



New Publication

**THE BYRONS OF COULSDON:
ABROAD AND AT HOME**

By Nigel Elliott

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EDMUND BYRON 1843-1921
LAST LORD OF THE MANOR OF COULSDON

by

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BOURNE SOCIETY

THE FAMILIAR name of Byron still looms large in the Coulsdon area where road names, schools and the former almshouses at Bradmore Green still bear the name of the family who were lords of the manor until 1921 and resided in the present *Coulsdon Manor Hotel*, formerly Coulsdon Court.

The death of Edmund Byron, the last squire, led to the dramatic transformation of the district and the end of a rural way of life that had existed for generations. Times were changing and even Coulsdon could not resist.

Through the good offices of the late Mrs Setitia Simmonds, Edmund Byron's great grand-daughter, the Byron family archive was donated to the Museum of Croydon and has been transcribed and catalogued by the Bourne Society. The archive contains a wealth of material relating to Coulsdon, life at Coulsdon Court both upstairs and downstairs and the Byron family. There are account books, hunting records, tour diaries and family letters and from these it is possible to build an insight into the family and its time at Coulsdon.

Nigel Elliott, author of *Coulsdon and Purley War Memorials: First World War* (Bourne Society, 2018), and one of the cataloguing team, has now drawn on this superb archive to produce *The Byrons of Coulsdon: Abroad And At Home*, typeset by Dr Robert Warner. In the opening chapters Nigel describes how two of Edmund's sons, Tom and Cecil, turned their backs on the traditional roles expected of them, to become ranchers in Canada. Drawing on family letters, much is revealed about the boys' relationships with the very strict Edmund and Charlotte. Descriptions of family travels to distant lands are staggering: Edmund & Charlotte's trekking expedition to South Africa in 1873 and their regular holidays in Norway where an unlikely friendship was formed between Edmund and *the Kaiser*, requiring Edmund to visit him in Germany. The final chapters are devoted to Robert Byron, Edmund's grandson, widely acknowledged as one of the great travel writers of the inter-war period, whose acclaimed *Road to Oxiana* is still in print. Robert is credited as being paramount in reviving interest in Byzantine art and architecture.

Much of the book is concerned with Coulsdon. The family's relationships with Revd Bourke, Revd Granville Dickson and FHB Ellis are quite revealing but far from being concerned only with gentry and clergy there are chapters on Byron's indoor staff, outdoor staff, village economy and agricultural management, and local sports and festivals in Victorian times. Edmund's long serving bailiff, John Gilbert, comes over as a countryman of unusual abilities and temperament.

Those interested in Victorian Coulsdon and beyond will find much to interest them in this well produced book of 238 A4 pages and Dr Elliott is to be congratulated on his devoted study and interpretation of the archive to produce an exceptional book. It is beautifully illustrated with over 120 images.

Copies are available from Paul Redington, (Bourne Society Sales Co-ordinator), 13 Crewes Avenue, Warlingham, Surrey, CR6 9NZ at £16 plus £4 p&p. (UK). General enquiries: 01883 349745 or visit bournesoc.org.uk.

