Surrey Constabulary History
'An in depth history of policing in Surrey'

September 2024
www.surrey-constabulary.com

Editor Robert Bartlett MA (Cantab) CF
938at938@gmail.com

Surrey Constabulary History 117

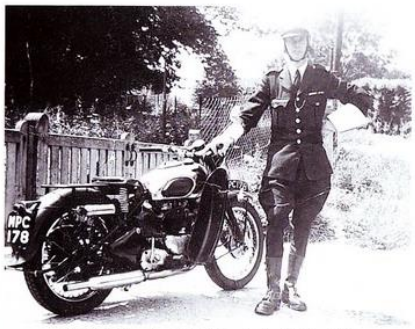
Surrey Constabulary senior officers 1983

Back row - Don Woodhams, who died in August 2024, Des Flanders , Tony Grey, David Stewart (d), David Harding (d), Eric Hughes (d),

Front row - Frank Trussler (d), John Hoddinot (d), John Smith, Brian Hayes, Chris Atkins, Gerry Atfield (d), David Eades.

Contents

POLICE VEHICLES USED IN THE 1950s



PC 544 P Barbrooke with his Triumph Speed Twin c1952.

PCs Doug Allmond and John Brenton at Chertsey Traffic Centre in 1953.

The Surrey Constabulary when Don Woodhams joined[1]

[1] Surrey Police A Pictorial History 1851-2001Geraldine Middleton-Stewart

Detective Ch/Supt Don Woodhams
Died peacefully at home on 8th August 2024 aged 99
Retired in 1985 from the Surrey Constabulary
War Service -1953 Royal Navy

Detective Chief Superintendent Don Woodhams Surrey Constabulary and Royal Navy, Second World War. **From Don Woodhams January 2021**, Date of Birth 20 January 1925. Surrey Constabulary Service 1953-1985. Retired as Detective Chief Superintendent. Born in Plaistow, East London and brought up close to the docks. His father was a Port of London employee, and they lived in Botha Toad, E13 until bombed out in 1940. The family then moved to Surrey.

Joined the Royal Navy on 2nd December 1942 as an able seaman. (Service Number JX388007) After initial training in Portsmouth was posted to HMS Naviculla based on the Hamble river near the Combined Operations base. This boat was an inshore patrol vessel. He then trained as a Torpedoman and joined the 'Dido' Class light cruiser HMS Scylla in November 1943. Don later served on this ship on D Day, the 6th June 1944. Scylla was command ship for the allied landing beaches 'Sword' and 'Gold' and was involved in shore bombardments and co-ordinating landing traffic. The ship was hit by a German Acoustic Mine on 23rd June 1944 and badly damaged. It had to be towed back to Chatham docks and was later scrapped.

HMS Scylla 1942

Don then joined HMS Sirius, another ‘Dido’ class cruiser. He then took part in the South of France landings (Operation ‘Dragoon’) in August/September 1944. He then served in the Mediterranean area.

De-mobbed in 1946 he later re-joined the Royal Navy in July 1947 and served on HMS Vengeance (Aircraft Carrier), HMS Veralum (Destroyer) and HMS Sheffield (‘Town ‘Class Cruiser). Served in the Far East, Mediterranean and West Indies. Don left the Royal Navy in March 1953 and joined Surrey Constabulary as PC 646 posted to Horley.

Father of retired Detective Sergeant Geoff Woodhams

Served as a detective constable at Woking in earlier 1960's and where in 1964 was detective sergeant before moving to Walton. Promoted to inspector September 1968 and in September 1970 as detective inspector he transferred from Walton to HQ. Detective Chief Inspector on Farnham Division 1973. By 1983 he was the Detective Chief Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary.

1971 visit to HQ by Princess Anne – Don in Crime Bureau

FARNHAM DIVISION
THE BIG FOUR

PC's Frank Trussler, Ken Gosling, Don Woodhams and Ro
Goacher, all joined the Force on 26th January 1953. Over th
years each gained experience in various parts of the count
and on different departments.

Promotion came to each and since 1st July 1972 when Mr
Trussler took over as Temporary Chief Superintendent, al
four have been stationed on Farnham Division.

Temp. Chief Superintendent Frauk Trussler, head of Farnham. Married with 2 daughters.

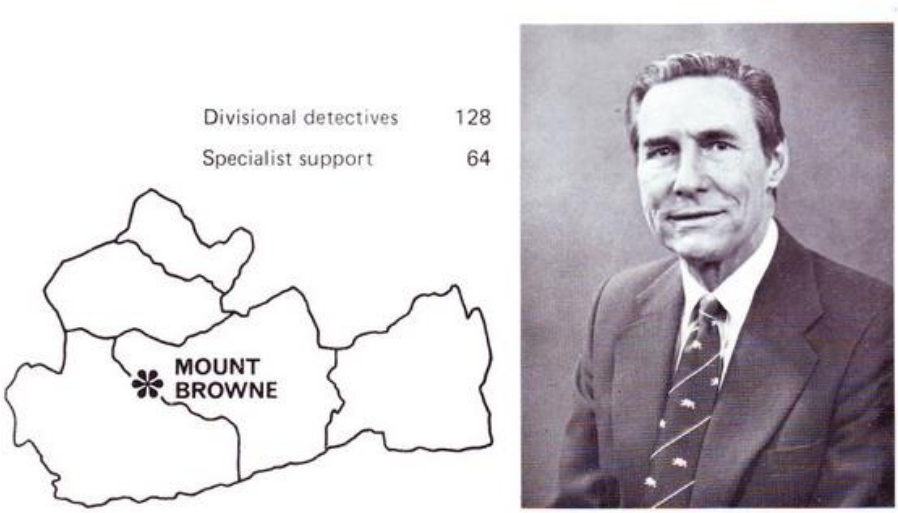
Superintendent Ken Gosling Chief Superintendent's Deputy Married with 1 daughter.

Detective Chief Inspector Don Woodhams, head of Farnham CID, married with two sons and one daughter.

Chief Inspector Roy Goacher, Head of Camberley sub-division. Married with 2 sons.

Off Beat 1973

Don Woodhams front row 3 from left next to Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable John Smith. About 1979



1983 Annual Report

Murder of Glenys Coe 1984

1984 August: Murder: Glenys **Coe murder** at London Road railway station in Guildford.

1984 September 1: Liverpool Daily Post: Woman strangled as she walked her dog. Police are hunting the killer of a 27-year-old woman who was strangled during a five minute walk with her Old English sheepdog. The body of Glenys Coe was found by her boyfriend in bushes at the station car park at Guildford. A few hundred yards from her flat. One of her shoes was wedged in car park railings a few yards from her body. Her unnamed boyfriend began his search after she failed to turn up for her job as manageress for Ladbrooks.

Detectives led by Detective Chief Superintendent Donald Woodhams head of Surrey CID and Assistant Chief Constable Ian McGregor of British Transport Police have set up an incident room in the station car park. House to house enquiries were continuing but there were no clues yet pointing to the killer's identity. Commuters using the station were also questioned.

Glenys described as tall, slim, blond and very attractive was wearing tight white shorts with a shirt tucked in and a pair of high heeled shoes when she was murdered.

WPC Joy Troke (?) in a reconstruction of the crime

On March 26, 1985, a man named Stephen Doyle was arrested in Essex for an offence of rape, and after being interviewed by police officers from Surrey he admitted to Miss Coe's murder. He was convicted of that murder on January 30, 1986.

29 March 1985: The Times: A man aged 24 was **charged** with the murder of Glenys Coe aged 27, betting shop manageress whose strangled body was found in the car park at Guildford railway station last August.

Criminal Gangs before the Surrey Constabulary

Jenny Tuffs and Robert Bartlett

The county constabulary of West Surrey is one of the most efficient in the kingdom 1856

Policing has never been easy! For the parish constable answering to a local magistrate for just one year, was little encouragement to counter organised crime often encompassing several parishes and even counties. The parish system was not imagined as a coming together of constables to form a group for large scale, complex enquiries. Each day was a financial gamble! The victim had to meet the constable's expenses and who was to support his family should he be injured performing his duty and unable to earn. What of the time he took from his work to deal with the crime and investigation. The gangs have always been there and why should I, a humble constable, unpaid, untrained with little support take on a group of hardened villains who knew me well! The constables and magistrates knew "who was at it" but given all the

constraints of the policing system little was to be done. Living close to London at the turn of the century there was the possibility of support from Union Hall court at Southwark with it six detectives or after 1829 might yield a Metropolitan Police officer or one of the still active Bow Street officers. However, what when these police returned to London and the criminal or his family, were still threatening and active in the village or small country town. No longer the constable, the year was up, living close to the family where possibly a member had been transported for 7 or 14 years. No love lost! And they did know where you lived!

Across Surrey and the generations, were several seemingly untouchable gangs that were to be taken head on by the new micro police forces of the 1840s such as Guildford Borough Police, Godalming Borough, Farnham and Dorking. Bravely working together across borough and county boundaries these early police officers were successful in arresting gang members for murder and burglary. This good work was consolidated by the nascent Surrey Constabulary a force that included the best from the micro forces. Biddlecombe, Hollington and Donaldson officers who left their mark on the history of policing.

Members of the criminal gangs were as incorrigible and as violent as their modern counterpart.

Shere

1830-1840: Sheep stealing was rife in the Shere district during the years 1830 to 1840. The parish constables were unable to cope and horses and sheep that disappeared in the south of the county of which most found their way to London. One of the gang's meeting places was The White Horse Inn, Shere and it was not uncommon to see a great deal of poached game on the premises as the men enjoyed themselves. They appeared immune from punishment. In addition to the Shere mob there were gangs at Elstead and a team known as the Hut Men at Peper Harow [2] which were broken up soon after the Surrey Constabulary was formed. [3]

[2] Durrant This should probably read Hindhead
[3] Durrant page 1 and 2. There is some confusion with this information. These Burglars were from a Sussex Gang and were probably not local Shere criminals.

1828 February 5. Surrey Herald. Horrible Atrocity. A few nights since, as a poor woman of the name of Peters was going from Albury to Clandon with a bundle containing wearing apparel etc, which she was conveying to her daughters she was knocked down by a villain who belongs to what is locally termed the "Shere Gang" , a set of desperadoes who have for some time past been the terror of the neighbourhood. After taking the bundle the inhuman wretch applied a bottle contained therein to his lips, supposing it to be filled with spirits, but which on finding its contents were vinegar, he dashed in her face and cut it most severely. Her husband finding her stay longer than he expected set out to meet her and actually reached within a few paces the very spot where she lay weltering in her blood but conceiving she might intend to stay all night with her daughter, he turned back. The poor woman knew the person of her brutal assailant but fearing he would murder her if she told him, she refrained from doing so and ultimately arrived at her home (about a mile and a half), after six hours painful exertion with three of her ribs broken and her body otherwise mangled in a most shocking manner, where she now lies without hope of recovery. We forbear to mention the name of the cowardly who has caused her suffering lest it might defeat the ends of justice which we trust will be fully served by his appearance before a jury of his countrymen.

The Moulsey Gang
Violent gang of burglars: Grove Cottage, West Moulsey 19 November 1828

William Banks was executed at Horsemonger Lane Jail, 11th of January 1830, for an armed burglary as part of a gang.

The Reverend William Warrington was a gentleman of large property, who resided at Grove Cottage, West Moulsey, in the vicinity of that well-known spot, Moulsey Hurst, Surrey. On the night of Wednesday, the 19th of November 1828, his house was entered by four burglars, and a great quantity of valuable property carried off. Mr Warrington's house adjoined that of Mr Jeffs, a magistrate of the county, and a ladder, which had been accidentally left in the garden of the latter gentleman, was employed by the thieves in effecting an entrance to the house which they had determined to rob. The circumstances which attended the burglary were as follows.

Between one and two o'clock on Wednesday morning Mrs Warrington was in her bedchamber, engaged in writing, and Mr Warrington was in the same room in bed asleep, when the former was terrified by hearing some persons at the back part of the house attempting to force a window on the first floor, which opened on to a staircase and to a passage which led to the bedroom. Before she had time to alarm her husband, the fastenings of the window were wrenched off, without breaking the glass, and as she opened her bedroom door, she beheld four men, who had entered by the window by means of the ladder before mentioned, in the act of ascending the stairs and approaching her chamber. Her fears were so excessive that she was struck speechless for a few seconds. When she recovered, she shrieked, and exclaimed: "Good God, we shall be murdered; there are thieves in the house!"

Her husband was awakened instantly by her cries, and he had just time to leap from his bed and proceed in his shirt to the mantelpiece, on which he constantly kept a loaded pistol, before

the four villains entered the chamber. He seized the pistol, levelled it at one of the thieves, and fired, but without effect. The first man who entered the room, however, a dark, ferocious-looking fellow, in turn drew from under his coat a pistol, and presented it at Mr Warrington. The villain pulled the trigger, but the powder did not ignite. He re-cocked it and pulled it a second time but it flashed in the pan. Mrs Warrington fell upon her knees, and in the most earnest and affecting manner implored the villains not to murder her husband, but to take all the property without interruption. The thieves then produced some cords (which they had stolen from Mr Jeffs's garden) and tied Mr and Mrs Warrington's hands and feet. Their hands they tied fast behind their backs and cautioned them to be silent as they valued their lives. They left Mr and Mrs Warrington in their bedroom for a few minutes, and proceeded upstairs to the servants' sleeping apartments, and there they bound two female servants (the only persons in the house beside Mr and Mrs W.) with cords, in the same manner as they had previously bound the others. After they had bound them the four robbers carried them downstairs to a vault which was under the house, and fastened them in that cold place, with scarcely any covering.

The villains then returned to Mr Warrington's bedroom, searched his clothes, and broke open his desks and drawers, and, in truth, ransacked the house completely. They took cash to the amount of about thirty pounds, and jewels and plate of considerable value, with which they decamped. The servants had been confined for several hours in the vault when one of them, after much exertion, released one of her hands from the cord and forced her way through the door of the vault. After ascending some steps, she found another door fastened, and she had to break through that before she could assist her master and mistress, whom she found in a most deplorable state of agitation. She unloosed the cords which secured them and, having released her fellow servant also, they alarmed Mr Jeffs's family and the other neighbours. Mr Warrington found that not only all his portable property of value had been carried off, but that the villains had stolen a horse, valued at eighty guineas, from the stable, and had taken his phaeton from his chaise-house, and by these means had carried off their booty. Mr Warrington

sent information of the robbery to Mr Cooke, constable of Kingston, who set off in pursuit of the robbers. He was able to trace the phaeton and horse and two of the robbers from the house of Mr Warrington, by a very circuitous route, to Walton Bridge, and from thence through several by-roads to Knightsbridge.

On the same day Mr Warrington also gave information of the robbery at Bow Street, and Ellis, Ruthven and Bishop[4] were directed to institute an investigation, with a view to apprehending the thieves. Upon the arrival of the officers at the house of Mr Warrington various minute circumstances transpired which induced a strong belief in their minds that the robbery had not been committed by experienced thieves, but that it had been "put up," or sanctioned by some person in the house. The clumsy manner in which the boxes and drawers had been opened seemed to point to the first impression, and the undoubted circumstance of six buckshot having been withdrawn from Mr Warrington's pistol, which had been lying on the mantelpiece for several days, led to the latter conclusion. Suspicion seemed to attach to one of the female servants, who had been familiarly accosted by her name, "Fanny," by one of the robbers, and who had been the first to secure her escape from the cords by which she had been confined, and she was taken into custody. After a few days' imprisonment, however, the officers declared themselves unable to produce any positive evidence against her, and she was discharged.

From this time the most anxious exertions were made by the police officers to secure the robbers. Every means in their power was tried; but although they succeeded in tracing them by witnesses to London, where Mr Warrington's phaeton and horse were found, they were unable to discover who were the persons by whom the burglary had been perpetrated.

In the month of July 1829, however, the long-pending mystery was solved. A man named Barnett, a Jew, had been convicted of a burglary in the house of Mr Colebatch, in Thames Street, for which he had been sentenced to transportation for life; but, anxious to save himself from the infliction of this punishment, he tendered information as to the parties who had composed "The Moulsey Gang," as they were now called, upon condition of his liberty being restored to him. The proposition was at once accepted, and he immediately impeached Banks and four other men, named John Smith, William Johnson, James Taylor and William Potts -- alias Emery. The officers instantly set about endeavouring to procure the apprehension of these persons, and Cragg, a resolute officer of Bow Street, was directed to proceed in search of Banks. This fellow was a notorious thief and was suspected to have been concerned in many robberies which had recently been committed. Cragg had heard that he had frequently declared his resolution not to be taken alive. Determined to succeed in his object, however, Cragg attired himself in the garb of a butcher and proceeded in search of him. Many days elapsed before he could find him; but at length he met with him and, rushing at him, presented a pistol at his head, and called upon him to surrender himself a prisoner, Banks appeared astounded at this salutation, and made no resistance, but exclaimed "I am a dead man." When his person was searched, a loaded pistol was found in his pocket, and on his back was a coat which was a part

[4] Bow Street officers

of the produce of a robbery in which he had been recently concerned, in the house of Mr Campion, at Waltham Cross.

The other prisoners were apprehended about the same time; and Potts was proved to have pawned a pair of shoes which also had been stolen from Mr Campion's. Upon their examination before the magistrates at Bow Street, Banks's participation in both burglaries was clearly proved, and he was committed for trial. Both Mr and Mrs Warrington identified him as one of the persons who had entered their house but pointed him out as having acted with some degree of humanity and strongly protested against the exercise of any cruelty by his companions.

Banks alone was committed for trial upon the charge of burglary at Mr Warrington's, the evidence against the other prisoners not being sufficiently conclusive to warrant their being indicted, and he was found guilty, and sentenced to death at the succeeding Surrey Assizes.

After his conviction he professed himself to be perfectly willing to meet his fate, as he knew nothing of a state hereafter; he declared that all he cared about being hanged was for the pain it would cause him. He refused to receive any consolation from the chaplain and was perfectly unmoved up to the time of his being pinioned.

He was hanged at Horsemonger Lane jail on the 11th of January 1830.[5]

A gang of persistent poachers

1828 Poachers Reigate: A gang of persistent poachers were active in the Croydon, Reigate area had apparently decided not to be taken alive and were therefore difficult and dangerous to detain. James Tasker one of the under-keepers at Merstham was on watch on Tuesday morning at about one o'clock with his brother and another man when they heard the sound of a gun. By the light of the moon the three men ran to the spot and saw two men armed with a gun. The men ran off pursued by the gamekeepers. Tasker challenged the men to stop or he would shoot but this was ignored. The men were cornered and turned pointing their weapons at Tasker who immediately threw himself to the ground in fear of being shot. Tasker had outrun his fellow keepers and the men noticing this and that Tasker was on the ground again ran off.

Tasker got to his feet and chased the men and as he closed one turned and shot him in the lower abdomen causing a dreadful wound and requiring his colleagues to stop with him and break off the pursuit. He was conveyed home and was without hope of recovery. Information having been given at Union-hall[6], Johns and Reid and acting on information they were given when they arrived in Merstham they arrested a man Nicholson a former under-keeper, for the attempted murder. The officers met with considerable resistance in securing this man whom they apprehended in a small cottage on Croydon Common. When they entered the door, Nicholson on seeing them armed himself with a long knife and running up a perpendicular

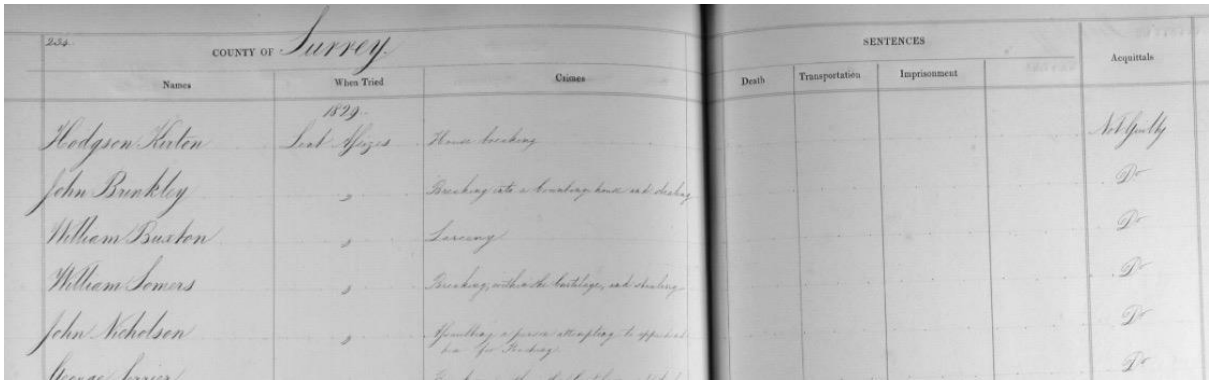
[5] http://www.exclassics.com/newgate/ng600.htm
[6] The magistrates court with detectives responsible for Surrey side of the Thames and out as far as Farnham.

flight of stairs stood at the head of the staircase and flourishing about the weapon swore he would murder any man who attempted to take him.

Johns and Reid little daunted by his threats ascended after him, soon disarmed him, made him their prisoner and conveyed him forthwith to Merstham before a magistrate. When taken to see Tasker he was immediately identified as one of the men who fired at him clearly seen in the light of the moon. He was sent for trial. Subsequently the officers detained Adams, Pratt and Richardson belonging to the same gang, at Smithen Bottom. On seeing the officers these three furnished themselves with a dangerous weapon each, being a thick stick, a yard in length, loaded with lead at one end, and being determined on resistance fought with them until being threatened with being shot.

They were handcuffed and taken before a resident magistrate. On being searched several wires, snares and other engines used for the destruction of game were found in their possession. The prisoners were identified as members of the gang who committed such depredations in that part of the country and kept the inhabitants in a state of terror and alarm were, by the decision of the magistrate, committed for three months each to hard labour at Guildford gaol. Nicholson was to be tried at the ensuing Assizes for shooting Tasker who remained in a precarious state from the dangerous nature of his wound. [7]

Several newspapers around 6th January 1829 have the following. Surrey Assizes. The trial of J Nicholson, a poacher for shooting John (sic) Tasker, a gamekeeper stands over to the next assize. John Nicholson was at the Lent assizes in 1829 found not guilty.


234

COUNTY OF Surrey

Names	When Tried	Crimes	SENTENCES: Death	Transportation	Imprisonment	Acquittals
	1829					
Hodgson Kirton	Lent Assizes	House breaking				Not guilty
John Brinkley	"	Breaking into a dwelling house and stealing				Do
William Buston	"	Larceny				Do
William Somers	"	Breaking with others into buildings and stealing				Do
John Nicholson	"	Injuring a person attempting to apprehend him for Poaching				Do
[illegible]						

John Nicholson fifth entry, "Injuring? a person attempting to apprehend him for poaching." Not Guilty

The Shere Gang 1833

In 1833[8] for the Poor Law Commission Report to the House of Commons, Mr Maclean gave a report for Surrey and Sussex. Speaking of the parish of Shere he says, "There is an organized

[7] 27 December 1828 Jackson's Oxford Journal
[8] This was the time of the Swing riots – agricultural disturbances

body of men in this parish known as 'the Shere Gang' and who are the terror of the whole neighbourhood. The members of it always have money without any ostensible means of earning or obtaining it, as they neither work nor apply to the parish for relief. The farmers and others are afraid to employ them, and equally afraid to refuse them work. When any depredation or outrage is committed, someone or more of these is apprehended, but generally escape commitment, as not one of them was ever known to split, nor was any crime ever punished upon information derived from them. One of the most notorious was hung for burning Albury Mill in the winter of 1830-31[9], and seven or eight have been transported at various times. Those belonging to the gang are known and are objects of universal terror.

There is no resident magistrate in the parish and on a recent occasion it was necessary to send seven miles to obtain a warrant to commit a man. Some vigorous measure of police is necessary for the security in this part of Surrey as well as in the almost adjoining parishes of Woking, Purford, Egham and Chobham, in each of which fires have occurred within the last few weeks' From the whole of the evidence which must excite the most painful interest in the mind of every man who reads it, the conclusion is inevitable, that the time is come when monstrous evils produced by the abuses of the poor laws must be grappled with." (Englishman 7th April)

The Captain Swing agricultural riots across the southeast of England in the early 1830s impacted the relationships of some farm workers and landowner. In Surrey there were numerous outbreaks of violence and damage with only the parish constable and magistrate, helped on some occasions by the army to restore the peace. There is little doubt that the coming together of these aggrieved men would have terrorised parts of the country.

1831 January 22: Hampshire Telegraph. Warner, the **incendiary who was executed** last week for setting fire to Mr Frank's mill at Albury in Surrey, belonged, it appears, to a desperate gang who have been a terror to that neighbourhood and a few days previous to his execution a notice was thrown into the premises of J Smallpeice esq of which the following was a literal copy,

"If warner is mured Frank Dromans an Smallpiece shal dye I could clear im allhether you fals swaring villing."

On the park palings of H Drummond esq was written, "It was me fired the Mill - starve and fire shall go together."

Warner, however, we understand made a full confession and it is reported has implicated some of his former associates in crime.

[9] James Warner, a labourer, aged 30, was sentenced to death for setting fire to Albury. The judge at the trial held out to him not the slightest hope of mercy. At the trial several witnesses proved the prisoner had used threatening language, some of them adding that the prisoner also said, "If you owe a person a grudge, don't go in a mob, but go and do it secretly, what you do keep to yourself.

1831 November 27 Bell's Weekly Messenger - About nine o'clock on Tuesday evening an **alarm of fire** was given which proved to be at Mr Whitbourn's, at Brook Farm, Albury, in the parish of Albury, near to the seat of H Drummond Esq, and about five miles from Guildford which destroyed a barley rick containing about 10 or 12 loads. The inhabitants of Albury and Shere had scarcely retired to their homes from Mr Whitbourn's fire when they were alarmed by the intelligence that another fire had broken out at Hollister Farm, in the occupation of Mr William Baker, about a mile distant from Shere and two miles and a half from the former fire, which consumed a valuable oat rick containing about 20 loads. Both Mr Whitbourn and Mr Baker are very respectable men and are respected by their neighbours. It is now about 12 months since Mr Whitbourn had a rick of corn burnt and Mr Frank's flour mill was burnt to the ground, for the latter a man of the name of Warner was tried and convicted at the last Surrey Winter Assizes and was executed shortly after.

1847 October 30 Hampshire Telegraph - The late case of **stabbing two game keepers** at West Horsley Surrey. On Friday evening between the hours of seven and eight o'clock, Mr Charles Hollington, inspector of Guildford Police with the assistance of some gunners of the Royal Artillery succeeded in apprehending Arthur and Reginald Bristow, who are charged with stabbing two gamekeepers named George Targett and James Martin at Horsley near Guildford on the 9th instant. A reward of £100 was offered by the Home Office for the apprehension of the prisoners and Inspector Hollington first traced them to Bristol and afterwards to London at Woolwich, at which latter place he apprehended them at the Crown and Cushion public house. On Monday the two prisoners were taken before the magistrates at the Town Hall, Guildford for examination. The magistrates present were, the Earl of Lovelace, Colonel Summer, etc. The examination was a lengthened one and in the course of it the two prisoners, Reginald and Arthur Bristow were identified as the two men who actually inflicted the stabs on the unfortunate keepers, who were both in attendance. At the close of the examination the prisoners were remanded for a fortnight and were removed back to Guildford goal. The two keepers have fortunately both recovered although for many days they were quite at death's door. Martin, the underkeeper is now quite recovered but Targett, the head keeper, although he is now declared to be convalescent, his health is still rendered by the nature of his wounds, very precarious. The Shere **Gang**, a description of which is most graphically given in the Poor Law Commissioners' Report for the county of Surrey, has during the past few years been gradually broken up and the two prisoners are two of the remnant still remaining and which it is to be hoped will be altogether destroyed before long.

Arthur and Reginald Bristow were later found guilty on the count of the indictment of intent to cause grievous bodily harm and sentenced to be transported for15 years.

Isaacs' Gang 1840s

The origins and demise of the brutal Isaacs' gang that operated in rural Surrey and Sussex in the 1840s. These were hardened dangerous criminals with about 20 members coalescing around the gang captain John Isaacs.

This is an extraordinary tale of vicious criminals who came together to form a gang that terrorised Sussex and Surrey mostly during the 1840s culminating in their capture in 1850 and 1851. Those aware of the origins of the Surrey Constabulary will know of the murder of the 54-year-old Reverend Hollest in his bed at Frimley Parsonage in 1850, a crime that led directly to the formation of the Surrey Constabulary. [10] What has been lost in time was that the murder was part of a series of vicious burglaries including the homes of several reverent gentlemen. The crimes were unravelled through dedicated and brave police work by a number of men who served in small borough police forces, responding professionally and with great determination and bravery. These forces are best described as micro as they normally consisted of less than four men.

These men, all referred to as superintendents, (more superintending than the modern usage meaning a senior officer) were Biddlecombe of the Godalming Borough, Hollington of Guildford Borough and Morten assisted by Constable Dadson of Tunbridge Wells police. These men took great personal risk encountering very violent men, travelling widely across the counties arresting hardened criminals with little to lose.

There were a significant number of crimes committed by the gang, (one report has 40 burglaries in their name) revealed as the evidence unravels. Much of the information comes from press cuttings but other sources have also been consulted. Possibly a part of this series of crimes were those committed by the so-called Sussex Burglars in 1845. After committing their crimes, they retreated to the areas of the country where the Isaac gang lived and committed crime. The Sussex burglars were pursued with great tenacity by Biddlecombe until they were arrested by him in North Hampshire. The first murder directly linked to Isaacs' Gang was committed on the downs near Brighton. There was no trial so it can be assumed it was undetected, but Biddlecombe was convinced that members of the gang were responsible.

Most crimes at the time were referred to as "robbery" be it a larceny (now theft) or burglary of a house, a shop, or a public house.

It is a story best told elsewhere, of how Superintendent Morten and Constable Dadson of Tunbridge Wells, crossed to the dark side, abusing their powers and trust as law enforcement officers. Both Morten and Dadson had to leave England in great haste and whilst Dadson ended up buying a house and running a bakery business in Brooklyn, New York, it is not known where Morten moved to after both fled to Belgium. For the full story of the downfall of these men see "Heroes and Villains: The Tunbridge Wells Police scandal of 1853" Derek Oakensen, Archaeologia Cantiana v.145 (2024) Kent Archaeological Society.) [11] [12] [13]

[10] Joan Lock Scotland Yard's First cases 2011
[11] Email Derek Oakensen to Robert Bartlett 1 May 2021
[12] Email Derek Oakensen to Robert Bartlett 1 May 2021
[13] For the full story of the downfall of these men see "Heroes and Villains: The Tunbridge Wells Police scandal of 1853" Derek Oakensen, Archaeologia Cantiana v.145 (2024) Kent Archaeological Society.

The bad guys [14]

It is possible from the published material to draw together very brief descriptions of the main players in the gang. Names are often spelt differently in the reports, they all seemed to have alias and nicknames and so it is not easy following the "career path" of individuals.

- One of the criminals who turned Queen's evidence, James Hamilton said the gang consisted of himself, Levi Harwood and Samuel Jones (hung) Samuel Harwood (hung), John and Edward Isaac, William Brooks, Joseph Carter, John and James Jones alias Smith, Hiram Smith, Thomas Foot alias Morgan, William Hillyer, John Brooks, Mary Crowder, Sarah White and James James. Most if not hung, were transported for life.

- John Isaac was the elected captain and all the others acted under his direction. They were all sworn to obey the instructions of the captain and if any attempted to back out or refusal to take part in a robbery or murder he or she would be instantly shot and if anyone left the gang without the consent of the captain, he or she would be overtaken and shot.

- William Brooks, alias Hayler: 33 years, born in Kent, never went to school and at 15 began to work on the railway. When he was about 24, he took to hawking, harvesting, and hopping, the occupations of travellers often used as a cloak for less honest pursuits. He met with Hamilton and Edward Isaac engaging in almost nightly robberies at Shipley Sussex, Hambledon Surrey, Cuckfield, the same night at Penvall's. Houses at Bolney, Balcombe, Horley, Haywards Heath, Lingfield, Public House Old Pie Corner, Frensham, Uckfield, Kirdford, Farnham, Chailey, and I am sure many more houses. A shop in Farnham, then a series near Lewes including The Five Bells at Chailey. The parsons' house at Frensham, the vicarage at Lingfield a vicar's house Rev. O E Vidal at Arlington in Sussex, another vicarage at Chelsham, and the burglary and murder at Frimley vicarage. The Uckfield burglary was then planned, and a wheelwright's shop entered, and tools stolen for use in that crime.

- Joseph Carter aged 25 was deserted by his father and was always a beggar but brought up as a basket maker before moving to the railways where he met up with the rest of the gang. He was to admit 24 cases of burglary and one of sacrilege. The hut tenanted by Morgan and Carter on Woking Common is situated in the heart of a notorious resort of gipsies, vagabonds, and other indifferent characters. Joseph Carter's alias was Cockman.

- Thomas Morgan aged 34: a gypsy who began very early as a poacher then fell in with his uncle a traveller with a sleeping van and dealt in horses. Stayed with him until he was transported for the first time, 6 years in Bermuda, returning as a traveller selling razors, pins etc until he fell in with the gang. "The prisoners were described "mostly of the ferocious and repulsive countenance, especially Morgan who is evidently much older than his companions." Alias Thomas Toot.

- Edward Isaac aged 31, a rather superior looking man when compared with his compatriots, whose father always worked in the tin trade and was a robber who travelled the country.

[14] The Blackburn Standard July 7, 1852

He was brought up making baskets, pegs, mats, and brooms travelling about the country. All the family attended the harvest and hopping when they would take wood, rob gardens and turnip fields. Possesses great natural shrewdness and much more information than could be expected. Gypsy blood flows in his veins.

- William Hillyer aged 23: father a veteran of Waterloo and a French mother he was brought up in France until aged 6, one of 13 children all of whom did well except William and a younger brother who followed his bad example. Went to school for about twelve months and at 15 joined the railway meeting Morgan at Goodwood races and went with him harvesting. Morgan would break into houses and Hillyer would keep watch when people were working in the fields. Hillyer stayed at Farnham with Morgan and broke into a farm. Left Morgan and teamed up with George May, Hiram Smith breaking into Mr Stovold's house, he then teamed up with Brooks and committed many more crimes. The Stovold burglary again involved five men storming into the bedroom. Hiram Smith was on this burglary.

- John Smith alias Hiram**:** aged 24 an Uckfield burglar and belonged to the lowest order of travellers. John was to become an "Approver" (turned Queen's Evidence) for the Frimley murder trial. The Times described at the Hollest murder trial "Hiram Smith who appears to have been the ringleader and plotter of the burglary is about the middle height, with narrow contracted shoulders and a stooping figure. His face, which wears a sallow unhealthy hue, is extremely forbidding in expression, the features having the sharp prominent character which marks the rogue, while the doubtful and hesitating glance of the eye indicates a disposition at once cunning and irresolute."[15] Of the four prisoners, by dress and manners, he seems to have been the most respectably connected.

- James Smith: aged 18 both Uckfield Burglars belonging to the lowest order of travellers. Also known as James Jones also alias Richard Fowler, alias Trowler. James Jones is also about the middle size, his features flat and repulsive, and his whole physiognomy expressive of a life of depravity and crime. Both he and Levi Harwood look like bold determined fellows, capable of carrying through any deed of violence they may once have undertaken.

- Samuel Harwood was married and had a child and came from the Guildford area where he was well known to the local police as was his brother. The Times described him at the Hollest trial as "he had great bodily strength, immense limbs and a slight cast in his eye, but good features and more frankness of manner than the rest. Found not guilty of the Hollest murder but immediately arrested on other charges.

- Levi Harwood who was unmarried, and in 1851 hung for the Frimley murder came from the Guildford area where he was well known to the local police as was his brother. Was convicted 1841 sentenced to one year's hard labour, since which time has several summary convictions for assaulting the police etc. Accused of firing the shot during the Hollest

[15] Joan Lock Scotland Yard's First cases 2011 page 129

murder was according to The Times: "A ruffianly looking man with course and rugged features on a face betraying mastery of violent passions. He looked like one of those idle fellows, half ostlers, half anything else who were seen loitering about country inns waiting for any job that may turn up."[16] Also:

- Samuel Jones alias Burbage alias James Jones was to be hung for the Frimley murder. Hollington arrested Jones on March the 13th 1850 on suspicion of a burglary at Mr Horne's linen draper Guildford (whose house was broken into on the 14th of February in the same year) and property was found belonging to Mr Horn's housekeeper. He was committed to the Guildford borough sessions but owing to a month having elapsed between the burglary and apprehension, and the prisoner stating he had bought the property, the jury ignored the bill. Described by The Times during the Hollest murder trial" had a flat and repulsive features and his whole physiognomy was expressive of a life of depravity and crime. He and Levi Harwood looked bold and determined fellows capable of carrying through and deed of violence they undertook."[17]

- James Hamilton alias Butcher who lived on Farnham Common in Surrey with Carter, became Approver for the Uckfield and trial admitting involvement in a range of vicious burglaries

- Joseph Carton

- George May

- Elizabeth Oliver, common law wife of William Brooks and a receiver – Chailey Burglary, Hayward Heath Burglary; alias Cockman. Sentenced to seven years transportation.

- James and his wife Sarah Edwards – both receivers

- Mary Crowder, the lady who lived with Levi Harwood

- Sarah White

- George Brisk, a companion of both Levi Harwood and Jones. Hollington found property in his house the product of several burglaries in the county. He was sentenced to seven years transportation.

- James Gulliver alias Jim Bull receivers with property traced to burglary. Cohabited with the sister of Brooks.

Not a very nice bunch! These brief descriptions give some idea of what the public and the emerging police officers were facing on dark, cold and dangerous nights across a sparsely populated and very rural south of England.

[16] Joan Lock Scotland Yard's First cases 2011 page 129
[17] Joan Lock Scotland Yard's First cases 2011 page 130

Gypsies, tramps, trampers, and travellers were the cause of great concern to the general population as a source of crime and violence numbering across the country in hundreds if not thousands. Many were driven into that way of life through poverty, unemployment, possibly drink and violence. For some it was what they were brought up to. A way of living probably impossible to break out of once deeply involved.

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain was greatly dependent on seasonal and tramping labour. The primary winter home for Gypsies, travellers and seasonal labourers was London. In a working-class mirror to the elite's "London Season", October and November saw hundreds and thousands of men, women and children returning to the capital from hop-picking and market gardening, from touring the fairs and tramping in search of work. Some were self-identified Gypsies, others were travelling Irish, and still others were the settled London poor either on the "tramp" or out seeking harvest wages in the hop fields of Kent or market gardens of South East England. These people were over-represented in the Proceedings at the Old Bailey. To be added were the unemployed, the unemployable, the career criminal, agricultural depression, poverty, and homelessness and in the earlier part of the century, those men discharged from service following the Napoleonic wars. [18]

A double murder of an elderly couple at Fetcham in 1826 opened public awareness to travelling criminals going from fair to fair across the south of England, living in tents on commons or on the turnpike. This crime demonstrated how difficult it was to trace and arrest people within this ever mobile and often dangerous community.

There were criminal gangs living on Farnham and Woking Commons and on the county boundary at Copthorne Common and forest. At Norwood in what is now Croydon there was one of the largest gypsy camps in the southeast.

These itinerants often covered very large distances usually on foot, speedily, accompanied often by a donkey with their tented home packed on it, moving from fair to fair, market garden to hop farm or orchard, often robbing and committing a range of crimes. The problems were exacerbated by the development of the railways with the movement of lawless navvies [19]across the country. Many of the Isaacs' Gang met up when involved with working for the railway probably as navvies. [20]

The Isaacs' Gang was not like an American "Hole in the Wall" gang in cowboy country who lived and spent their time together. These people came together to commit crime and dispersed to differing campsites or homes, responding to a call from Isaacs to commit a specific often planned, series of crimes.

[18] http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Gypsy-traveller.jsp
[19] Navies killed Inspector Donaldson in Haslemere in 1854
[20] Durrant History Surrey Constabulary 1851-1951 page 2

It took the considerable courage of a few men, "arch competitors" for the glory and more importantly, rewards to come together and bring the depredations to an end. Enter Biddlecombe, Hollington, Morten and Dadson from a generation of police officers from micro-forces. Their tale is long and complex and best uncovered on the website www.surrey-constabulary.com.

Following the detection of the gang punishment followed. Some were hung but most were transported. Recently a number of associated press cuttings have been uncovered and are transcribed below. These cuttings bring more details to "transportation" and give an insight to how the men and women of the gang lived during their depredations of these rural counties.

1850 November 6; Blackburn Standard: The late **burglary at Arlington**. All doubts seem to be removed that the burglaries at Frimley and Arlington were committed by the same party. It may be remembered that the latter burglary was committed on the night after the late explosion at Seaford[21]. Arlington is only a short distance from Seaford and it is now known that Hiram Smith (Isaacs' Gang member) was in the neighbourhood for two previous days and that he sold a jug (he was a hawker of crockery ware) at the Dicker public house, but a man named Watts, living at Pevensey saw him in the crowd of spectators at the explosion. In addition to this, Miss Capper, sister of the Rev Vidall, has seen the party charged with the Frimley murder and she was in no doubt that Hiram Smith is the man who caught hold of her arm and that Levi Harwood was the man who seized Mr Vidall on the staircase. Should a conviction fail in the Frimley case other indictments will probably be resorted to with regard to the Arlington robbery.

1851 June 6 Carlisle Journal: The **Frimley Gang** at Preston. Seven men of this notorious gang of burglars are now in the Preston House of Correction,[22] undergoing the usual probationary term prior to transportation. Their names are James Smith alias Hones, William Hyllier, Edward Isaacs (brother to the sworn captain of the gang, Jos Carter, Wm Brooks, John Smith alias Hones and James Morgan alias Toot. Carter is the man who told the judge after passing sentence that he would murder the first man he met when he got abroad.

1851 October 3: Evening Mail London. Woolwich Oct 1st. **The Anna Maria, female convict ship** in charge of Surgeon Superintendent M'Crea at present lying off the Royal Arsenal has taken on board about 200 female convicts, several of whom have children with them, for conveyance to Hobart Town. The majority of the convicts are of Irish extraction and mostly from Liverpool. There are two, however, on board each under sentence of 14years transportation in consequence of articles being found in their possession from male associates of the **Uckfield gang**. A boy, the offspring of one of these women was put on board yesterday to accompany his mother to Hobart Town. The child was born in goal and is now upwards of two years of age and has been well taken care of in one of the workhouses in East Kent since

[21] A massive explosion, designed to bring down a large part of the cliffs at Seaford, was planned for 19 September 1850
[22] Is most likely Preston in Lancashire

April last. **1851 October 7:** Sussex Advertiser. The **Uckfield Burglary**. Among 200 female convicts received on board the **Anna Maria** for conveyance to Hobart Town was prisoner Elizabeth Oliver, who it will be remembered is under sentence of 14 years transportation in consequence of articles found in her possession which she had received from her male associates of the **Uckfield gang**[23]. Her daughter (sic) who is nearly two years old was put on board the vessel on Wednesday to accompany her mother to Hobart Town. The prisoner Eliza Howis, for the **Portslade burglary** by the **same gang** was also sent off at the same time.

Details for Convict Ship Anna Maria states she left on 4th October 1851 arriving in Van Dieman's Land on 26th January 1852. Eliza Howis, a prisoner was born 1828 and died 1901, aged 73 years. She was transported with two children and one of her children, James died on board of dysentery in 1851. Eliza was sent to Cascades Female Factory and given permission to marry convict, Frederick Butler. They married 28th February 1853 at Hobart and had a further 11 children.

She is appointed to sail on 1st December. (sic) The other member of the Uckfield gang on board was Elizabeth Oliver, a basket maker born 1820, death unknown. Both these women had a sentence term of 14years.

From National Archive collection: On route to Van Dieman's Land Eliza Howis aged 23, female convict was put on the sick list with dysentery 13th December 1851 and discharged 21st December 1851. James Howis aged 3 years, child of female convict was put on sick list with dysentery 7th January 1852, died 17th January 1852 at sea, He was badly fed and had previously been ill with bowel complaints, he suffered much pain and his motions were very bloody. Also, a William Howis child of female convict aged 1 year put on sick list with dysentery 28th January 1852 and discharged 30th January 1952. William had a vaccination on board the ship on 18th October 1851, but it was unsuccessful.

1851 November 12: London Evening Standard. On Monday, the hired **convict Ship, Aboukir** came to moorings off Woolwich Dockyard where she will receive on board 400 male convicts for conveyance to Hobart Town, amongst them being the notorious burglar, **Isaacs** and the gang that were concerned with the **Frimley murders**. (sic)

1852 July 21: Blackburn Standard: **Narratives of Crime**. From the 28th report of Rev John Clay, Chaplain to Preston House of Correction, Lancashire.

Criminals Among "Travellers" Gipseys (sic) &c

It appears desirable that a Class which fosters into action such lawless and desperate men as these should have some attention paid to it; that its marauding activity should be repressed; and its members should be brought within the pale of settled civilised life. No doubt more is known respecting these people in the counties infested by them, than I can derive from the

[23] Also known as Isaacs' gang

statements of a few convicts; and it maybe, that practices submitted to for generations are not so keenly felt as the might otherwise might be; but the daring and brutal spirit latterly displayed by these profligate vagrants may suggest the propriety of more minute inquiry into their habits, which – so long tolerated – have at last grown to an intolerable head. It is not improbable that, on some points, the information given to me may be new; and that a record of it may be useful; and therefore, in pursuance of the intention I have already expressed, I beg to offer what I have gathered from none or ten independent statements relating to the same facts, and substantially agreeing with each other.

The Gipseys, Romaneys, half-breeds, and travellers so far as my informants are personally cognisant of the facts, roam, chiefly over the counties of Oxford, Berks, Surrey, Sussex, Hants, Kent, Dorset, Devon Cornwall, Wilts, Somerset, Hereford and some of the adjoining Welsh counties. Their occupations sometimes real more frequently pretended, are hawking, tinkering, knife grinding, basket, mat, clothes peg, and broom making; umbrella mending; fiddling and fortune telling. "They live in camps." "Some have house wagons and carts; sometimes they lie in out-buildings." A few of them, especially those that become nearer the true Gipsey, deal in horses. The real means of support for the majority of them are derived from imposture, trespass, theft, robbery from fields and from barns; stealing fowls sheep and horses to say nothing of housebreaking and burglary. Their impostures are generally practised upon ignorant and silly domestics who beside being cajoled out of their own property, become unconsciously or willingly instrumental to the effecting more serious robberies from their masters or mistresses. "They entice young men and young women too, to go off with them and often get them transported." Two of these very convicts Hillyer and Gulvin had been themselves "ticed off." Hillyer lived with them a considerable time, learning their language and acquiring their habits. The account he gives of them is fuller than the accounts of other men, partly from his evident desire to tell all he knows, and partly because the manners and practices of his dangerous associates, contrasted with what he had been accustomed to at home, made the more lively impression on his mind. In all that he states he is confirmed by the separate testimony of his companions in crime, he speaks of what, no doubt, is generally suspected, if not generally known, namely that these theft-vagrants move through the county, carrying rushes and pretending to be chair menders; "though they have never mended a chair in their lives;" or on pretence of hawking small articles at farm houses, carefully noting what may be pilfered, and returning at night to profit by the observations they have made. Sheep stealing is common among them. Hillyer states and Morgan confesses, that the latter, in conjunction with Hamilton stole a sheep every week. They went off twenty or thirty miles when they had got one they would get another and be off again.

At the fairs they will ride off with horses and go into the forest country where they keep them for a while then sell them.

It is Hillyer's opinion that " if there were not so many Gipseys, travellers and fortune tellers there would not be so many robberies. They get the servants" he says both men and women, to rob their masters. They do not frighten them to do it but entice them. They are very selfish and greedy. They have tried to make me get my father's potatoes and they often wanted me to tell

them where my sister lived and at last I told them. She lived where there was only two or three ladies. ---- Many of them are guilty of assaults when they are in company but single, they are cowards. In companies they will carry sticks with lead or iron in the end. They are barbarous, barbarous.

In Hampshire they have the Gipsey leagues. The lead of young chaps to the fairs and clubs and entice them to take anything they can get and afterwards the Gipsey " Wolf it up."

If a farmer will not allow them to stop on his farm they will do him some harm if they go thirty miles to do it. They will let out his cattle of pull down his fences. Morgan says " They hurt the farmer very much. I have known them do £30 worth of damage by turning fifteen or sixteen horses, besides donkeys into a field of young wheat. If they have a spite against anybody they will do them harm one way or another." One of their modes for taking sheep is this, according to Morgan, Hillyer and, as will subsequently be seen to E.R. They take some wool from the sheep's back, cram it down its throat and choke it; and on the next day they will go and beg it, the owner not suspecting anything" Several beer shops are specially named in Brighton and Guildford, the landlords of which " are as deep as any of the Gipseys" aiding and abetting them as. Poachers, utterers of base coin or housebreakers.

Hillyer and Carter describe as well as they can camp life of these people and the means they resort to for procuring animal food. Their sheep stealing has already been noticed. The farmer's pigs are also objects of their cunning and of their unclean appetites. Hillyer says " many of them live in a way `I should not like – finding out any of the farmer's animals that have died and eating them." This fact is confirmed by all the other members of the Uckfield gang, most of whom state in addition that these same animals the pigs especially, meet their end unfairly. Carter affirms that "half bred gipsies visit the farmhouses and under the pretence of poisoning rats destroy one or more of the pigs; and the women on the following morning, happening to come to the place beg the carcasses which are carried away and eaten." That "something is given to the pigs" to destroy them without making them unfit for Gipsey's and "travellers" appetites is asserted by six of the seven Uckfield burglars. Hillyer whose statements I am satisfied are what he believes himself to be true declares, " The Gipseys steal live pigs by putting mustard on their noses which prevents he pig from making a noise so they may be carried anywhere." Hedgehogs constitute a favourite article of diet with these people and, according to Morgan " they will give anything for a dog that will catch them." (E.R. who was first induced to taste hedgehog by a gamekeeper asserts that the hedgehog is not unlike though better than, rabbit.) Some of them enjoy a dish of snails. Carter and Hillyer positively assert this, mutually confirming each other as to the fact, and the simple mode of dressing the mollusk "It is quite true " Hillyer said "for I have often seen it; the Romany's gather the snails that are found on banks and walls and roast hem in a pot lid and eat them with salt. They call the large snails "bowries" and the small ones "slippery grogs". All my informants refer to the dirty and filthy habits of this race. Hillyer in allision to these, says "When I went with them the first time I was a lousy as a calf and I actually changed clothes with a scarecrow that I saw in a field."
In concluding this compilation of notes from the statement of the Uckfield gang it has yet to be mentioned that all, with the exception of the younger Smith who never knew any other

existence than that of a Gipsey or "traveller," declare with more or less earnestness that "it would be a good thing for the country if all camping was done away with. It would be of great benefit to the poor people as well as the gentlefolk and farmers." I would state, that although n the several accounts I have used, "travellers" may be often confounded with the "half breeds" or the pure Gipsey. Yet when a distinction has been made between them the assertion is alike in all these narratives that the "half-breeds" and travellers" are much more profligate and dangerous than the true Gipsey.

1853 July 24: Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper. **The last of the Frimley Gang**. George Smith, the approver[24] of the **Frimley Gang died** last Saturday in the East Grinstead Union Workhouse. So rapid did decomposition set in that he had to be buried that evening. The deceased who was the last of the dreaded gang was 62 years of age and had passed 54 years of his life as a tramp. During his month's residence in the Union, he was very reserved and never alluded to the crimes of his accomplices or the participation he took in them.

1853 August 29: The Sun, London. **Report on Discipline and Management of Convict Prisoners** by Lieutenant Colonel Jebb, C.B. Surveyor General of Prisons (part of the article) Classification of Convicts. In connection with the subject of a modification of the present system or other changes, I would submit the expediency of establishing a more severe system of discipline and of enforcing a more protracted term of imprisonment in the case of men convicted of heinous offences especially such as were accompanied by violence. This plan has already been partially acted upon by the removal of desperate characters, such as those in the **Frimley gang** direct from separate confinement to Norfolk Island and to the penal gangs in Van Diemen's Land. It would appear desirable that it should be introduced as part of the system.

It would relieve the Secretary of State from much responsibility if a classification of criminals were made by the judge when passing sentence, who would exercise his discretion according to the classification of the individual and the attendant circumstances in the same manner as is now done in the case of different classes of debtors and misdemeanants. Under such arrangement it might be necessary to send certain classes direct to the severest kind of penal discipline and from thence remove them to commence the ordinary routine in separate confinement and public works so as to preserve a due gradation of punishment.

1854 March 14: Sussex Advertiser. Seven members of the notorious "Frimley Gang" convicted of the burglary at Uckfield and transported for life were removed to Preston Gaol for probationary discipline. Mr Clay* ascertained that all of these with only one exception belonged almost from infancy to one of the most daring and profligate divisions of the dangerous Class, the division known as 'travellers' who (both men and women) perambulate every part of the country in parties more or less numerous and maintain themselves by begging and imposture or by robbery of every kind from petty larcenies to carefully planned and cruel executed burglaries.

[24] Informant or CHIS – covert human information source!

*Rev John Clay was Chaplain to Preston House of Correction

1854 April 1. Berkshire Chronicle: 12th January Morning Chronicle. It is stated by Rev S Martin of Westminster who has written an interesting account of the Colonial Training Institution for the Reformation of Adult Criminals located in Smith Stret Westminster that **Levi Harwood,** who in the spring of 1851 was executed at Horsemomger Lane Gaol for the Frimley murder had a few months before the deed of blood and the robbery which led up to it applied no less than three times to this institution for admittance and was **refused for want of room**.

1856 January 12: Staffordshire Advertiser. Singular **Disappearance and Death of a Thief**. Early in November last a man of notoriously bad character disappeared from the neighbourhood of Kinstone and he was supposed to have been **connected with the Frimley Gang**, it was believed that he had absconded, last week however his body was discovered in a well in a gentleman's garden on Kinstone Hill, greatly decomposed. It would seem that in a state of drunkenness, which he was known to be in the night he was last seen he entered the garden and after filling his pockets with apples (which were found upon him) was returning when he **fell headfirst into the well**.

1856 March 15: Hereford Times. The Police Bill. Withdrawals and Amendments. The Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, illustrated his argument for the necessity of county police by the following description of the condition in the county of Surrey.

The House would remember that a **gang of housebreakers, known as the Frimley Gang** (Also Uckfield, Isaacs' Gang) taking advantage of the unprotected state of that part of Surrey, met there, committed various depredations and in the end consummated their crimes by the murder of a most respectable clergyman. Then it was that the conviction forced itself on the minds of the justices of that county that, had there been an efficient police that gang would not have been able to meet and arrange plans for the perpetration of those enormities. What was the consequence? At the next quarter sessions notice was given to establish a county constabulary and by a large majority a resolution to that effect was carried and now the county **constabulary of West Surrey is one of the most efficient in the kingdom.**

1892 January 16: (**Forty years on and still the Isaacs Gang can make news**.) Illustrated Police News. The Fleet Street Burglars. All the prisoners concerned in the attempted burglary at Messrs Saqui and Lawrence's Fleet Street, have been identified by the police with the exception of the man King. There is little doubt that one of the members of the gang escaped. Mr. Fitkin, dentist of 88 Fleet Street states that about midnight he heard someone running downstairs. Thinking it was his brother, however, he took no notice and it was only when the latter entered immediately afterwards by means of a latch key that they discovered that someone else had been in and had left the premises. The police have little doubt of discovering who this sixth man is. A day or two ago the occupiers of these premises in the block of the building in which the attempted burglary took place decided to subscribe to a suitable

testimonial to Detective Palmer through whose instrumentality the capture was so cleverly made.

Palmer joined the force in 1874 and has almost always been employed in plain clothes. Amongst other cases in which he has been conspicuous are the Ludgate Hill dynamite outrage, the robberies in the Temple by James Matthews, the Post office robbery of letters containing cheques, the great jewel robbery in St Paul's churchyard, and the capture of Solomon and **Isaac gang to whom no less than 40 burglaries were traced.**

Hindhead formed the nucleus of a smuggling community[25]

1900 August 11, Lord Middleton wrote about Hindhead, within living memory was the centre of a very lawless district. In the early part of the century, it formed the nucleus of a smuggling community, the wells of some of the adjacent villages are built bell shaped for the better concealment of goods. Later, the Huntsmen, squatters in the Punch Bowl and surrounding district were the terror of the neighbourhood. Their well-known leader, one Chuter ended his days in, I believe his 17th term of imprisonment in the county goal. Their exploits rivalled those of the famous 'Shere Gang' to whose daring and activity the neighbouring preserves, hen roosts and sheep folds bore ample testimony. The knell of their predatory existence was finally rung when the County Police Force[26] was established early in the fifties. The Shere malefactors disappeared at a much earlier date.

Hindhead Gang

1839 August 11: The News (London) Croydon Assizes 5th August. James White, age 30 was capitally indicted for discharging a loaded gun at Edward James Baker, with **intent to murder** him. In another count the prisoner was charged with maliciously shooting at a certain mare with intent to injure her. The prosecutor stated that he was a farmer and resided at a place called Frensham, in this county. On Saturday 16th March between 5 and 6 o'clock in the evening he was returning home from Guildford market in his chaise and had just turned off the high road to go down a lane leading to his farm when he observed some object crouching down at the side of the road, and at the same instant a gun was fired at him. By the flash of the gun he had an opportunity to see that it was the prisoner who had fired it. He felt that he was wounded and at the same instant his mare dashed away with him and he could not stop her, he then discovered that the ball had passed through his clothes and his arm and on examining the mare he discovered a hard substance by the side of the chine which he cut out and it proved to be a bullet which had penetrated two inches into the flesh. He afterwards gave the bullet to Goddard, the officer. In cross examination the witness said he had known the prisoner some time and believed he got his living by poaching. Henry Goddard[27], a Bow Street officer deposed that he

[25] 1900 August 11 Norwood News. An extract from an article by Viscount Middleton, Lord Lieutenant of Surrey written for 'The Surrey Magazine'

[26] Surrey Constabulary

[27] A future Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police and one of the investigators of the Richardson murder 1834 Banstead.

had some communication with the prosecutor relative to the outrage that had been committed upon him and received from him a bullet. He afterwards searched the prisoner's house and found a gun that had recently been discharged and a bullet mould. The bullet fitted the mould and the gun. Some evidence was adduced and the Jury returned a verdict of "Not guilty."

1845 January 21: Sussex Advertiser. **Offence against the Game Laws**. Charles Cover and Amos Winchester were summoned at the instance of Mr. Baker for an offence against the game laws at Frensham whereby they had become liable to the penalty of forty shillings. One of the defendants called Amos Winchester did not appear. William White, a young man in the employ of Mr. Baker as keeper deposed to seeing Cover and Winchester on 1st January beating about with a dog as if to turn up a hare. He was in a field close by watching them but did not see either with a gun or stick in their possession. They were alone in the cover and he did not see them get a hare. Cover admitted he was with Winchester on the day in question and that they were out with Mr. Baker's sanction. Mr. Baker was in the habit of engaging persons to assist him hunting and if any found a hare he would give them half a crown.

Mr. Baker having taken the oath deposed he had not instructed the defendants to assist him on the occasion referred to and not even during the whole season. He had employed Winchester last season but not since. Edmund[28] Winchester, brother to the defendant of that name deposed that on the morning of the day alluded to, he had seen the defendants hunting with Mr Baker, they were close behind him and half a mile from Pitfold Manor the place the alleged offence took place. He was working close by as they passed but could not state the exact hour but was sure it was in the forenoon. The defendants had the dog with them, it belonged to his brother and was about 10 months old.

Mr. Baker was again called and as before denied the defendants were with him on that day or that they had any authority from him for hunting. Jacob Coombe, 16 years, was examined for the defence and deposed seeing both defendants with Mr. Baker at the hunt on the day in question, he had joined the hunt early in the forenoon and remained with it until about half past 12 o'clock and during part of that time was along with the defendants who were close behind Mr. Baker. After he left the hunt to go to his dinner, he had seen nothing of the defendants. The bench after a short consultation dismissed the case.

1850 May 28: Sussex Advertiser. **Capture of the leader of the Hindhead Gang**. Amos Winchester, the leader off the notorious Hindhead Gang was brought up on Saturday May 25th in custody of Superintendent Thompson of the East Sussex Constabulary, before Capt C E Mangles on the following charges, first, of being one of the men who in February 1849 shot at the gamekeeper of Mr Baker of Frensham Hall. Secondly of being concerned in the Burglary at Mr Pannell's at Ash near Guildford. The prisoner was taken into custody near Battle. On the application of Superintendent Biddlecombe, he was remanded till Saturday next.

[28] This is probably Edward Parkhurst Winchester brother to Amos

1850 August 9: Evening Mail London. At the Summer Assizes at Guildford Amos Winchester, 39, labourer was indicted for **feloniously shooting William White** with intent to do him grievous bodily harm. William White is the gamekeeper to Mr. Baker of Frensham and on the night of 13 January 1849, he was out watching with assistant gamekeeper Loveland when they saw the prisoner and two other men come out of his cottage and proceed in the direction of the game preserves. They followed them and four other men joined the prisoner and his companions and when they saw the gamekeepers watching them they gave a "view halloa". While William White was standing at a short distance from the party two guns were discharged by some of the men which rattled past the gamekeepers without doing them any injury. The keepers were insufficient numbers to attack their assailants so went for assistance. When they were reinforced, they examined the wood where they had seen the men and discovered a dead cock pheasant, feathers of a hen pheasant, the wood pile disturbed and a portion stolen. Two of the party were tried at the subsequent March assizes for the offence of shooting at the gamekeepers, there being evidence that they actually fired the shots. They were convicted and sentenced to transportation. The prisoner absconded immediately after the incident and had only recently been taken into custody. The only evidence against him being the fact he was in company with the other men and nothing whatever to show he had in any manner sanctioned the discharge of the firearms although there was no doubt he had intended to be party to the poaching. The jury were later told to return a verdict of not guilty.

The prisoner was then indicted for committing a burglary at Ewhurst. The principal evidence against the prisoner being the discovery of a portion of the stolen property concealed in his cottage. As, however, it appeared by evidence in the former case that the prisoner had abandoned his residence and did not appear to have any control over the premises finding of the property under such circumstances did not seem sufficient ground to convict him of the offence with which he was charged. A verdict of not guilty was then given.

1851 March 28: Surrey Assizes Kingston upon Thames, Amos Winchester, aged 39, labourer appeared in court to answer an indictment for night poaching at Frensham on lands in the occupy of James Baker. He was acquitted.

According to "The Shottermill Scrapbook" Mr E J Baker the owner of Frensham Hall was a hard man, unpopular with his tenants who eventually became bankrupt.

1859 May 7. Hampshire Telegraph. Petersfield. At the Police Office Richard Winchester and William Winchester, **two of the notorious Hindhead Gang** were brought up by Superintendent Fey charged with stealing a quantity of wheat from a barn on Hindhead, the property of Mr Benjamin Butler and were remanded to give the Superintendent time to get the case up.

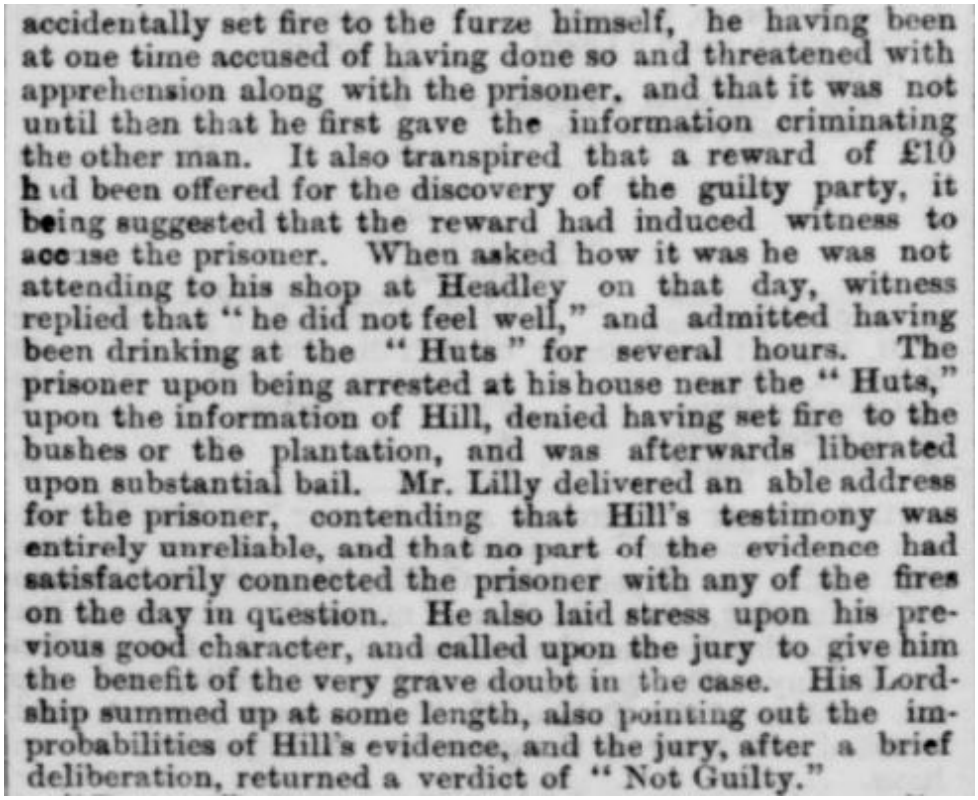
At Hampshire Quarter Sessions 30th June 1859, Richard and William Winchester, father and son were acquitted of stealing two bushels of wheat at Bramshott, the property of Benjamin Butler.

1863 August 8. Aldershot Military Gazette. At Croydon Assizes Amos Winchester was indicted for setting fire to a quantity of heath growing upon the property of Mr. Baker in the parish of Frensham. He was found guilty and sentenced to prison for 12 calendar months with hard labour. At the time the Judge observed that the crime of arson was greatly on the increase in the county.

1868 January 18. Hampshire Telegraph. Petersfield Petty Sessions. William and George Winchester of Frensham (brothers) were charged with cutting and stealing holly on land belonging to Mr W Chalcraft at Bramshott on Wednesday 18th December last. The defendants were convicted and adjudged to pay a fine of 10s each with costs 9s and damage 1s.A fortnight was allowed for payment.
William and George Winchester were two of the sons of Richard Parkhurst and Caroline Winchester.

1878 August 2. Hampshire Post. Alleged arson Hindhead

LIPHOOK.—THE ALLEGED ARSON.—In our paper of last week we briefly noticed the case of Stephen White, 30, labourer, who was charged at the Guildford Assizes, before Mr. Justice Mellor, with having feloniously set fire to the furze of a plantation alongside the Portsmouth turnpike road, near the "Huts," upon Hind Head, the property of James Baker, Esq., of Frensham Hall, on the afternoon of the 2nd of April. It appeared from the evidence of the local constable, and of two men named William White and Edward Winchester, that there had been several fires upon the waste land near the high road upon the day in question; but the only testimony connecting the prisoner (who had hitherto possessed a good character) with the fires was that of a grocer of Headley, named William Hill, who deposed to having been in the company of prisoner, walking along the road towards Liphook together, and looking at the smoke from one of the fires, when the prisoner remarked that "he would soon warm the Bottom" (alluding to a hollow beneath the roadway, facing the "Huts" Inn), and that he subsequently saw him (the prisoner) run a short distance ahead, take some matches out of his pocket, and set light to a bush. In the course of a searching cross-examination the witness admitted having been drunk on the occasion, and that he was smoking his pipe subsequently, as he sat down upon a bank alongside the road, and had refused to help in putting out the fires when asked by the other witnesses; further, that he had also lit some matches, and might have accidentally set fire to the furze himself, he having been at one time accused of having done so and threatened with



accidentally set fire to the furze himself, he having been at one time accused of having done so and threatened with apprehension along with the prisoner, and that it was not until then that he first gave the information criminating the other man. It also transpired that a reward of £10 had been offered for the discovery of the guilty party, it being suggested that the reward had induced witness to accuse the prisoner. When asked how it was he was not attending to his shop at Headley on that day, witness replied that "he did not feel well," and admitted having been drinking at the "Huts" for several hours. The prisoner upon being arrested at his house near the "Huts," upon the information of Hill, denied having set fire to the bushes or the plantation, and was afterwards liberated upon substantial bail. Mr. Lilly delivered an able address for the prisoner, contending that Hill's testimony was entirely unreliable, and that no part of the evidence had satisfactorily connected the prisoner with any of the fires on the day in question. He also laid stress upon his previous good character, and called upon the jury to give him the benefit of the very grave doubt in the case. His Lordship summed up at some length, also pointing out the improbabilities of Hill's evidence, and the jury, after a brief deliberation, returned a verdict of "Not Guilty."

1881 March 18 Hampshire Post. **Assault.** George Winchester of Hindhead was charged with assaulting James Colver (probably James Cover) **Hindhead** on February 25th. The case was described as somewhat of an Irish affair. After hearing the evidence of several witnesses about the quarrel the case was dismissed.

1897 April 30: West Surrey Times. Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Lord Middleton wrote an article about Surrey's progress during the Victorian era. It included the following. After the formation of the police force there was no single constable cared to patrol the wild tract of country around Hindhead. The Shere gang of notorious sheep stealers and evil doers had died a natural death early in the thirties but the Hut men, as dwellers in the Punchbowl and vicinity were called maintained their unsavoury **reputation for robberies and pillage** of all kinds until the fraternity was finally broken up by the sagacity of Inspector Biddlecombe, then stationed at Godalming and by the death of their leader, Chuter of Frensham in his 17th term of imprisonment in the county jail. Gang poaching survived at Elstead and several other out of the way villages until much later due probably to the old smuggling proclivities which caused the construction of bell shaped wells in these localities as safe receptacles for contraband goods. There were several Chuter families around the area at this time and a number of them had criminal records.

1898 April 22 Hampshire Post.

LOCAL HISTORY.—It is quite within living memory when the "Loam-pits," as the land in Liphook was called, a part of which is now devoted for the enjoyment of the inhabitants of Bramshott for ever, was the scene, in former years, of many a sanguinary conflict between the roughs of Hindhead and others resident upon the Common at Grayshott and Hammer. Very frequently the merest trifle would bring a gang down, more particularly on a Saturday night, when they would meet at the Green Dragon Inn, and set up a quarrel with the more peaceably disposed frequenters who resided in and near Liphook and Bramshott. After some discussion and heated argument, the quarrel would end in a challenge to fight it out, and for that purpose they adjourned to the Loam-pit ground. Whichever was worsted, the members of the gang would quickly come to the rescue of their comrade; and if he had no more injuries than in a fair stand up fight, all the better for the vanquished. But it did not end there. Other single-handed fights followed; and after sufficient for the night, the finish was generally adjourned to another Saturday night. Thus it was that the "fugacious" continued more or less for weeks, becoming a regular occurrence on Saturday nights. If a quarrel did not take place, a disappointment was usually felt by the onlookers, who regularly expected a repetition of these broils. The fights were not always confined to the same parties. Other gangs from Surrey and Sussex would assemble to meet the Hampshire "rowdies," and try which would come off best, and it was no uncommon sight to see men with blackened or cut visage in the belfry on Sunday morning. Employers, from their frequency were accustomed to such appearances, and so became inured to it. The law in those days was powerless to put them down. The Parish Constable, with a lock-up miles away, did not feel inclined to show his power (?) if he felt so inclined. With the advent of the present Police arrangements, law and order prevailed, and has so remained ever since.

By 1899 the Wandsworth gang were regularly committing burglaries in the Hindhead area.

Grayshottt - The Story of a Hampshire Village by John Owen Smith, March 2002

“That the whole district of Hindhead was wild and lawless becomes vividly evident in a story of probably the middle of the century, told in *Frensham Then and Now* (Baker and Minchin: published 1938):

"As to the buildings called "The Hut," now known to us as the Huts Hotel, it is safe to say that they constituted one of the oldest habitations on Hindhead, comprising a little inn of a very primitive type, with a brewery attached. The brewery, now dismantled, was in action as recently as 1870, John Elliston being the last to brew ale there. His successor, the late Benjamin Chandler, started the first motor-bus service from Hindhead and Grayshott to Haslemere ... it is equally certain that up to the middle of the last century many of the squatters who sparsely inhabited the Hindhead valleys ... eked out a hand-to-mouth existence by sheep stealing and highway robbery. They were frequented too by fugitives from justice, from whose depredations nothing in the immediate vicinity was safe.

My father used often to tell the story of how he once narrowly escaped being robbed and maltreated ... He was sent to an important cattle fair at Haslemere to sell some cattle - the business done, he started on his return journey, but calling at Frensham Hall on his way and leaving his horse there, the afternoon was far advanced before he resumed it.

“At this time”, so my father told the tale , “the commons were unenclosed, and large numbers of forest ponies, cattle and deer grazed on the unenclosed wastes of the Manors. No defined road existed, and my way from Frensham Hall to Simmondstone was by a track crossing the Portsmouth Road near High Pitfold, traversing the centre of Wagner's Wells Bottom, emerging thence near where Grayshott Hall now stands, and so leading on to Barford and Simmondstone. It was now dusk. Immediately on entering Wagner's Wells Bottom I passed a drove of ponies lying down in the fern and had only proceeded a few hundred yards when I heard a shrill whistle from my rear. Startled by the sound, the ponies I had just passed came galloping down on me. At once I realised that I had been marked down at the Fair. As they overtook me, I managed to

grasp one of them by his mane and neck and ran beside him. Almost immediately I saw figures emerging from the high furze bushes which grew densely in the narrowest part of the valley.

But with the ponies all round me I broke through them safely and reached Simmondstone sound in limb and pocket. I learnt afterwards that the gang who waylaid me were from Blackdown, over the Sussex border, that I had been shadowed at the Fair, and had been heard to say that I was taking the money to Simmondstone that night, instead of cutting short my journey at Frensham Hall. It was the custom of the Blackdown Gang to work Hindhead, whilst Hindhead went further afield."

In an Appendix to the same book there is the following account of the apprehension caused to Frensham people by the Hindhead Gang:

"I, who am now well over the allotted span, can remember when a boy being told by my grandmother tales of the goings-on of that rough Hindhead Gang who were so noted for sheep stealing and highway robbery. I still have a staff which was regularly carried by my grandfather when he went out after dark. I myself remember tales of these rough gangs going round and smashing up threshing drums, as they were very embittered against these inventions, thinking they would do away with their winter's work. These old drums were but small affairs driven by horse gear. Old Mrs. Sturt kept a shop at the crossroads opposite Earle's Farm (at Frensham). On very rough, windy nights they were afraid to go to bed. Sometimes old Mrs. Sturt would rush across the road in the morning and say, 'Oh, Harriet, they have been again; they have taken our cheese, butter and everything; it is that Hindhead Gang and they have cleared us right out." The Winchester, White and Coombe (s) families were all related.

Amos Parkhurst Winchester was born in 1811and his occupation varied between agricultural labourer and Broom maker, he appeared to live in Frensham all his life, nothing can be found about his life after 1863 when he was sent to prison. Richard Parkhurst Winchester born 1813 died 1868 was his brother, also a broom maker who lived in Waggoners Wells. He Married Caroline White and they had 12 children. They had an elder brother Charles Pankhurst Winchester who seems to have married Charlotte White in 1828 who died in 1840 then Caroline Coombes in 1842, the witnesses at this wedding being James and Hannah White. The older sister Mary Ann Parkhurst Winchester married Stephen Coombes in 1823 at Frensham. Most of these families were broom makers/agricultural labourers living in Frensham or Hindhead. The Cover family also lived at Frensham and Hindhead and were broom makers.