romantic and exciting past. It had been the silent witness of much thirsty and bloodthirsty work.

Many a smuggler crossed its threshold, many a keg of brandy was hidden within its walls. And many stirring deeds, both foul and fair, were enacted within its view.

Smuggling reached its peak during the Napoleonic Wars (1805-1815) and probably there was more traffic in smuggled goods across Sussex and this part of Surrey than in any other part of England.

Here, within 30 miles of London, was a piece of country stretching from Holmwood, across Hurtwood Common almost to Guildford which was wild and lonely in the extreme.

Numerous grassy tracks traversed these hills and commons, making excellent trackways for packhorses. And there was plenty of bracken and undergrowth in which to hide the contraband.

Moreover, it was only one night's trek from the Sussex coast. Everyone participated in the smuggling directly or indirectly — landowners, magistrates, clergy and labourers.

After all, the smugglers were the only free-traders and but for them the poorer folk would never have known such a simple luxury as a cup of tea.

In the smuggling business

there were sets of people employed, or three departments so to speak. Firstly, there were the men who sailed the contraband from France across to the English coast.

Secondly, there were the men who helped land it and who by night conveyed it inland on packhorses to safe hiding places.

Thirdly, there were those who undertook the delicate task of delivering the goods to "customers". This was where the miller came in.

When his carts delivered flour to nearby towns they could easily carry contraband concealed beneath the sacks, or even inside them.

Private carts bringing grist to the mill could carry a keg of

brandy when calling for their flour. And more useful still, the windmills could be used for signalling.

When the sails of the mill were set in a certain position, it meant that there were no excisemen about and that a "run" that night would be safe. But if the sails were set in another position, it meant danger.

Ewhurst Mill was ideal from the smugglers' point of view. Perched on the spur of the hill, 812 feet above sea level, it could be seen from the coast.

A smuggler by the sea had only to look in the direction of Hurtwood and he knew that a "run" that night would be safe.

Having seen the signal, the smuggler waits. Darkness falls on a lonely part of the Sussex coast. It is now past midnight and a pale moon sheds a faint glimmer across the sea.

The waves break gently on the sands. Dark figures move about the beach scanning the waters for the outline of a boat,

while behind them stand the packhorses restlessly waiting in the darkness.

At last the sound of muffled oars is heard. A peculiar whistle floats across the water, which is answered from the shore.

The packhorses are waded into the sea and the kegs of brandy are slung in two straight from the boats across their backs.

A word or two passes between the smugglers regarding the next run, and then the trek inland begins.

Silently the horses and their minders wend their way over the downs, skirting villages and cornfields, through covets and pinewoods, to the dark depths of Hurtwood.

Nearly a century has passed since the smuggling ceased, but the memory of it is by no means lost either at Ewhurst or in the Holmwoods.

As late as 1891 there was a man living near Ewhurst who, as a youth, had been transported for smuggling.

There was another man whose mother remembered a smuggler riding about just below the windmill looking for a keg of brandy which had come loose from a packhorse the previous night and rolled down the hill.

The father of the same man used to say that if you saw a man riding stout you could be sure he had yards and yards of smuggled silk wrapped round his waist.

In the fields below Leith Hill a naval cutlass was picked up in about 1875, a relic no doubt of some smuggling affray.

On both sides of Holmwood Common were smugglers' "roads", and probably across it too for this was the shortest route to the smugglers' caves beneath South Street, Dorking,

in which vast quantities of contraband were stored.

The old Nags Head, which was the inn at Mid-Holmwood until the turnpike road was diverted, is reputed to have been one of their points of call.

Near this inn, one night, a much-hated exciseman came face to face with a band of smugglers.

They drew their swords and attacked him, but they were the worse for drink and in the darkness struck at a tree by mistake. The officer was able to escape.

Mr Buckland's cottage, at Batchetts Green, is known to have had associations with smugglers, and it would be difficult to imagine a cottage more conveniently placed for that purpose.

And here is the story of what happened at a big house not far from Holmwood in about 1810.

The squire was new to the district. One morning before he was dressed, his manservant brought him an urgent message from his bailiff to say that he wanted to see him.

The squire said he must wait. The message came back still more pressingly worded. "Well, send the fellow up," said the squire.

The bailiff came in with a mysterious air and, having watched the servant go out of the room, said in a hoarse half-whisper: "There was a run last night, sir; and I've marked four."

The squire did not understand, so the bailiff explained that the smugglers' hiding place had been found. Four barrels had been marked which would be left in consideration of the find not being reported. That was the established custom in the district.

"But I can't have anything to do with smuggled goods," burst out the squire. "Why, I'm a magistrate. How dare you come to me with such a suggestion."

The bailiff stood his ground quite unabashed. "If you take

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ble."

The squire continued to
protest vigorously. The bailiff
said: "Well, sir, will you ask the
parson?" He did so, and the
vicar's answer was: "If you wish
to live at peace with your neigh-
bours, you had better fall in with
the custom of the country."

Old Mr Smith, one of the
grand old men of the
Holmwoods, told me with a
chuckle that his father knew the
taste of smuggled gin all right.
His father was a respectable
farmer at North Holmwood but
he used to help the smugglers
along the "road" which ran near
Parkgate, past Ewood Farm and
Lodge Farm, through Roothill
Cope and on to Betchworth.

The years have rolled on and
Ewhurst Mill has been idle
these 40 years or more.

From about 1890 it stood
derelict, but in 1912 it was con-
verted into a weekend residence
where, through the kindness of
the owner, girl guides stay dur-
ing the summer.

The place where the grain
was once stored is now a com-
fortable dining room with gate-
legged table, windeer chairs and
a neat little dresser hung with
dainty teacups.

Time has wrought many
changes in the face of England
and nothing has changed more
than the methods of growing
and milling wheat. When Mr
Smith was a boy, cornfields were
everywhere.

The seed was sown by hand,
as in Biblical days. At harvest
time the countryside was ablaze
with golden corn. It was cut by
hand with sickles, both men and
women doing this work.

After the harvest had been

gathered came the gleamers,
whose stooping bodies eagerly
gathered all the corn that
remained. Then, during the win-
ter months, the corn was
threshed, not by a machine but
with the flail on the barn floor.

This was a piecework job and
the tap tap of the flail was a
familiar sound at every farm.
Finally, the wheat was taken to
the local windmill where it was
ground into wholemeal flour.

All that is now changed. The
ancient industry of milling is no
longer of the open countryside.
The windmills will never work
again. They ceased work,
decayed and fell.

Only a few now remain and
almost every gale sends another
grand old veteran crashing to
the ground. Never again will
their twirling sails decorate the
landscape of this green and
pleasant land.



Silent witness:
One of sev-
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