

[124 Brook and Little London History AVH 21 November 2023.mp3](#)

(Video also available for Members)

There is a set of 154 slides accompanying this talk.

People started living and farming here because of the Lawbrook, a tributary to the Tillingbourne...

Also known as Postford Brook, the Lawbrook is 7km long and rises in several sources around Gasson Farm and Peaslake itself.

The whole area was originally called Little London, marked on John Rocque's map of 1768. It shows Brook Farm, opposite the road junction, as well as a dozen other properties. A persistent story is that the name originates from people fleeing London during the Great Plague of 1666 - BUT the name was already in use in 1647...

Amazingly, there are over 130 Little Londons in England and Wales, three of them being in Surrey: Albury, Redhill and Lingfield.

It probably refers to a settlement which grew very rapidly, though another respectable theory is that these were rural places which regularly took livestock and produce to sell in the ever-expanding City of London.

Brook Farm, on the left, has been a constant from the earliest days. It may be named after Richard de la Broke who lived here in 1241.

Prominently up the hill, to the right, is Brook Lodge guest house.

The Lawbrook stream passes under the road to a millpond.

Here are the Brook Farm buildings in 1976.

Early tenants had been Albert Charman and Gilbert Bicknell.

It was then sold by Albury Estate to R.W. Barker in 1964 for £27,500 and to the jockey, Buck Jones in 1969 for £42,000.

This delightful watercolour with Brook barn and its waterwheel behind a haycart, was probably painted by Flora Russell of Farley Green around 1920.

The waterwheel looks rather decayed and disused.

Here's a more detailed view of the wheel - and a couple of ducks enjoying the millpond

The L shaped barn and waterwheel are beyond this chap sitting on the Lawbrook bridge parapet...

And the same man, now sitting beside the wheel itself, which indeed is missing all its paddles on one side.

The undershot waterwheel had been used for crushing oats, chopping turnips and grinding corn.

In 1935, Albury Women's Institute featured the apparently working Brook Farm waterwheel of 1890, on this panel of a screen designed by Miss Joan Drew.

On the far right, amongst trees, is Brook Lodge, there are two water wheels, haystacks on staddles and two women talking over a fence to a man.

They may be the Charmans.

When the barn was rebuilt in 1985, traces of the waterwheel had almost completely disappeared.

This photograph, around 1900, is looking south towards Brook Farm millpond, with the barn to the right.

Brook Farmhouse itself dates from circa 1725 and it had a passageway of hedges leading up to the front door...

The hedges had grown quite substantial by 1976...

By 1999, all that had gone.

You may be able to see cricket stumps on the new flat lawn, just in front of the blue car.

With Albury photographer Percy Lloyd typically posing his own children, Brook had a working men's club: Brook Institute...

There are rules: *"Members are to be men over the age of 16 years.*

"No magazine, book or game is to be taken out of the room.

"Gambling is not allowed, nor are swearing, bad language or alcohol.

"A member may bring in a friend on payment of one penny for the evening."

In 1915, a young Vic Woods remembered being in the Institute on the October evening when this L13 Zeppelin came over heading for Guildford. He ran home frightened.

The Institute came to an end when Albury Estate sold the property, which it had rented out for £10 per year.

In 1922...

"It stands in a spacious and well stocked garden and lends itself readily for modification into a compact and convenient country dwelling."

"There is a large billiard room with a Register Stove, a card room with Register Stove, a sitting room with Register Stove and outside a wash house with copper, a privy, men's urinal and a piggery.

"Water is laid on from the Brook Waterworks."

The Institute was sold for £920 to Mr Wood.

The building is still standing...

Greensward Cottage had been the Institute downstairs, with the caretaker's family living in the rest of the building.

Here's a frosty winter view of Greensward Cottage, with Holts shop beyond, in Southside Cottage at the bottom of Brook Hill.

In 1914, one of those living in Little London was Gilbert Bellinger.

He served in World War I and was a survivor of the Somme.

After the war, in 1920, a war memorial was commissioned for Albury church and local architect, Gerald Fenwicke Metcalfe, was appointed to design the work.

Metcalfe used Gilbert Bellinger as the model for his design...

Which was created by masons Arthur Moon & Sons and casters The Albion Art Foundry.

March 1922 saw Reverend H. E. Crowley conducting a Service of Commemoration to unveil the niche and tablet for the dead.

Here is Gilbert Bellinger in later years when he lived at Greensward Cottage.

In 2018, Gerald Metcalfe's original watercolour for his design of our war memorial from a retired V&A Director's collection, appeared at auction where it fetched £1,500.

The architect and artist, Gerald Metcalfe, had lived at Woodside on Albury Heath.

Brook Waterworks was an operation taking water from the Lawbrook, after it had flowed past Ponds Farm.

Their reservoir was on top of the hill, just south of the railway, and they had a hydraulic ram pumping water up to it, from a small building beside the stream.

Two nearby customers were number 55, Brook Laundry, and number 57, the Estate Nursery of half an acre.

In the 1922 sale of Albury Estate properties, Brook Laundry, now Bridge House, was described as well built of brick, having a tiled roof with: *“three excellent coppers”* in the Washing Room. It was: *“readily convertible to a Very Attractive Country Residence”* and sold for £1,025, also to Mr Wood.

One trace of Brook Waterworks still visible is this disused control valve at the side of the driveway running down to Ponds Farm.

This is Little London, looking north...

And an earlier view, from the railway embankment.

Just left of the road, in front of the houses, is a haystack with a ladder leaning against it, being part-used here in January 1986.

The prominent house at the top of the hill is Hurst Lea...

This is Hurst Lea being built, by Anthony Browne's workmen in the early 1880s

It is surrounded by wooden scaffolding tied together by knots of rope...

And here, with a moped and two bicycles outside, is Hurst Lea in 1976.

Just along Park Road, behind The Old House, the Domestic Buildings Research Group looked into a Wash House...

Described as late 19th century and timber framed with a copper, chimney and sink with one corner partitioned off for an earth closet.

Water came from a well by the house or the underground rainwater tank.

Opposite that haystack is Northworth, nowadays Hawthorn Cottage, and the Old Cottage...

The building is originally late 17th century and may once have been a shop.

The end wall, now rendered, is gabled with three Queen posts

Craftsman and builder Anthony Browne, born in 1813, died in 1898, was a notable local character. He married Sarah Stanton in 1837.

After living at Sherbourne they moved here, to Chennels West, one of a pair of old cottages that Anthony had taken down and rebuilt...

using the same materials at a cost of £326-3-8d.

Anthony was a gifted craftsman and much of his other work is still with us....

This is one of Anthony Browne's carved pew ends in the Apostolic Church and his Drummond Chapel screen in the Saxon Church.

He carved this mirror and the gate pillars at The Little House, Albury Heath, are examples of decorative bricks for which Anthony made the moulds...

As are the special bricks in these Pugin chimneys at Weston House.
He also made moulds for decorative brickwork on the Apostolic church.
Anthony Browne kept an extensive diary:

"Went to the Colonial Exhibition".

The Illustrated London News shows Queen Victoria opening the exhibition in 1886.

"1887, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

"Next year, Algernon Percy presented my son with an official Jubilee commemorative medallion in recognition of our outstanding contribution to the success of local Jubilee festivities."

Looking from Alf Howick's back garden in Little London, a steam train passes by in 1950.
The naming of Brook, as a separate hamlet, had started after the railway embankment split Little London Lane's community in half.

In 1845 there were plans for an atmospheric railway, using a vacuum tube to pull carriages along.
Their map showed the tracks completely demolishing Pond's Farm.
By 1846 maps proposed a conventional line, again directly south of Brook Farm and passing on top of Brook millpond.
It would then join a connecting line from Portsmouth coming across from Blackheath.

Why was Chilworth Station originally named 'Chilworth and Albury'?

Anthony Browne wrote: *"Mr Drummond gave his reaction to the Reading and Reigate Railway Company that he did not want a station on his property, the company would have liked one at Brook."*

Just three years later, in 1849, ten and a half miles of the North Downs Line, between Dorking and Shalford, were opened: *"giving the Londoner the first access to this very attractive scenery."*

This is an early view of Brook crossing, with the box to the left and Brook Lodge Guest House beyond the railway on the right.

Keeper's Cottage is the other side of the road, beyond the signal box, in 1936.

Another early view of Keepers Cottage, before it was painted white.

Keeper's Cottage, the box and crossing even featured on postcards.
There's a well just this side of the cottage and lots of smart fencing on the Albury Heath side...

And another view, in a Frith postcard.

When Brook Crossing was automated, the gate keeper's box closed on 19th July 1965.
Keeper's cottage is also long gone, with a cabinet operating the crossing gates now occupying the site.

Crossing House was built on the eastern side of the road, here in August 1976...

And earlier, here, behind the tree beyond the signal box.

Trains climb uphill from Gomshall station and at Brook Crossing have started descending towards Chilworth.

In 1892, a coupling snapped...

at Shere Heath and detached the rear part of a long goods train pulled by two engines, with 51 wagons and guards vans at both the front and rear.
The detached part then ran freely downhill, through Brook Crossing and past Ford Farm, towards Chilworth...

Near Birget Hill, the rear caught up with and crashed into the front part of its own train which was slowing into Chilworth.

The impact threw 30 wagons down the embankment, smashed the front guards van and derailed the front nine wagons.

The disaster caused the death of 52 year old guard Henry Wicks: *"whose van was smashed to splinters.*

"Bricks, barrels, pipes, sacks of cement, furniture and other goods were scattered about in the greatest confusion.

"Huge iron bars were twisted like straws and the rails were bent and torn up over about 150 yards."

The South Eastern Railway Company granted Emma Wicks, Henry's widow, a weekly pension of 10 shillings a week for life.

The sad event was commemorated by this topiary pheasant, photographed here by Alan Edwards in 1968.

Over the years, the bird at Lockner turned around to face the trains.

Affectionately called the Chilworth Chicken, its official name is Jessie's Seat, named after Henry's daughter in law.

It was she who had persuaded the rail company to plant the yew tree.

To prevent future runaway disasters, catch points were installed, with this sign at Brook Crossing.

Before the railway and the level crossing, the 1839 tithe map shows there had been two parallel north-south lanes going between Brook and Albury Heath.

When the railway was built the landowner of Brook Lodge, which was between the two lanes, was Elizabeth Locker.

She sold one rood of her land to the railway company and the main westward route, the road past Haredene, was closed permanently.

As railway mania continued, a line planned from Little London, across Brook Hill and through Blackheath, to join the Portsmouth main line, had seemed imminent in the mid 1870s.

Happily, not demolished by railways, there was Holts Store at Southside Cottage in Brook.

There is some splendid clothing and headgear in this photo from around 1900 and posters in the window were advertising Camp Coffee and Blue Cross Tea.

Here is Holts Store, one of his dairy cows and its newly roofed barn

Soon afterwards, the gate has been removed and the shop extended, with a new bay window.

Around 1910, this cart, artistically positioned outside the shop, includes Eric Bellinger, Fred and Bernard Holt, Norah Bellinger and Winnie Holt, later Winnie Nursey.

This looks like a wedding car being filled up from the petrol pump which had appeared, just to the left of Holt's barn.

In that flint wall, recently demolished...

There used to be this old bell push, to call someone inside the shop to come out and operate the pump.

By the 1960s, the petrol pump had been changed to a pump selling Aladdin Pink Paraffin.

Here is Fred Holt, with his wife and dogs, and to the right is the cut-out in the garden wall, where the pump had been.

At Hull House Farm the Holts had both horned cattle and horses...

In June 1950, the front cover of The Field magazine featured Holt's cows, happily cooling themselves in the Lawbrook.

Milk bottles were branded: "*Tuberculin Tested Milk, F Holt & Sons, Brook, Albury.*"

Across from the shop, on the west side of the road, was this large building which was the other enterprise of Fred Holt...

Brook Stores, antiques and general store.

The shop was quite extensive, with flowerbeds at the front...

And this eye-catching piece of topiary.

This shows Fred Holt in the antique shop garden with one of his dogs and some of his stock.

Old Mr Holt is here with some of his children, a grown up Winnie Nursey being in the dark dress.

When Fred Holt was 98 years old, the artist Imre Goth, at Whyteholme in Farley Green, painted Fred's portrait.

It was selected for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition of 1941: "*I Am 98 Today*".

Sadly, the painting appears to be lost.

Musician and artist to the stars of stage and screen, Imre Goth had fled Berlin to England following this too-honest portrait of Herman Goering, which gave away Goering's morphine habit.

If it were found, Goth's painting "*I Am 98 Today*" would be worth a few thousand pounds.

Fred Holt died two years later, at 100 years and 4 days old.

He was put in his coffin by Vic Woods of Little London.

Holts shop continued trading, here in August 1976..

But closed not long afterwards.

The dip in the front wall, where the petrol and paraffin pumps had been, was still clear to see.

This car is approaching Holts shop, with the three storey Brook Lodge up the hill behind it.

From the 1870s, the Leslies lived at Brook Lodge.

Their son, John William Leslie, became a lawyer and had this entry in Who's Who, as Recorder of Shrewsbury and Clerk of Assize, Western Circuit.

Brook Lodge was a guest house, with a loggia, a pond, ornamental gardens, a lavender walk...

And a tennis court. Everything you would need for a relaxing stay in summer.

But in the winter of 1938, following the Munich Agreement which allowed Hitler to take over the Sudetenland, Brook Lodge was full with fifty Czech refugees.

By now, the tenants were the Bedford family and this is just one their guest book pages.

It lists everybody who stayed at Brook Lodge, along with their hometown and profession.

One or two, who were German nationals rather than Czech, were deemed friendly aliens and released from internment.

An immediate job saw refugees clearing snow around the Brook Lodge gateway over Christmas 1938.

Those house entrance, now bricked up, is still there.

All of this was organised by Albury's vicar, Reverend Philip Gray and here, in August 1939, are the refugee children then living at Brook Lodge...

And a few of their parents during that summer, standing by the doorway of Brook Lodge.

With reliable snow in those days, in January 1940, the teenagers built this fine snowman. After the war, the couple to the right, who had met in Brook, got married. Behind them, to the left, the summerhouse at Brook Lodge had been turned into a school for the refugees...

And these are the pupils, along with their parents. The head, Mr F.R. Cobbold, was a retired headmaster assisted by Czech national teachers with Miss Lydia Hyde and other English staff.

Albury Parish Magazine of April 1939 reported the formation of Brook Lodge Scouts for the Sudeten boys...

The troop called themselves the Red Falcons. They joined other groups in Guildford for various events, including parading for Armistice Day.

In these earlier postcards of 1910 showing a cart, Brook Lodge is at the top and Brook Farm on the left...

And now, having used the ramp, the cartwheels are entering the stream to keep the wood wet and their steel tyres tight on the wheels.

To the left, these photographs also show a steam traction engine busily working away in front of the haystacks.

The 1873 Ordnance Survey map shows Little London's pub as The Garibaldi, which it was until 1885, named after the Italian patriot who had been given Freedom of the City of that 'other' London, in 1864.

The Garibaldi Inn hosted an inquest into the sad death in 1867 of farm worker Charles Cannon and two horses...

In Carthouse Field, between Ponds Farm and Dilton Farm.

"Cannon was killed by the dread visitation of lightning under circumstances of peculiar and melancholy interest."

Cannon and the two horses had been found lying dead where they had been ploughing. Both a steel tobacco box and a knife in the deceased's pocket had been magnetised.

The jurors returned a verdict of Accidental Death and gave over the amount of their fees for the benefit of Cannon's widow and their children.

This is the earliest photograph of the William IVth, with James Mercer as the landlord and a gathering of 32 regular drinkers - all of them men of course.

In Anthony Browne's diary of 1864: *"Signed paper for James Mercer to get a licence for his Public House."*

"Mercer obtained his licence - Canon Dundas said he would like to do away with Mercer's licence at Little London."

James and Laura Mercer appear in the electoral rolls up to 1932. Seemingly having done reasonably well from running the pub...

And liking the area, they moved their home to Heath End, here, on the left.

The pub started life as a 2 bay agricultural building in the late 15th century, timber framed and one storey only, converted later into a dwelling with a smoke hood and outshot. Later an outside chimney and a 19th century bride wing were added. The next William IVth proprietors, here, were Mark Lee and his family...

Here they are in close up, complete with an unknown man peering through the saloon window behind them.

This postcard from 'Rose', in Buckhurst Hill in Epping Forest, to one of the family, Miss Nellie Lee, is from 1908.

Rose writes: *"Do not be surprised if I walk through the door on Monday as I am having the day off so, if fine, I may come down to good old Albury once again. What close weather we are having."*

A grand day out from the William IVth to Southsea was organised in 1928, travelling in this charabanc hired from Guildford.

It has a notice on its side stating: *"Speed 12 Miles Per Hour."*

If the charabanc really stuck to that speed, the 51 miles to Southsea would have taken them an amazing four and a quarter hours!

This 1930s postcard by Tuck, shows a postbox in the wall by the driveway and signs offering Courage London Ale, Teas, Wines, Spirits and Bed and Breakfast.

At the rear of the William IVth there were stables operated by Mr. J Travers, ex Weeden and ex Royal Horse Artillery...

"High steppers, Hunters and Ponies for hire and sale.

"Horses wanted to break and make.

"Jumpers schooled for Show, also Hacks for Sale and Hire.

"Animals wanted for reform."

The William IVth, in fetching pink and with convenient parking directly outside, in 1975...

And with the front garden enclosed and developed as a seating area in October 1986.

In 1996, Carol Martin described walking up to the William for the library van which parked there and spotting what appeared to be a burglar in his striped jersey hanging by the neck outside.

Investigation showed it was a French onion-seller dummy, complete with bicycle and string of onions, all swaying in the breeze.

When the inn was expecting its delivery of the new Beaujolais, French lorry drivers had been on strike. To show their annoyance someone hung up this figure, much to the amusement of the locals.

Just along from the pub is a builders' yard with, until it burnt down, this building owned by Woods, "Contractors & Undertakers".

Later it was Lampards.

On the chimney at Heathmead, the home of builder Vic Woods, are some specially engraved bricks...

When we interviewed Vic Woods at Heathmead in 1977 he said: *"The bricks we used were made locally. Nearly all the materials we used when building were made locally.*

"In this area there was a tremendous amount of bricks out of Sherbourne Brickyard. Wonderful bricks they were and the sand locally.

"That is a funny stone you have up there in Winterfold. The harder it is the longer it is left above ground. First off it is very soft, that is the time that you want to do stonework."

Here is Vic Woods, at the top right, as a player, in 1924.

In the lower photo Vic is an umpire, outside Albury cricket pavilion and with his young son, Herbert Woods at his side.

In 1939, he was second from the left in Albury church choir when the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Cosmo Lang, visited for the dedication of Northumberland Chapel in Albury Church.

Rather later, this photo has Vic Woods on the right at Ellis Laboratories in Albury Mill, along with Tom Knapp, Phil Bishop and another, unknown woman.

A member of the Cricket Club, the Football Club, the Bowling Club, the British Legion and a founder member of the Friendship Club, nobody could have been more involved in Little London's community than Vic Woods, who died aged 84 in 1981.

Up near the park gates, Lieutenant Malden's map of 1825 shows both a Workhouse and a School. It is hard to know which of the cottages along the track had housed the school, possible candidates being Walnut Cottage, Holland House or Midfield.

The Workhouse, now Heath Lodge, was built as the Parish Workhouse in 1732.

The chimneys did originally have Pugin-type tops. There was a gabled wing and a bacon loft with a wing at the back housing a Brew House, Pantry and Cellar.

The 1739 Inventory lists: *"2 Hog Tubs, 1 Well Bucket & Rope, 1 Wheel Barrow, 1 Wooden Horse, 1 Hanbarrow, 2 Prongs, 2 Hows, 2 Garden Racks, 1 Carrat Digger, 2 Spades, 1 Old Ax, 1 Dung Spade... and 10 Chamber Pots."*

The Workhouse closed and all its contents were sold by auction, at the building, in 1836.

There was excitement in 1931 when this Bristol F2B Fighter [F4542] made an emergency landing on the south side of the railway, between Brook Arch and Ponds Lane.

Nobody was hurt!

Many houses are timber framed and have 16th or 17th century origins. Meadow Cottage is a rare hall house of only 2 bays in total with a large internal jetty. Only one other is known in Surrey.

It was built as the Upholsterer's cottage for Albury Estate, probably around 1500.

Its odd position, set end-on and well back from the road, suggests it was facing an old east-west lane running from Blackheath through to Shere...

And modern LiDAR surveys support that idea, with evidence a pathway once continued eastwards, alongside the Lawbrook, and then crossed the stream to join Ponds Lane near the bridge.

This is much the same route proposed for the 1845 atmospheric railway, but with that continuing straight on eastwards and destroying Pond's Farm.

38 years later, in 2014, with a conservatory added, here's another view of 16th century Meadow Cottage.

More recently, Little London was noted for innovative housing...

When, around 1900, Albury Estate constructed several houses from concrete.

Here are Appletree and Mayland Cottages...

These are Foxton and Brookfield...

And 1 & 2 Block Cottages, later renamed Jacquin & Hideaway Cottages.

During the war you may well have contributed to the Wings for Victory campaign and helped Albury Heath raise £4,065 in 1943, way beyond their target of £1,000...

And some of these collections may have paid for two huts and a small kitchen building built in 1940 for the Royal Artillery, where they had a searchlight and an anti-aircraft gun.

Mrs. Instone Gallop remembered: *"A searchlight unit was set up at Brook and troops enjoyed hospitality at neighbouring houses.*

Some nights they were rather busy and the Sergeant was heard to say: 'What with the bombs and Mrs. Nursey's plums, we were on the run all night'!!"

This circular mark on the LiDAR survey in the field, just along from the army huts, might show the site of their gun.

One of the Czech refugee children, Gerhard Hofner, remembered: *"One night in the summer of 1940 the air raid sirens went and a bomber flew over. I was living in the Brook Lodge summerhouse at this time, which had large windows at the front. You could tell the German bombers by their un-synchronised engines which made a pulsating throbbing noise.*

"The bomber must have had a spare bomb and decided to drop it on the searchlight. The bomb seemed to whistle down for ages and I ducked under the bedclothes, not that it would have done me any good with all the glass..."

"There was a very loud crash as the bomb exploded. I later went up to the searchlight battery and found that the bomb had missed its target by only 30 yards, making a crater about 5 yards across."

Perhaps that LiDAR mark is the crater?

Win Browne recalled: *"Incendiaries spread down over the cottages in Little London. They were dealt with by the Home Guard and firemen."*

Pond's Farm used to be called Stonehill Farm.

This unusual map, with east to the left and west to the right, from 1724, when it was occupied by Harry Sanders, listed the acreage of each field...

A wartime photograph of Ponds Farm...

Where work in those fields was done by the Land Army...

There were baby calves to suckle...

And sheds to build. These two Land Girls are labelled Pat Edwards and Jean.

Win Browne said: *"Many trains passed along the line from the coast bringing troops from the evacuation of Dunkirk, some stopping en-route.*

"People from Little London and Brook took fruit, biscuits and water to give to the men, who threw postcards from the windows of the trains, which were picked up and posted for them.

"These were the official cards, signed by them, to inform their relatives that they had returned safely. One man among them was from Farley Green, his card was delivered directly to his home."

After the war the army huts were purchased by the 'Welcome Home Committee' to use as a social club.

One user was the Girl Guide Brownies...

They were visited by Lady Baden Powell and a camp fire sing-song at Brook was broadcast by the BBC Overseas Service.

This photo is around 1975.

The Albury Red Cross also met in the hut...

As did the Young Wives. This looks rather like the Queen's Coronation, in June 1953.

The state of the footpath to the huts caused several organisations to cancel meetings so, by 1975, the Farley Green Ladies Club agreed to pay rental of just £1 per year to take on managing the buildings.

Presumably because of the guest house, Brook was photographed far more often than Little London. Visitors fell away and the structurally questionable Brook Lodge Guest House was suffering from dry rot.

Sold by Helen, Duchess of Northumberland, in 1953, the owners then became the famous racing motor cyclist, mechanic and engine tuner, Francis Beart and his wife Margaret.

Beart was often on television and amongst his many successes, from the Brooklands era through to the 1970s, Beart had 11 Manx Grand Prix wins with his bikes.

Beart applied for permission to reduce the number of storeys or modify Brook Lodge - but this was refused.

The result was that the entire building was demolished...

Where the camera stands here.

Instead, the original stables and coach house were extended.

This photo was the long dry summer of 1976...

And again that same year.

So here, to end, a more distant view in 1939, looking from the top of Brook Hill, with hay stooks standing in fields running down...

Towards the peaceful Lawbrook valley.

THE END