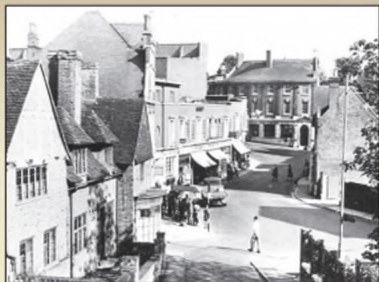




c: 1940s



c: 1950s

## Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Potted Histories No: 22

### Sweench House & Gravel Hill - Leatherhead

Sweench House (Nos. 2-6 Gravel Hill) was probably named from the 'switch' or fork in the road and is one of the oldest and most attractive buildings in Leatherhead. It is an amalgam of three 16th century buildings (though part of No 2 may be 15th century) and all are timber framed. No 2 seems to represent a complete small house with smoke blackening in the roof suggesting that it was originally an open hall structure. It was once a farm house and was occupied for more than thirty years in the mid 19th century by the widow Mary Brumwell, a cowkeeper, who sold milk at the door. Her daughter continued in the same house as a laundress and 'mangler'. Nos. 8 and 10, now called Jubilee Cottages, were built within the Sweench House curtilage by local builder Charles Roberts in 1840 and originally called Jessamine Cottages. They were improved and renamed in honour of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee when they changed hands in 1897.

Nos. 12-14 were built around 1875, obscuring the side elevation of Flint House, Nos. 16-18, which bears the date 1799. A timber framed building, it was renovated in that year and faced with knapped flint by Benjamin Simmons (1751-1832), who shortly afterwards also built the side terrace of six cottages then known as Flint Row (and the almost identical Chitty's Row which used to stand in Bridge Street). The fine red brick house No 20, also by Simmons, has the date 1810 scratched on the brickwork near the front door. It was originally one of a pair, Vine Cottages, No 22 having sadly been demolished when Leret Way was built. Simmons built many of Leatherhead's finest Georgian buildings; his works opposite the Parish Church are known to have been visited by Nelson in 1802. It was due to the benefactor Herbert Reeves and the Countryside Protection Society that Sweench House has survived. It is set off by the striking Catalpa or Indian Bean Tree in the War Memorial Gardens, the site of a smithy in the 19th century.

Alun Roberts

**For Information regarding Membership, Lectures and Museum opening hours contact: Leatherhead & District Local History Society, Leatherhead Museum, Hampton Cottage, 64 Church Street, Leatherhead, KT22 8DP**

**Tel: 01372 386348**

**mail to: [staff@lheadmuseum.plus.com](mailto:staff@lheadmuseum.plus.com)**

**Website: [www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk](http://www.leatherheadlocalhistory.org.uk)**