# 'Loose Threads'

Your local history magazine

Number 10

## Featuring ...

- \* House histories and family stories
- \* All Saints' Church and its memorials
- \* Leonard Gould, Loose's last factory
- \* Kirkdale Cottages and Salts Avenue
- \* Dambuster visits Scouts' HQ
- \* Gurney's Mill and Hayle Mill
- \* The Wool House and Wool House Cottage
- \* Boughton Monchelsea, East Farleigh, Langley, Tovil
- \* Reminiscences, archive photos ... and much more!

The Journal of the Loose Area History Society

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### 'Loose Threads'

## No. 10

#### From the editor ...

Welcome to another issue of 'Loose Threads', which we hope you will enjoy reading. Having recently taken over as editor may I thank my predecessor, Roger Thornburgh, for all he did over a period of many years to establish this journal as essential reading for everyone interested in the fascinating history of our beautiful ragstone village and its neighbourhood.

Within these pages you will find articles by some of our regular authors and also by correspondents whose work we have not had the pleasure of publishing before. My thanks to everyone who helped me compile this issue.

We have also delved deeply into the Loose Area History Society's archives to bring to light previously unpublished reminiscences and photographs of days gone by.

The area we aim to cover in 'Loose Threads' consists of the parishes along the Loose Valley (Langley, Boughton Monchelsea, Loose and Tovil) plus Coxheath, East Farleigh, Hunton and that part of the South Ward of Maidstone known as 'North Loose'.

Please feel free to contribute a few paragraphs or articles of up to 2,000 words (and a selection of photographs) on any aspect of the local, social and family histories of these places that you think will be of interest to others. Articles of more than 2,000 words may have to be abridged or published in successive instalments.

Provided that 'Loose Threads' continues to sell well and that we receive sufficient articles, we will in future publish an issue every year. The deadline for our next issue is Friday, July 1, 2011.

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'Loose Threads' is on sale at Aquarius Wool Shop (Coxheath), Loose Post Office, Lucky's Newsagents (Boughton Parade) and Boughton Monchelsea Post Office; and at the Loose Area History Society's meetings. To order by mail within the UK please send the editor a cheque for £5.50, payable to the Loose Area History Society. If you live outside the UK please email the editor for details of overseas rates. Copies of 'Loose Threads' Nos. I - 9 are still available. For details see our website or send an email or s.a.e. to the editor.

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Many artists have visited Loose for inspiration, while others have both lived there and left a legacy of sketches and paintings of our picturesque buildings and landscapes.

One such artist, Mildred Mary Ratcliffe, retired to Loose in 1959 after a distinguished career in London as a commercial artist and calligrapher, and is still remembered by many local residents for her interest in village activities and for her artistic works.

These included designs for Christmas cards sold in aid of local charities; illustrations for the Loose Medieval Street Fayre programme in 1975; and Roger Thornburgh's book 'Exploring Loose Village', published in 1978 to mark the 25th anniversary of the Loose Amenities Association.

Mildred lived at No.1 Mill Street, one of a pair of period cottages that appear to originally have been one house, known as Westbrook. She was born in Rochester on October 17, 1899, the second of Alfred and Rose Ratcliffe's seven children, and died in October 1988, two days after her 89th birthday.

Members of her family published an obituary in which they said: 'Initially tutored by a governess, Mildred entered Rochester Girls' Grammar School for further education and left in 1916 to join the Civil Service as a wages clerk in Chatham Dockyard.

'In about 1920 she transferred to the Post Office Savings Bank in Hammersmith as a clerical officer. She shared a flat in West Kensington with two other girls, one of whom, Mildred Peacock,



came from Strood, Kent. She subsequently moved to her own flat and lived in London on her own until she retired. 'She was not enamoured with her life as a ledger clerk in the Civil Service, her sparetime interests being in the field of the Arts, and when in the mid-1920s the Post Office Savings Bank set up a publicity department she obtained a transfer to the newly formed unit, and spent the rest of her

'During the war years she was

working life there.

engaged in the design and production of advertising media which exhorted the public to save for the war effort. Many of he productions are still in existence.

'Some have been accepted by the Imperial War Museum and others are in Maidstone Museum and the General Post Office Museum, which has set up a Mildred Ratcliffe Collection.

'She was also responsible for an annual calendar which was sold for various Civil Service charities.

'The work in which she was involved had a marked affect on her artistic style and is reflected in her later water-colours, which cover a multitude of subjects from delicate flower drawings and paintings to architectural reproductions; and an imaginary portrayal of Sir Anthony Eden arriving at Moscow airport during the war to meet Stalin.

Title picture: Mildred Ratcliffe giving a lesson in calligraphy at the Loose Medieval Street Fayre in 1975. Above left: Mildred's drawing of Westbrook, Nos. 1 and 2 Mill Street.



'She was a prominent member of the Civil Service Arts Club and exhibited regularly at their annual exhibition. She also had works accepted for two Royal Academy summer exhibitions.

'In the 1930s she became particularly interested in the art of calligraphy, studying at the Hammersmith School of Art and at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London, and spending





several summer vacations in Switzerland and Bavaria under the tuition of Anna Symons, an internationally famous exponent of the art. She also came under the influence of Edward Johnston [regarded, with Rudolf Koch, as a father of modern calligraphy] and possibly had tuition from him.

'Her progress in this field was so successful that she was commissioned by the Post Office Savings Bank to design and produce its annual Christmas card for members of the Royal family. Her work as a scribe reached its peak with the production in 1950 of a 'Book of Acknowledgement', profusely illuminated in gold, published for the Benenden Civil Service Chest Hospital's Appeal Fund. This was presented to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, when she officially opened the hospital.

'At about the same time she was elected to the Fellowship of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators in recognition of the excellent and high standard of her work. It is not without interest to note that in a school report her teacher noted that her handwriting was "poor", adding she "must try harder".

'After she retired she joined the Maidstone Art Society, where she was a regular exhibitor, and attended weekend schools with the Civil Service Arts Club, of which she was a life vice-president. She continued her art work until she was in her 80s, even to the extent of tutoring local children'.

Following Mildred's funeral at All Saints' Church, Loose, one of her brothers, Eric Ratcliffe, wrote to the Rev. Gordon A. Parlett, who had recently retired as Vicar of All Saints', saying: 'In the last two years of her residence in Loose she became increasingly unable to fend for herself and it was only by the kindness of her neighbours, Keith and Sylvia Palmer and the Acotts, who fetched and carried meals to her, that she survived. Her physical condition deteriorated and in February 1987 I had no alternative but to arrange accommodation for her at Barty House, Bearsted'.

Two fascinating stories are told about Mildred, which have not been confirmed. One maintains that, after visiting Germany in 1939 she returned home on the last boat to sail before the outbreak of the Second World War, bringing with her samples of Koch and Symons' work. Another says that she designed the Britannia figure for a £5 banknote, her model being a prostitute she saw on the Circle Line of the London Underground!

Top of page: Mildred's artwork for the 1975 Loose Medieval Street Fayre programme and a 1981 Christmas card which she entitled 'Christmas at Loose in 1781'. Left: No. 1 Mill Street, Mildred's home from 1959 until 1987.



Although much of Mildred's local artwork has survived, some has not. Roy Hood remembers a sketch she made from her back garden of some 18th century cottages on the corner of Bridge Street and Mill Street. 'She was very meticulous in her work,' said Roy. 'She counted every brick and tile.' The cottages were demolished in 1963 and the site was redeveloped. The sketch, presumably, was in one of the cottages and was lost when it was pulled down.



Also missing is a framed 'Visitors' Wording' text that Mildred executed for Gordon Parlett. This was installed in the porch of All Saints' and read: 'Enter this door as if the floor within were gold, and every wall of jewels all of wealth untold; as if a choir in robes of fire were singing here. Nor shout nor rush, but Hush for God is near'.

Presumably the plaque was lost when the church was 're-ordered' in 2003, or did someone think to preserve it? In a church further afield, St Mark's, Surbiton, Mildred's calligraphy can still be admired, in the form of two 'Books of Remembrance'.

Richard Ratcliffe recalls how, as a young teenager, he often visited his 'Aunt Mildred' at her flat near West Kensington Underground Station in the 1950s. 'She designed National Savings Stamps, and posters of Post Offices all round the country,' he said. 'She was no mean artist. She had a remarkable circle of friends in

the world of art and was a charming and lovely lady, with slightly bohemian friends. She taught me to love London and I'll always be grateful for that'.

Asked to comment about the 'last boat to England' and 'Britannia £5 note' stories, Richard said: 'I didn't know about her visit in 1939 ... a lovely tale and I have no reason to doubt it. It is certainly possible that she designed the Britannia on the £5 note, but that would have been before her retirement in 1959, so it would have been the old "white fiver". If this was Mildred's work there seems to be an element of self portraiture about the good lady Britannia. I don't know about the prostitute on the Circle Line!

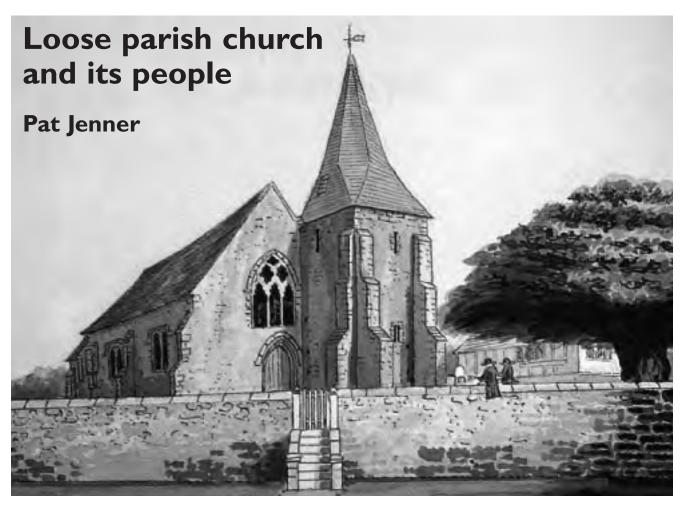
'Compared with images of earlier fivers in 1942 and 1947 she looks a good deal more "modern": maybe Mildred's little joke? That's pure speculation of course. At that time she was involved with a number of savings stamps etc, linked to the Coronation'.

Examples of Mildred's work for the Post Office Savings Bank are kept at the British Postal Museum and Archive (http://catalogue.postalheritage.org.uk). The items donated to the Imperial War Museum and Maidstone Museum have not yet been traced. The latter may be among ephemera kept off-site in storage whilst the east wing is refurbished. We would be pleased to hear from any readers who have any originals or copies of Mildred's artwork.

■ In future issues of 'Loose Threads' we will feature examples of artwork of our locality by Peter J. Braybrook, Geoffrey Cardew, Robin B Evans, E Jones, C. Hullmandel, Nancy Illingworth, Robert Shadbolt, Alison Smith, William Knapton, P Thomas, Roger Thornburgh and other artists. Please tell us if you have any local scenes by these or any other artists.



Top left: 'A Corner in Loose' (Florence Cottage, Florence House and Bridge Street). Left: 'Brooks Path and The Chequers'. Above: a 1952 £5 note. Is this the one for which Milldred drew the Britannia figure?



All Saints' Church is in the centre of Loose, tucked into the coombe beside the stream known as the Brooks. It is a very plain building and over the centuries has seen many changes. The Sanctuary is dated to the 13th century but the tower at the west end is set at a strange angle, and is older.

There is a small medieval doorway leading from the nave to the tower which bears traces of blue and pink wall painting. The interior of the nave is Victorian, following a fire in 1878.

The original roof was thatched. Many years ago, following a storm, some tiles needed replacing and remains of the original thatch were seen. It was impossible to save any as it disintegrated as soon as the air reached it.

North and south aisles were added in the early 19th century and the present porch replaced the original one, although the present door could have been from the original.

Two stained glass windows on the north wall of the nave are by the artist C E Kemp, whose work is mainly seen in Naval and Army chapels. The background detail in them is



very beautiful. The 'All Saints' window' on the north wall commemorates the church's dedication. It is dated 1962 and is by H J Stammers, designer of the St. Anselm's Chapel window in Canterbury Cathedral.

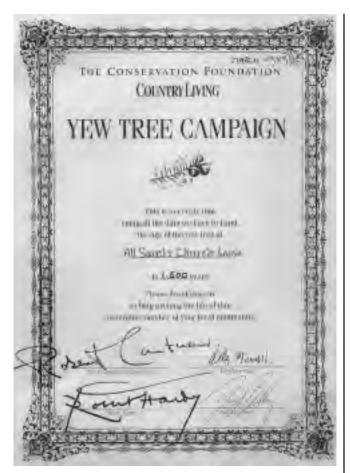
The tower has three bells housed in a wooden cage. The treble bell dates from 1550; the middle bell was cast in 1603; and the tenor bell, first cast in 1629, has been recast twice. The middle and tenor bells were made by the well-known Kent bell founder, Joseph Hatch.

There are few ornamentations in All Saints'. There are five stairs to the left of the chancel arch which once led to the rood screen. In the Sanctuary there is a marble monument, a thanksgiving to a merchant who augmented the stipend of the curate; and in the Lady Chapel adjoining are three wall monuments relating to two Admirals and a wife relating to the Jones family and their descendants, the Marsham family, who became prominent in Loose.

Three hatchments decorate the west wall. Two relate to the Martin family of Salts Place. One, Denny Martin, married Frences (sic), heiress to Leeds Castle, some five miles away. The third hatchment is circular and is that of Sarah, the first wife of James Whatman, High Sheriff of Kent and a member of the well-known paper making firm.

In the Sanctuary under the high altar is a crypt containing the remains of the Buffkin family of Salts Place, Denny Martin's ancestors. The direct line of the family died out in 1702 when Ralph Buffkin died childless.

Title picture: All Saints' in about 1794, the earliest known picture of the church. Church House is in the background and on the right is the celebrated Loose yew (Kent Archaeological Society). Left: a favourite view of Loose, showing All Saints' Church and the Brooks, photographed by Jim Walder.



Certificate issued by the Conservation Foundation's Yew Tree Campaign in 1989, after inspecting the yew tree in All Saints' churchyard. The tree has a circumference of 33 feet 6 inches.

The churchyard contains gravestones of many men and women who lived in the village with their families, and who served their community. There are millers, masons, owners of tanneries, paper makers, farmers and fruit growers, many of whom have been churchwardens, clerks to the council and members of the parochial church council throughout the ages (as their descendants are today).

On the left as one enters the churchyard gate there is a large headstone recording the deaths of eight children of the Moore family, reminders of diseases which inflicted the parish in the 19th century.

In the lower churchyard, against the wall on the left, is a rather insignificant stone recording the life of the Rev. Richard Boys (1785 to 1866), the incumbent of Loose from 1854 until he died in 1866, aged 82. Previously he had been chaplain to the Honourable East India Company on St Helena in the Atlantic from 1811 to 1829, during Emperor Napoleon's exile there.

By the south side of the tower is a strange monument to the Charlton family, a pillar with primitive faces on three sides of the top section. Close by is the yew tree which stood there long before the church was built.

The most recent changes have been to the interior of the church. The pine pews have been removed and replaced by chairs; the floor carpeted; and the organ removed to its original position on the south wall, fitted into an elegant oak casing. This released space for a kitchen, small meeting room and toilet facilities, as well as a church office.

■ You can read more about All Saints' Church, including a history based on notes made by Rev. LW Mudge, vicar from 1951 to 1964, on www.allsaintsloose.org.uk



# Who's buried in Loose?

The 340 memorial inscriptions ('MIs') on Loose's gravestones, tablets, tombs and monuments contain invaluable information for those who are researching their family histories or local and social history, but finding and deciphering them was hard and sometimes unrewarding work.

Now, researchers' lives have become much easier thanks to painstaking work by Roger Thornburgh, president of the Loose Area History Society (pictured above) who with the help of a willing band of volunteers has meticulously transcribed all the legible inscriptions to be found at All Saints' Church and Loose Cemetery.

The transcriptions, containing the names of hundreds of people who lived in Loose and nearby parishes over a period of several centuries, have been published on the Kent Archaeological Society's website.

Mls not only tell us about people who are buried in our graveyards; they often provide details of people who once lived in the parish but were buried abroad. Also, relatives, ancestors and descendants of the deceased are often named.

Many Mls, especially those outdoors, are in danger of being destroyed or eroded as time goes by, so transcribing and publishing them for future reference is essential. Roger started work on his project more than 20 years ago and already some of the inscriptions he was able to transcribe in the 1980s are illegible.

Furthermore, when the floor of All Saints' was taken up in 2003 during the final phase in the 're-ordering' of the church, Roger took the opportunity to record the graves and inscriptions on stones that had previously been hidden. Now that the floor has been reinstated, only two of these are visible. The others are once again hidden from view.

The earliest Loose MI on the website is for a member of the Lamb family who died in 1590. The most recent MIs commemorate people who died in the early 20th century. Details of memorials erected since then can be gleaned from Roger's original notes, held by the Loose Area History Society's archivist, Margaret Chapman.

Margaret also holds copies of All Saints' baptism, marriage and burial registers, dating from 1559 to 1843. In some cases Roger has cross-referenced deaths recorded on the MIs with entries in the burial registers, which Margaret is collating into a 'searchable' document.

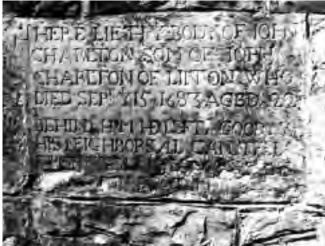


Among the many fascinating details in the MIs are various occupations of Loose parishioners and their relatives in days gone by.

They include an alehouse keeper (Robert Wilkins); a barrister (William Post); two butchers (Edward Froud and John Mead); a carpenter (John Coomber); a clerk (William Muddle); a draper (Thomas Pearne); a farmer (Michael Golding), two fullers (Walter Jones and Thomas Jones); a husbandman (Thomas Robinson); a maltster (James Castreet); a merchant (Richard Beale); a miller (Robert Wilson); a music seller (Thomas Pearne, related to the draper); five papermakers (Thomas French, Henry French, William Hunt, William Harris and John Farley); three tanners (Thomas Fisher, William Peene and William Wilkins), two victuallers (John Farley and Joseph Silk) and a wheelright (Richard Peirce).

Faithful servants of well-to-do parishioners are also commemorated, notably John Gilmore, 'For 48 years a faithful and devoted servant to the late Admiral Jones Marsham of Hayle Cottage'; William Jackson, 'A faithful servant at Hayle Place for 53 years'; John Tyrrell, 'for 33 years faithful and devoted service in the family of the late Col. Walter Jones of Hayle Place', and Ellen Elizabeth Pitcher, 'Faithful servant and friend for 27 years in a family who still cherish her memory'.





Left: eroded headstone of the grave of William Wilkins, tanner, of Boughton Monchelsea, his wife Mary and their son Thomas. Above: the skilfully inscribed memorial to John Charlton, son of John Charlton of Linton.

To view the MIs visit www.kentarchaeology.org.uk. The website also lists MIs for St Mary's Church, East Farleigh, and Tovil Baptist Burial Ground but volunteers are needed to record St Peter's, Boughton Monchelsea; St Nicholas, Linton; St Stephen's, Tovil and other parishes in our area.



Above: 'In Memory of Richard Beale, Merchant. Born in this parish and buried in Hamburgh, who gave five hundred pounds for an augmentation of the Curacy of this parish in ye year of our Lord MDCCII. This tablet was erected by Henry BRIGGS, Curate'. Below left: In memory of William and Kate Peale, 'unceasing benefactors to the poor of this and other parishes'. Below: commemorating William and Mary Post of Hayle Place and their son (a barrister) and daughter-in-law





## They say that every picture tells a story, but the stories behind some of these photographs taken in East Farleigh have yet to be revealed

No, the picture above does not show East Farleigh's very own Cleopatra's Needle but the Maidstone Water Company's pumping station, near the River Medway and railway station. The building's architecture shows obvious Egyptian influences. Two men are directing a jet of water towards the obelisk whilst others pose on the roof, apparently unconcerned at the possibility of being drenched. Who are they? And was the photograph taken to commemorate the opening of the building, or perhaps during a water pumping demonstration?

The photograph on the next page of the group near St Mary's Church was taken in September 1913, but what was the occasion? Who are they? Hop pickers, perhaps, before or after attending a service? Parishioners waiting to set off on an outing? There are notices about the Hop Pickers' Mission on the building on the right, and at the entrance to the churchyard. The cattle trough on the right was erected in 1911 to commemorate the coronation of King George V and can still be seen at the top of Station Hill.

There is a link between the pumping station and hop picking in East Farleigh. There were several outbreaks of cholera on local farms among hop pickers from London's East End in the 19th century. There is a memorial to 43 victims in the churchyard. Contaminated water from wells and the pumping station was suspected to have been a contributory factor.

At the foot of the next page we feature an undated photograph of the Bull, on the corner of Lower Road and Station Hill, in the days when the pub was owned by Sherwood, Foster and Stacey. The horse appears to be waiting to be served at the entrance to the bar. The pub was rebuilt in late Victorian times.

The photograph below shows Coppen's Cottage and East Farleigh Bridge. The cottage was demolished in 1881, presumably at the time the road (Station Hill) was widened. Who, we wonder, lived at the cottage at this time: the people in the picture? Crossing the bridge is to this day rather daunting, with drivers hoping to gain 'occupation' before anyone approaching from the opposite direction beats them to it!

■ Our thanks to Duncan Spencer of the Farleighs History Society for submitting these photographs. We would be pleased to hear from anyone who can tell us more about the pumping station and the group at the church, or send us more pictures, articles or comments on any aspect of East Farleigh's history.





A gathering at the village trough, and a thirsty horse at the pub ...





Kirkdale Cottages, Loose, were built in 1868; 142 years of village life here reflect the dramatic changes of the second half of the 20th century, with the advent of mains water and drainage, gas and electricity; the decline of agriculture; the growth of supermarkets and car ownership; the increase in age of compulsory education; family planning, and improved maternal and infant care/lower mortality rates.

I was delighted to have a phone call from Paul Campbell, whose great grandfather, Ernest Mercer, lived at 'my house',



2 Kirkdale Cottages, the focus of this article, from the late 1880s. Our talk led to other interesting conversations, adding personal history to census and documented information. My grateful thanks to Graham Baseden, Yvonne Bolton (now Woodcock), Paul Campbell, Roy and Rita Hood, Jim Mills, Molly Proctor, Teresa Sellen, Margaret Taylor (now Waller), Daphne Tyler (now Lancley), Irene Tyler (now Evans) and Ann Wanstall for those conversations.

I have discovered that among the residents of my house from 1871 to 2010 were: 1871, John Gigger (35, born in Ivybridge, Devonshire), a labourer, his wife Anna (33, born in Loose) and their children Alfred (13, b. Tovil), Walter (9, b. Loose), Arthur (6, b. Loose) and Alice (4, b. Loose); 1881, Harriett Froud, widow (67, b. Staplehurst). The Blakes were the next occupiers, followed by the Mercers for about 15 years from the late 1880s.

In 1911, No. 2 was the home of Frank Benjaman Perriman (33, b. Loose), domestic gardener, his wife Mary-Ann (37, b. Marden) and their children Alice (12), Frank (10), Charles (9), Rose (6), Algernon (1) and George (1), all born in Loose. Were Algernon and George twins? I don't yet know who lived here in the 1920s and 1930s but in the early 1940s the residents were Mr and Mrs Bishenden and their children, Joyce and Tony. Mr Bishenden worked on Colin Duncanson's farm at Pympe's Court. The Bishendens subsequently moved to Ivy Mill.

Then came the Taylors (1947 to 1987); the Williamsons (1988 to 1997); the Mathers (1997 to 2004); the Hollingworths (2004 to 2008) and, since 2008, me!

Ernest (Ernie) Mercer, born on January 15, 1886 and baptized on February 14, 1886 at All Saints', Loose, was one of 11 living siblings when eight of them moved to No. 2 with their father James (44, a farm labourer, b. Linton) and mother Mary Hannah (née Stuchbury, 40, b. Loose).

Title picture: Kirkdale Cottages in 2010. Left: Hilary Hunt at No. 2.



Ernie's brothers and sisters at No.2, all born in Loose, were Alfred James (23, brass finisher), Harry (18, gardener), Kate (15), Arthur (12, porterboy), Floria (10), Mary Jane (8) and Archibald (2). Floria and Mary Jane were at school. Three older children, William Edward, Eliza and Sidney, did not live at No.2.

By 1901 Ernie's father had died in an industrial accident at a brewery behind the Papermakers' Arms in Loose Road and only Ernie and Archibald were at home with Mary and a boarder, Margaret Flerin (11, b. London). At 15, Ernie was a solicitor's clerk in Maidstone, his lifetime occupation.

Ernie married Kate Hannah Wilkins, whom he had first known at Loose school. Their children were Constance, Robert, and Stanley who married Phyllis (Paul Campbell's grandparents). Their daughter Frances married Alex Campbell, Paul's parents. Kate died in 1957. Her father, Edward Wilkins, a builder and contractor of Avenue Villa [since demolished] built the chimney at Hayle Mill. Margaret Taylor said that as a child, 'it used to frighten the life out of me, that chimney'.

In 1977 Ernie talked to Roger Thornburgh about life at No. 2, saying: 'we lived there for many years. I was one of a family of twelve. One had died; there were six of us going to school, and absolutely not a penny in the house. My mother was a terrific woman talk about the world's women heroes; my mother I should imagine worked for 20 hours a day out of the 24, year in year out. [Apart from running the house] she used to go out doing work; she used to go to the Vicarage and quite a number of places doing needlework and nursing. [Mary died in 1912, aged 62.]

'[The cottages in] Kirkdale were fairly modern when we went there but all we got was an old dip-hole at the bottom of one of the gardens [No I] with water running out ... and it went through a dirty old orchard, and there might even be droppings in it'.

Ernie remembered Peale House, Loose Road, owned and occupied by Mr Cole, being almost totally destroyed by fire, and how his older brother Alfred James damaged his clothes helping to put the fire out and was given a new suit.

Paul Campbell said: 'Ernie moved up to the Loose Road later in life [in the 1920s the family home was Ambleside, Boughton Lane] and we used to visit him there, before he moved in with my grandparents in Canterbury in the 1970s. I suspect the last time I visited was in 1977 when I accompanied him when he planted a tree on the [King George V] sports field to commemorate the Silver Jubilee'. He was asked to do this because, as a schoolboy, he helped plant an oak tree on Loose Green to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

On April 19, 1917, when he was 31, Ernie joined the Royal Naval Air Service, a precursor of the RAF, but he was not assigned to active service on a ship. 'I don't know exactly how long Ernie served', said Paul. 'He signed up for the duration of hostilities. In April 1918 he transferred to the RAF along with everyone else in the RNAS. However, I imagine he would have left as soon after the end of the war as possible'.

Ernie and Kate's son Stanley was born on October 27, 1918 and served in the Fleet Air Arm. Their other son, Robert, died in a bombing raid over Germany in the Second World War and is honoured on the Loose war memorial.

Ernie was an active member and treasurer of the Loose Bowls Club. In 2009 Paul found people there who remembered his daughter Constance (Betty) and her husband William (Bill) Cowie. 'She lived in Loose all her life,' said Paul. 'Bill played at the Bowls Club with Ernie. And Ernie lived with them for a time in the early 70s, before he moved in with my grandfather'.

I talked to Margaret Taylor (now Waller) on June 22, 2010. Her father, Archibald Ronald (Ron) and mother, Margorie (Madge, née Quinnell) moved to No. 2 in about 1947, when Margaret was six and her brother Robert (Bob) was three.

Top of page: Ernie Mercer, standing sixth from the left, in an undated photograph of a Loose football team. Inset: Ernie in his Royal Naval Air Service uniform in the First World War.



'My grandfather was a shepherd on Loose Court Estate', said Margaret, 'and that was how he managed to get my parents the cottage down there. When we moved there, Major Thomas used to come and get the rent. My grandfather [Quinnell] used to play in Loose cricket team and that used to be a Sunday afternoon trek to Godlands to watch the cricket ... and then walk back to Kirkdale along the valley ... I can remember my grandma making tea, then my mother and her older sister making cupcakes.

'My father was from Chart Sutton. My mother before she was married was in service at Mullion Court [Linton] ... she was live-in. I think she had one day off a week and had to walk to Loose and walk all the way back. [When at Kirkdale] mother used to clean at Vale House for Mrs and Major Lawrence and also a Mrs Moore who lived in Pickering Street.

'Sunday school was usually at the Baptist Church. My mother sometimes used to play the organ there and my grandmother was caretaker.

'[The cottage] was literally two up and two down.When we first moved in there I shared the back room [upstairs] with my brother.As I got older, I got put up in the attic, a store room. It was all slopey ceilings: extremely cold. I can remember a glass of water with ice floating on the top.I think a surveyor decided that you shouldn't walk through one bedroom to get to another, and put that little wall in; it could have been late 60s.

'[In the kitchen] we had a gas cooker, and there was the fireplace there which only got lit at Christmas. We had a gas fridge. There was a sink under the window ... part of that alcove [under the stairs] was where we put the coal and then next to it was the pantry. Roy Hood's father used to come round the back, in the back door, and put the coal there. There were a couple of steps down [from the back door]. I used to have to scrub them every Wednesday and do the ironing. My father had these detached collars and he liked them stiff as a board; most Wednesdays I had I6 to do. My mother would leave them soaking in starch in the morning.

'[In the front room] there was another fireplace and we used to have an upright piano in there. A drop-leaf table and a sofa, just a small one. We weren't allowed in there very often. My mother played the piano; Bob played the violin; I played the cello. We'd have to start playing or singing and she would pick it up. She was partially deaf and when you think about it she was quite good. That was when we were allowed in the front room. We had family sing-songs round the piano at Christmas and sometimes my mother would go to The Chequers, it used to be a Boxing Day thing, and they would try and persuade her to play the piano there, all the locals

there, and I don't know why the kids were allowed in on Boxing Day, and we were all singing.

'[The six cottages] had three outhouses. The outhouse for I and 2 was literally outside the back door of 2, and there was a big old copper in there, and on the right and left at the back there were toilets. No one used the big copper. My mother had a copper in the kitchen for washing. She had to boil it up. She had a mangle in the washhouse. There wasn't a flush toilet until the bathroom was put on [in the mid-80s]. You still had to go outside and periodically they would come round and empty it. You had to chuck water down it.

'As you come out of I and 2 there was a pathway straight down the middle [of the garden], I on the left, 2 on the right, which went down to the stream, and a footpath went along the gardens to the allotments. You automatically had an allotment with the house. The field was all allotments, divided up. Ours was right up near the corner where Mr and Mrs Apps lived. We grew lots of vegetables. I can remember the bit of garden that goes on to the stream. I had a go at growing watermelons there and they came up a treat and then something ate them all. There used to be big trout at the bottom of that garden. Going down towards the stream, on the left hand side at the bottom of Baseden's garden [No. I] there was what we called a dip-hole and you had to go down there with jug and a sieve. Everything had to be boiled.

'Mrs Stockwell was our teacher at Loose school. I used to babysit Yvonne and John [at No. 5]. Kirkdale was very rough, full of potholes; used to be a nightmare coming home from work without a torch [not much changed there! HH]. Graham [Baseden] and I were friends. At that age we used to go off for the day during the summer holidays. As children we used to cycle along the shallow side [of the Brooks] and soak people as they walked along.

'[My happiest memories] are just going out and wandering round the fields and that. It used to be great.'

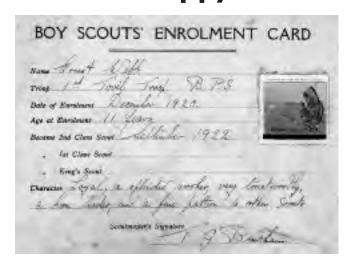
Ernie Mercer's memories of life in Loose as told to Roger Thornburgh in 1977 were published in 'Loose Threads' No. 6. Hilary Hunt's 'Village life at Kirkdale Cottages since 1868' will be continued in future issues of 'Loose Threads'. Hilary (tel 07944 05622500) will be pleased to hear from any readers who have memories or old photographs of Kirkdale.



Above left: Ernie Mercer with Harry Smith and Fred Meakin of Loose Bowls Club in 1940 when they won the Kent County Triples Trophy. Above: Ernie and Kate Mercer, c. 1935.



## Happy Birthday, Tovil Scouts



Congratulations to Tovil Scouts, 90 years old and still going strong.

The '1st Tovil Troop BP Scouts, Rovers and Cubs' (to give them their original full title) were founded by Glad Bincham, who worked at Tovil Mill at the time and later became a senior manager in the papermaking industry.

The scouts held their first informal meeting in July 1920 and their inaugural meeting in December 1920, followed by registration with National Scout Headquarters in 1921.

Their first official parade was on Armistice Day 1921, at St Stephen's Church, Tovil.

By courtesy of Margaret Davis and John Webb, whose father Ernest Webb was one of the Troop's founder members, and Denis O'Kill, we feature here a selection of archive photographs of Tovil Scouts.

We would be pleased to hear from any of our readers who can put 'names to faces' of any of the members we have been unable to identify.



Top of page: Tovil Scouts, winners of the Maidstone Swimming Association Shield, c. I 926. With them in the second row from the front are Glad Bincham (Scoutmaster), F A Brett (Hon Secretary and ASM) and J Barcham Green (whose mother was the Troop's President). Glad Bincham was the founder of Tovil Scouts and their leader for many years. Left: founder member Ernest Webb's enrolment card. Above: Ernest Webb at an awards ceremony. Below: undated picture of Glad Bincham with members of the Troop.







## **Dambuster hero joins Tovil Scouts**

Before Tovil Scouts moved to their current premises at Straw Mill Hill, Stockett Lane in 1985, their HQ, camp site and open-air chapel were on land close to what is now Woodbridge Drive.

A memorial on the site honours six Tovil Rover Scouts who died on active service in the Second World War: Aircraftman John Riley, Petty Officer Reginald Harold Whyman, Ordinary Seaman Ronald Albert Farley, Sergeant John Wenham, Guardsman Dick Chapman and Wing Commander Guy Gibson.

Wings for Victory Week in Maidstone in June 1943 raised £1 million. The RAF displayed a Wellington bomber in Rootes's car park in Palace Avenue, and a Spitfire and 'bombs destined for Berlin' at the Old Palace.

The event opened on Saturday, June 19, with a military parade headed by several senior RAF officers, among them Wing Commander Guy Gibson, VC, DSO, DFC, who only 34 days earlier, on the night of May 16/17, had led the Lancaster bombers of 617 Squadron on the Dambusters Raid.

Gibson's other duties in Maidstone included visiting local firms. The Kent Messenger reported that he gave 'a graphic account of the operation that stirred the world' at Willet & Robinson and the Southern Paper Stock's factories in Tovil, where he was introduced to crowded audiences by Glad Bincham.

On Sunday, June 20, Gibson visited Tovil Scouts' HQ and enrolled as a Rover, having been a scout in his boyhood.

On September 19, 1944, he and his navigator, Squadron Leader Jim Warwick, were killed on a bombing raid on Rheydt while operating as a Pathfinder Master Bomber.

The Troop kept candles burning in its chapel in memory of Gibson and Warwick until the end of the war, and subsequently erected wooden memorial crosses there in honour of all the Tovil Rover war casualties.

By 1973 the chapel site and memorial had become overgrown and neglected. It was restored at the instigation of Gordon Newton of the Stone Shop, East Farleigh, and Robin Brooks, aviation historian and author, and re-dedicated in September 2004 to mark the 60th anniversary of Gibson's death. The six crosses that comprised the original memorial are currently being restored for erection in the Troop's hall.

Were you there when Guy Gibson came to Tovil? Do you have any memories or pictures of other special occasions at Tovil Scouts? If so, please tell 'Loose Threads'. Read more about the history of Tovil Scouts on http://www.tovil-scouts.org.uk



Top left: 'I promise on my honour that I will do my best to serve God and my country ... '. Guy Gibson renewing his Scout vow during his visit to Tovil Scouts. Top right: a photograph signed by Guy Gibson (third from left) and four fellow officers who accompanied him on his visit to Tovil. Above: the memorial to Tovil's Rover Scouts (Photo: Alan Smith). Right: 'Old Tovil Scouts' on May 3, 1958, at a reunion to mark Glad Bincham's 50 years in the Scout Movement. Glad is sitting in the front row, fifth from the left.

## Together again, celebrating fifty years



## Loose and Langley's 'troublesome priests'

Two headstrong Victorian parsons in parishes in the Loose Valley did not always earn unqualified admiration. Pat Jenner and Paul Tritton tell tales of the Reverends Richard Boys and William Bouverie Pusey

Richard Boys was the son of John Boys (1749 to 1824), an agriculturalist living at Each End, Woodnesborough, Kent. He had a family of eight sons and three daughters, Richard being the fourth son. His mother was Mary Harvey, daughter of Rev. Richard Harvey, a descendant of the Earls of Huntingdon.

Mary was proud of the tradition that the Boys family descended from Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror. The family has been 'landed gentry' in Kent since 1087.

Richard Boys attended King's School, Canterbury and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. After a short period in the Royal Engineers he returned to Cambridge and obtained his Master of Divinity degree.

In 1811, at 26 years of age, he joined the Hon. East India Company as a chaplain and was posted to St Helena, arriving with his wife Agnes, son Markby and an unknown number of daughters. They lived at Smith's Gatehouse until Kent Cottage was built to accommodate the growing family.

On October 15, 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte arrived at St Helena on board HMS Northumberland and it is on record that on that day he had a conversation with Richard Boys.

Boys was described as 'honest and devout but bad tempered, tactless, narrow-minded, outspoken and intolerant,' and did not endear himself to Major General Hudson Lowe, the Governor of St Helena, who was of similar temperament. The comparative calmness of Richard Boys was remarked upon after Lowe left the island 'under a cloud' in July 1821.

From his pulpit Boys censured Rear Admiral Plampin who arrived in July 1817 to take charge of the naval station. He was accompanied by his mistress, whom Governor Lowe allowed to stay. Boys and his curate, as St Helena's schoolmasters, educated the sons of freeman and slaves, which was not approved of; although it was admitted that Boys was an excellent teacher.

The island's garrison had a strict social regime. When the question of precedence arose Boys, as senior chaplain, was accorded the rank of major.

Agnes Boys was not included on the list of ladies suitable to entertain, and be entertained by, Napoleon. However in a second list of 'Principal Ladies of the Island,' Agnes Boys is No. 28 out of 54.

This difficult cleric had a softer side. Napoleon's friend and major domo, Cipriano, died at a time when there was no Roman Catholic priest on the island. Boys and his curate prepared the grave and conducted a Church of England service, earning the gratitude of Napoleon, who sent Boys a gold snuff box and £25 for the poor.

The curate received a silver box. Both boxes had to be given back as it was forbidden to receive gifts from Napoleon. Following his death the boxes were returned and the gold one is said to be in the possession of the Boys family.

In the Lowe papers there is a letter from Lt George H. Wood of the 20th Foot Regiment expressing appreciation for the continuing hospitality received from the Boys family on behalf of 20 young Christian soldiers. Of Boys, Wood wrote, 'He watched over us as a father over his family'; and Agnes Boys was 'a true mother in Israel'.



Boys' custom was to record the names of the fathers of the island's illegitimate children, to the chagrin of the men but to the benefit of the women, who could obtain support for their babies.

Napoleon died on May 5, 1821, after which there was a public sale of his possessions. Markby Boys recorded that his father obtained two plaster casts, which he brought back to England, together with a toast rack, some plates, a cane, some of the emperor's buttons, his autograph and a lock of hair.

Markby Boys became Bishop of Bombay and in an undated article in the 'New York Times' he described conversations between his father and Napoleon on St Helena and the two bergere chairs on which they sat. He said that Napoleon was 'always in a state of irritability' and damaged with a penknife the chair on which he sat.

Kent Cottage is described as being near Longwood House, where Napoleon lived and was free to walk around the island, provided that he was accompanied by a guard.

Richard Boys, his wife and two daughters returned to England in 1829. He became curate at All Saints', Tudeley, near Tonbridge, leaving in 1853 to become perpetual curate at St George's, Wrotham. In 1854 he became Vicar of All Saints', Loose

Agnes died in 1862 and is buried at All Saints', Loose, with two of her daughters, Charlotte and Helena. Three other daughters died and are buried at St Helena. Richard Boys died in Loose in 1866, aged 82, and is buried with his family.

There is no record of any discord between Boys and his parishioners in Loose! His portrait (above) can be seen in the vestry at All Saints'.

PJ

#### 'Napoleon's chair'

The bergere chairs were acquired by Richard Boys, who brought them home to England. One, described as 'Napoleon's chair,' was donated to Maidstone Museum in about 1866 by Councillor Alexander Randall, senior partner at the Kentish Bank (now the NatWest). The chair was exhibited until placed in storage in 1996 and 'rediscovered' in 2009, since when it has received considerable media coverage and is featured on the internet at

Http://johntyrrell.blogspot.com and http://news.bbc.co.uk

### Arrogant 'learned divine'

The members of the congregation at St Mary's, Langley, were grateful to their rector, the Rev. William Bouverie Pusey, for the beautiful new church he built for them at his own expense in 1855. But gratitude gave way to resentment soon after the building was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Bird Sumner.

Pusey had a reputation for being arrogant and autocratic. His behaviour became scandalous in January 1856, as Building News reported: 'A learned divine, the Rev. Mr Pusey of Langley, more conversant with the practices of the Dark Ages than with the institutions of the country in which it has been his fate to be born, has in building a new church for his parish, attempted to divide the families of his congregation, quartering out the males on one side and the females on the other, separating husbands and wives, mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters, masters and maidens.

'To his great surprise and disgust the congregation has refused to be so penned out like sheep in a market'.

Apparently Pusey's rule was obeyed only by 'the I abouring classes'. Ratepayers and their families insisted on sitting together. Visitors from outside the parish were also requested to 'separate themselves'. Mr Pusey even deprived his clerk, Mr Butcher, of his own seat and all his responsibilities and 'placed him far away, close to the church door, to perform his office, which resembles that of parish pound-keeper rather than of parish clerk'.

When a Mr Farrance and his wife and two daughters, who lived outside the parish but near the church, took seats together in the north aisle, Mr Butcher sallied forth, asked Mr Farrance to move, and paraded him to a seat in the south aisle.

An unholy row ensued, with Mr Farrance protesting, 'Is this not a free church?' to which Mr Butcher responded, 'Mr Pusey's arrangements are otherwise'

The other members of the congregation supported Mr Farrance and urged him to ignore Pusey's instructions. The local newspaper reported that 'this kind of resistance will entail endless trouble and annoyance without the aid of the Archbishop who, there can scarcely be a doubt, will promptly assist them. The parishioners, we are informed, are now about to appeal to the Archbishop'.

This course of action prevented further disturbances and eventually the parishioners were allowed to sit wherever they pleased. Despite having antagonized, divided and insulted his flock, Mr Pusey remained Rector of Langley for another 31 years. He died at the age of 77 on April 19, 1887.

His grave can be found to the south of the path from the lychgate to the church. Buried beside him is his wife Catherine, who died in 1873 and is described on her headstone as 'a loving wife and devoted mother'.

She must have had a lot to put up with.

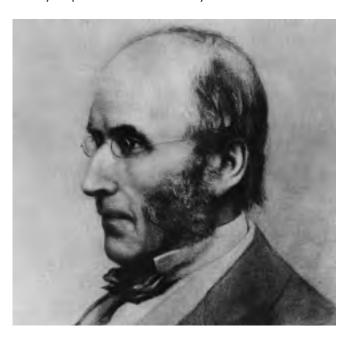


## **Utterly Butterfield**

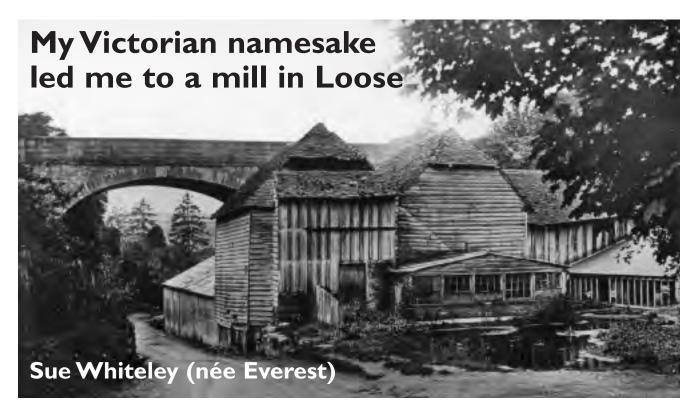
St Mary's Church (above) is a splendid example of the work of William Butterfield (below) the celebrated Gothic Revival architect noted for his highly individualistic polychromatic brickwork, masonry and decorative details.

Butterfield was an associate of William Bouverie Pusey and his brother, Dr Edward Pusey (a founder of the Oxford Movement and member of the Ecclesiological Society) and was commissioned after Langley's parishioners complained that their old church, which dated back to the 13th century, was damp, too small, and had inconveniently arranged pews. W.B. Pusey was authorized to build a new St Mary's on the understanding that he would bear the entire cost.

The old church's monuments, piscina, font and bells were re-erected in the new building; the gravestones and headstones standing near where the builders were working were protected; and any corpses that were 'unavoidably disturbed' were reburied.



РΤ



While studying my father's family tree I came across my namesake, Susan Everest, born on September 16, 1835 at White Post, south of Westerham. Susan's parents were William and Elizabeth (née Penfold) Everest. William was a wheelwright in Westerham.

Susan's oldest brother, William (born in 1820), was my great-great-grandfather. In 1841 he moved to Crockenhill where he had a wheelwright, blacksmith and undertaking business and was also a farmer. I thought it would be fun to try to find out more about Susan and the trail has taken me to Loose, where Susan's husband, Henry Gurney, ran a mill in Salts Lane.

Susan's father died in 1850 leaving his widow, Elizabeth, a charwoman, at home with the youngest of her 10 children. In 1851 Susan and her sister Sophia were working as barmaids in a pub in Westerham. How long Susan remained working there, and



where she went afterwards, are unknown but sometime between 1851 and 1856 she met her future husband, Henry Gurney, and started a family with him. Henry was a widower with five children from his first marriage. It was not until 13 years later, after they had had 10 children, that Susan became Henry's second wife.

Henry was born in 1817 at Woburn, Buckinghamshire, an important papermaking centre. One of many papermakers who moved from Buckinghamshire to Kent between 1823 and 1845, he worked at mills at Snodland and St Mary Cray. In 1838 he married Ann Susanna Butler and in 1841 they were living in Snodland with their two young sons, Henry and John. By 1845 the family had moved to St. Mary Cray, where they had four more children: William, Anne, Matilda and Alfred.

Ann died from tuberculosis in July 1851, nine months after giving birth to Alfred, who died of hydrocephalus two months before his mother's death.

I next encountered Henry Gurney in 1861, by which time he had moved from St. Mary Cray to Loose and established a millboard manufacturing business in what became known as Gurney's Mill, employing nine men, one woman and a boy. Some records indicate that Henry could have taken over the mill (which he probably rented from a neighbouring mill owner) as early as 1851.

It must have felt like quite a step up in the world for Henry to have his own business. He seems to have been a man of some talent. I know he had an interest in music and was a skilled craftsman, because he built organs in his spare time: there was at least one installed at the mill. In his memoirs, Alec Partridge recalls how his father, Henry's nephew, used to enjoy playing it in the 1880s.

Living with Henry at the house next to the mill were his new 'wife' Susan Everest; their four children, Alice, Ellen, Alfred and Sidney; and two children from Henry's first marriage, William and Ann. The two oldest boys from the first marriage, Henry and John, were living together in a nearby cottage and presumably working for their father.

Title picture: Gurney's Mill at about the time it was abandoned. Left: Gurney's Cottage in 2010. This may have been where the Gurney brothers lived when they worked at the mill.



How and where did Henry and Susan meet? It could have been through mutual acquaintances, or perhaps she was employed by newly widowed Henry to look after his children. In any event by the mid-1850s they had set up home together in Loose. After the birth of their tenth child in 1869 they decided to put their relationship on a legal footing, and chose to do so at Shoreditch Register Office in London. On their marriage certificate they gaveNo.105 Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, as their place of residence.

It is a mystery why they waited 13 years to get married. The reason may have a connection with the birth of their eldest child, Alice. She is present in the household, aged 4, in 1861 and described as their daughter, but I have been unable to trace any record of her birth. On the other hand, the births of all their subsequent children, starting with Ellen Grace in 1857, were registered.

The lack of a birth record for Alice could be a simple transcription error but it might indicate a mystery around her parentage, which could have affected Henry and Susan's decision not to marry.

Their marriage certificate seems to bear out the secretive and perhaps hastily arranged nature of the wedding. As well as registering his address as Shoreditch, Henry described his occupation as 'organ builder' rather than mill owner, making it difficult to link his name with his home village. They had been pillars of the local community in Loose and had lived together as man and wife for many years. What would the neighbours have thought had they heard they had only recently married?

Bride and groom returned to Loose where, over the next seven years, they produced five more children, the first of whom was named Susan after her mother. It is likely that Henry had 21 children: six with his first wife and 15 with Susan. Their youngest child, Mildred Ethel May, known as 'Dollie' was born in 1877 when Susan was 42. 'Dollie' died in 1901 aged 24 and was buried in Loose churchyard.

Susan and Henry lived at the mill house [now known as Old Mill House] into the early 1900s. Various children and grandchildren stayed with them from time to time. By 1901 Henry, now in his eighties, had retired and his and Susan's sons, Joseph and Archibald, were running the business.

Despite being eighteen years younger than her husband, Susan died before him, succumbing to cardiac disease on October 23, 1903, at the age of 68. Henry died following a stroke on April II, 1906. He was 88 years old. Their graves are in Loose churchyard.

At the time of the 1911 census only Joseph was in charge of the mill. Two of his unmarried sisters, Ellen Grace (52) and Agnes (49) were still at home with him. After Henry

Above: Old Mill House and, foreground, the site of Gurney's Mill, c. 1925. Mill Falls now stands on the site. Above right: Old Mill House in 2010. The waterfall once drove the mill's waterwheel.



died, Joseph and Archibald switched from manufacturing board for bookbinding to making a new form of roofing board.

Local records and memoirs indicate that their efforts to revive the failing millboard business ran into difficulties and the mill was closed. Its chimney was demolished in the First World War, for fear that it would be a landmark for enemy Zeppelins. Ironically, the work was done by German PoWs. The 1920s saw the demolition of the remaining structure but the mill house, where Susan and Henry brought up their family, still stands.

At some point around the time of the First World War the Gurneys abandoned the mill. Local lore has it that they left in a hurry, not bothering to clear out many pieces of equipment, account books, household effects or even Henry's beloved organ.

I have traced what became of the Gurney descendents. Of the children of Henry's first marriage, John started working at Gurney's Mill. Later he became an engine driver and married Ann Hucks of Pontypool. I can only find definite evidence that four of Henry and Susan's children married: Alice, Alfred, Sidney and Susan Marion.

Alice married William Bryant, who went into educational publishing and lived with his family in Boughton Monchelsea and then in Loose. Alfred, a professor of music, married Sarah Ann (née Blinkhorn) of Horsmonden. They emigrated with their family to Canada, where many of their descendents live to this day. Sidney, a papermaker, married Sara Amelia Dear. They had a home in Paddock Wood but for a time they stayed with Henry and Susan in Loose. Susan Marion married John Pentelow, who worked for the Inland Revenue.

My trail following Susan Everest's life has been a fascinating journey, uncovering many interesting facts and a mystery or two along the way, but sadly I have been unable to find any photographs of Henry and Susan. Now if I could, that would be a real treat!

Have we got news for you, Sue! After this issue of 'Loose Threads' was compiled a grandson of Alfred and Sarah Gurney, Michael M. Whitehead, who lives in Canada, sent us photographs of Henry, Susan, Alfred and Sarah; told us that Alfred was organist and choirmaster at All Saints', Loose; and said he had a diary Alfred kept when he and Sarah were courting. All this will be featured in our next issue. Watch this space! - Ed.



The wall stands unnoticed outside the newly converted Hayle Mill in the Loose Valley and it is easy just to walk past without noticing the names and initials carved into the bricks.

They date back nearly a century but some recent ones have also been added. Do you know of anyone who spent time there expressing their love for another, or in an idle moment inscribed their names or initials like S.W.L. 1944 JULY 12 or MDM 1957?

And were GA, ES a couple, and are they still together?

MH, G BEAL and ONION 72 obviously had more time to spare, as their carvings are deeper than some of the others. And does PJ still love DF?

These are wonderful reminders of times gone by. Next time you walk along Hayle Mill Road, do take time to look at the wall (pictured above) and see what is the earliest date you can find and whether it might have been a relative carving his or her initials.













Some of the inscriptions. Please tell **'Loose Threads'** if you carved your name with pride on the wall or recognize any of the initials.



# Boughton Monchelsea's war memorials Jenny Harrison

Boughton Monchelsea is unusual in that it has no outdoor memorial to the dead of the village from the two world wars. Instead there is memorial screen in the church and a plaque in the school. A further war memorial was the old village hall which was an army hut brought from Hampshire.

The church memorial screen preceded the hall but sadly the information on how it came about is very scant as the Parochial Church Counci's minutes for this period cannot be found. Maybe someone borrowed them to research the memorial? What is known is that the minutes for 1920 refer to the unveiling by Admiral Shindlee. The inscriptions were done by Mr Cole who lived in the Quarries.

A sad footnote to this memorial is the names of Ronald Bluett Winch who died in the Great War and Antony Desmond Winch who died in the Second World War.

Ronald was the son of Lieutenant Colonel George Bluett Winch and Ethel May Winch of Boughton Monchelsea Place. Following his death his parents adopted Antony, who was subsequently also killed in war, thus leaving no heir to their beautiful property.

Boughton Monchelsea primary school originally consisted of a school room with a cottage attached where the head teacher lived. One of the bedrooms of this cottage is now the school's History Room in which are preserved all sorts of things that schools often throw away. Including a shield (*pictured*) bearing the names of 25 men. This originally hung in the school room.

The early school log books are now deposited in the County Records Office and require further examination but the following is recorded: '11.2.1921. The Roll of Honour containing 25 names of the 'old boys' who lost their lives in the Great War was unveiled this morning by General R Style, one of the managers.

'The board comprising the memorial was made by the boys at their handicraft class and the decoration carried out by a Maidstone decorator, the cost being met by subscription from the children and staff'.

The lists of names on each of these memorials do not quite match but the school log does refer to some of the village children attending school in Chart Sutton. Many of the surnames are still well known in Boughton Monchelsea.

Please tell 'Loose Threads' if you have any photos of the old village hall, or of events and special occasions there.



Mari Gosling of the Marden History Group wrote to Margaret Chapman, author of 'Families of Wartime Loose', saying: 'Private John Albert Goulds and Stoker Fred Lavender are commemorated on the Marden War Memorial in St Michael & All Angels Church as well as on the Loose War Memorial.

Margaret understood that Goulds' parents, William and Ada, lived in Linton, that he served with The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, and that he died on April 20, 1941, aged 22 and was buried at Marden Cemetery.

Mari added to this account, saying that John was born in Marden but later moved with his parents to No. 3 Hubbards Lane, Loose. Before joining the Army he was employed by Mr F Towner of Salts Farm.

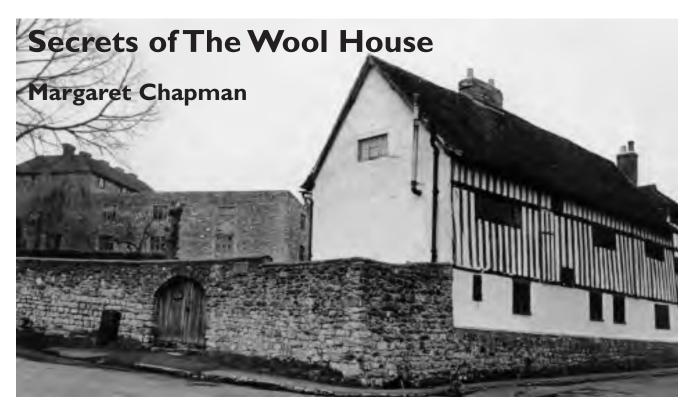
John was a motor transport driver and died as the result of an accident at Newbury, Berkshire.

## Langley from the Jutes to the present day



In her new book 'A History of Langley in Kent' Anne Clinch reveals that the parish at the head of the Loose Valley contains much of historical interest. While admitting that it lacks 'castles, stately homes or famous inhabitants,' Anne nevertheless has discovered enough to put together a succinct and well-ordered story of the parish from Jutish times to the present day. Subjects featured include St Mary's Church; Shieling Hall; Langley Park; Rumwood Court, and photographs and reports of important events. The book has 105 pages including many illustrations and an index. Price £9 (plus £1 p&p) from J & A Clinch at No. 3 Milners, Upper Street, Leeds, Maidstone ME17 IGZ. Email jimclinch@tiscali.co.uk.Tel 01622 861217.

Left: Langley's village sign, depicting St Mary's Church, an oast house, and the fleur-de-lis and red rose emblems of the Plantagenet and Tudor kings that decorate the church's font.



It is strange that we know very little about The Wool House and its adjacent Wool House Cottage. They stand at the bottom of Well Street, one of the largest and most prominent pairs of buildings in Loose, are of considerable age, and belong to The National Trust. Yet almost nothing of their history is known, apart from what little we have now discovered via the Austen (aka Austyn and Austin) family, who owned and occupied both properties from about 1500 until 1765.

During this time The Wool House was known as the Homestall. Prior to this both properties were, as far as we know, unnamed. There is no evidence that they ever had anything to do with the wool industry, whereas we do know that the Austens were leather tanners.

In the 1920s the larger of the two houses was named Elm Cottage and in the 1934 'Kelly's Directory' it was called The Old Manor House, after which it and its neighbour became known as The Wool House and Wool House Cottage, the latter being the older of the two properties. Yes, there is Colonel J.C.B. Statham's book 'The Romance of a Tudor House' but although it records his restoration in the 1920s it is laced throughout with such fantasy that we learn very little about the place. There is not anything to be gleaned from The National Trust, either. The most the staff there appeared able to say in 1988, in reply to an enquiry by Roger Thornburgh, was to admit 'we do not hold a large archive on The Wool House'. The Trust's handbook merely states that the house is 'a fifteenth century half-timbered house, thought to have been used for the cleaning of wool'. The Trust acquired the property in 1934 under Col. Statham's will.

Evidence for The Wool House being used in the wool industry is, as far as we are aware, non-existent, with the exception of the present name of the house, together with a picture of a teazle fragment above the fireplace in the sitting room of Wool House Cottage. The wording on a panel under the teazle reads: 'this fragment of [a] late 16th century painting was probably the centrepiece of a larger subject extending over the fireplace. The device represents teazles associated with the wool trade'. It possibly had some connection with the production of wool, although exactly what, is not clear. There is rather more evidence to connect it with

the local tanning industry and mixed farming (of which more in the next issue of 'Loose Threads', in which we will talk about the Austen family). So what evidence do we actually have regarding these two properties?



Title picture: an undated photograph of The Wool House, its barn and (left) Fairview Cottages. Above: the 'teazle' picture in Wool House Cottage.

The earliest reference to them is from about 1550 when Nicholas Austen, who died in 1564, purchased the two houses, after he had sold lands in East Farleigh, Hunton and Linton that he had inherited from his father. The Homestall (which Nicholas left to his wife, Agnes) was purchased from John Palmer, gentleman, and William Greene of Maidstone; the adjacent cottage (which he left to his son, Nicholas) was bought from William Collyer of Marden. Both properties were on what was then the boundary of the parishes of Loose and East Farleigh. They were to remain in the Austen family until John Austen died in 1765.

While restoring The Wool House, Colonel Statham discovered a religious tract or book, hidden behind some plaster. This could date to the time when Henry Walter, Vicar of Loose from 1666 until 1712, lived in the house, although there is no proof that this is the case. Nobody knows what happened to the book or any of the other items that Statham found: the only evidence we have is his book 'The Romance of a Tudor House'.



The religious tract and other objects Colonel Statham found at The Wool House, including a platter, ewer, spoon, spear, lace, shoes and pipes.

Statham also discovered a Cromwellian tax document (pictured right). This was a tax or levy on the district for its share of the £120,000 (equal to more than £9.067 million at today's values) which was raised every month for the maintenance of Cromwell's Army and Fleet. One of the names on the document was that of Henry Austen who lived in the house at that time. The text reads: 'By virtue of an Act, passed the 24th day of November last, for an assessment of £120,000 by the month, for six months ending the 24th day of June next, towards the maintenance of the Armies and Navies of this Commonwealth; you are to assess for the first three months, ten-pence for every twenty shillings on yearly value of lands or real estate with your said Parish or Province, and for stock upon land; two-pence for every twenty shillings rent, on yearly value as aforesaid, and for all other personal stock or personal estate besides stock upon lands, one penny for every twenty shillings: also to charge all lands, stock and personal estate of any person living beyond sea, other than merchants, a double proportion; and to bring in two books of your said assessment under your hands, fair written and summed up to the Commissioners for the said tax at the Bell in Maidstone upon Friday, the 30th of this instant month of December by nine of the clock in the morning, and hereby you are not to fail'.

The document was 'Dated this 21st day of December, 1653' and signed by John Charlton ('for the Parish') Henry Austen and another John Charlton ('at Church, Loose'). These names appear to be the names of the 'Assessors of the Levy' (both 'John Charltons' had married Austen girls and all three men lived at The Homestall). In the left hand margin of the document are the names of the Commissioners: Lambard Godfrey (wrongly translated by Colonel Statham as L.E.O. Godfrey) who was appointed Recorder, Steward and

Town Clerk of Maidstone in 1658; Geo[rge] Duke; and Fra[ncis] Beale.]

By 1912 both properties and others in the vicinity were part of the Peale Estate when they went up for auction. The sale particulars describe 'Five Very Substantial Cottages [lot 25 on the plan below], called Oast Cottages. Built of stone, with Tiled Roof, and each having Living Room with Range, Scullery with Cement Floor, Copper and Sink, and Two Good Bedrooms, and Good Gardens. Gas is laid on. Let to Weekly Tenants at rents £39 per annum'. These cottages are what we now know as Fairview Cottages. Previously they were called Oast Cottages (in 1912) and Spion Kop (in 1919).

Also up for sale was 'A Most Substantial Building 70 feet by 27 feet 6 inches [lot 26]. Constructed of Stone, laid in courses, and partly timbered, with an excellent king-post slated roof, formerly used as an Oast House and Stowage, having Four Spacious Floors, supported by massive timbers, and a Basement. Very suitable for a Warehouse or Factory and having approaches on two sides, and a piece of Garden Ground'. The remnants of this oast house can still be seen behind The Wool House.



And finally, 'At the lower corner of Well Street, Loose, A Block of 2 Picturesque Very Roomy Brick, Plaster, and partly half-timbered Dwelling Houses [lot 43]. Formerly a Farmhouse [we know the Austens farmed there] containing: (I) Kitchen, Large Scullery, Lumber Room, Pantry, and Five Bedrooms; (2) [presumably Wool House Cottage] Two Living Rooms (one with range), Large Scullery, Pantry, Three Bedrooms, and Two Large Attics, with Good Gardens. Occupied by Mrs Rayner and Mr G Wells, tenants of many years standing, at the very moderate rent of 3/- per week, giving £15 12s per annum'.







Above: the earliest known photograph of The Wool House, taken in about 1920. It is captioned Elder Cottage and was taken shortly before the restoration undertaken by Colonel Statham. Above right: a slightly later picture, dated 1921, of the rear of the property, showing a number of old, small blocked-up windows.

'The Romance of a Tudor House' was published in 1929. Apart from the items mentioned earlier Colonel Statham uncovered seven fireplaces, which had been bricked-up; a supposed 'secret chamber', which we can account for (via the Austen history) as a lumber room; various bits and pieces of lace, coins, shoes and sundry items of clothing; and an old spear of some sort. He also talks romantically of ghosts and witches (one proved to be a creaking tree and the other an unstable chimney); mysterious underground water (which is no real mystery!); and a lost passage. The Colonel doesn't make clear what this supposedly lost passage was, but it was apparently responsible for the ruination of his collection of trophies from his hunting days, which he kept in the old barn and which were fatally affected by dampness.

The Colonel also talks of Jack Cade and his followers, who, he says, were captured in Well Street in 1450, and possibly in his house, since it was the oldest in Well Street. There is no evidence whatsoever of Jack Cade having been in Loose, although the Rebellion was certainly in 1450. Oh well, the book is called a Romance!

In 1936, two years after The National Trust took on The Wool House and Wool House Cottage, Arthur Mee wrote in 'Kent: The Gateway of England and Its Great Possessions': For about [500 years] there has been in Loose a house which now belongs to us all, having been left to The National Trust. It was the old manor house which a great friend of beautiful things, Colonel Statham, recovered from neglect and ruin and turned into what he called his Dream House. He found it leaning, with the chimneys undermined, beams gone to powder, ivy climbing through the windows, and flowers creeping over the roof. He underpinned it, turned the course of springs that were ruining its foundations, opened up seven Tudor fireplaces, discovered frescoes painted long before Elizabeth's days, found a secret hiding place with a tract of 1616 in it, and restored its lovely Tudor front so that his beautiful house looks really what he called it, a dream house. A small barn in the garden is full of relics of his life of great adventure'.

So why does The National Trust, having owned the house for 76 years, not know more about it? Primarily, I imagine, because its officials are not particularly interested in it. It is to them, a small, unimportant property, not worthy of much attention, and probably a bit of an embarrassment, though of course, having acquired it, if pressed, they might well agree with the sentiments (about the house, not its residents!) expressed by one of the Trust staff back in the 1940s, a certain James Lees-Milne (pictured right), whose job it was, as historic buildings secretary, to travel round the country inspecting NT properties and who kept a diary which recorded some fairly forthright opinions.

He had joined the trust in 1936 when they had a staff of five and owned just five country houses. By the time Lees-Milne retired in 1951 the number had risen to 53. When he died in December 1997 the Trust, in the summer edition [No 84] of its magazine, paid tribute to the man they described as 'the most modest and self-deprecating man'. After reading the following two extracts from his diaries, what do you think?

'Thursday, 23 April 1942: My reception at The Wool House in Loose was just as Eardley [the Trust's land-agent] foretold. The house has been divided into two since the war. Miss Hunt lives in one part; some people called Beeson in the other. The house is a hideous, pretentious, genteel over-restored fake, just like its inhabitants. A horrible property. I hope it gets bombed. Miss Hunt shouted a catalogue of grievances against the Trust for not carrying out repairs to the bogus half-timber which she had been obliged to attend to at her expense. It is true that the plaster is falling off the panels, and you can see daylight between plaster and beams, most of which should never have been exposed. The Beesons came out of their part and shouted abuse at Miss Hunt, and then at me. I could not bear it and fled, without seeing the museum of African flints and trophies'.

'Friday, 14 January 1944: Motored to Loose Wool House, Kent, that detestable little half-timbered atrocity. There I went over the furniture that is ours. The tenants offered to buy it for £100, and good riddance to bad rubbish. Very friendly, very quelconque people who have evidently made money. They kindly gave me luncheon which they called dinner, and we drank tea afterwards. On leaving I was presented with four eggs, of which two were ducks'.

Colonel Statham would turn in his grave at hearing these words!



# The Wool House and Wool



In 1964 a journalist from 'The Gazette' wrote an article on The Wool House and Wool House Cottage. He (or she) started off badly with the old pun about our 'Loose Women', and continued with various misconceptions and half-truths. However, the main thrust of the article was an interview with Mr E C Harris (pictured above), the then owner or occupier of the cottage, who, like Colonel Statham, perpetuates the myth of Jack Cade (he must have read the book!). 'This was originally the Little Manor House (wrote Mr Harris). 'It was built in 1465, so next year it will be 500 years old. Oliver Cromwell had his military Kent headquarters here for his Campaign. The leader of the rebels, Jack Cade, hid here. He was caught and killed in the bedroom upstairs'.

I can understand Mr Harris's link with Oliver Cromwell, but Jack Cade certainly didn't die in Loose. He

I can understand Mr Harris's link with Oliver Cromwell, but Jack Cade certainly didn't die in Loose. He died in a skirmish near Heathfield in East Sussex, after which his body was taken to London and quartered for display in different cities. His preserved head ended up on a pike on London Bridge. No, Jack Cade did not die in a bedroom at The Wool House.

That is the extent of our knowledge of the two properties. Please, if you can offer any further evidence to help extend our knowledge, we will be very grateful to hear from you.





A post-restoration view of The Wool House and Wool House Cottage, c. 1935. Note that the photograph is captioned 'The Old Manor House'. Fairview Cottages, the 'Five Very Substantial Cottages' that were sold in 1912 as Lot 25, are in the background.

## House Cottage, yesterday and today

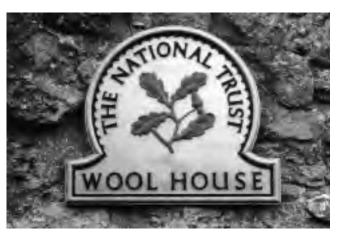




Opposite page: the rear of The Wool House and Wool House Cottage before restoration, showing decorative plaster-work or 'pargetting' on the gable wall and around the window under the eaves; a comparison picture taken in April 2010. Above: The Wool House and Wool House Cottage, pictured from the garden soon after Colonel Statham's restoration of the 1920s, and a comparison picture taken in about 1955. Right: The barn in which Colonel Statham displayed trophies from his hunting days, viewed in the 1920s through a gateway he built in Well Street. The photograph is from his book 'The Romance of a Tudor House.' Below: Detail of the barn in 2009.







The Wool House is rarely open to the public. The Loose Area History Society asked The National Trust if there were any plans to make the property more accessible. A spokesman for the Trust replied: 'Currently The Wool House is not open to the public but is tenanted. This is ultimately down to cost unfortunately. Four in every five of our historic houses run at a loss and our resources have become increasingly stretched. But if there is enough interest in opening up the property I'm sure this would be taken seriously'.

There is copy of Colonel Statham's book in Maidstone Reference Library and in the Loose Area History Society's archives.



My first recollections of Loose are of the time in about 1931 or 1932 when my parents moved from Maidstone to a brand new semi-detached house in Salts Avenue: No. 8 in those days but later renumbered 43. This private road was being developed by a local well-to-do farmer, Mr Towner, who lived in Salts Farm House, opposite Rosemount Estate.

At that time Salts Avenue did not even reach the little 'dip' and the end of the road was blocked off by hurdles, beyond which stretched large and immaculate orchards. The Avenue was gradually extended as each group of a few houses was built.

I clearly recall our milk jug being replenished at our door from the churn of Mr Thompsett of Kirkdale Dairy, and the horse drawn van of Mrs Biggs the Maidstone bakers. She continued calling thus until the war was over. Our refuse was collected by a private contractor (the council would not then serve a private road), a service for which each householder paid 6d. a week.

There was a shop on the corner of Salts Avenue, originally occupied by Mr A E Walker, a grocer, who augmented his income by selling and servicing second-hand bicycles. Later the shop was run by Miss Rowles. After that it was very briefly a gun shop, before its present use by an installer of TV aerials.

The triangle opposite the shop was originally devoid of trees and was the favoured parking lot for the council's steam roller, complete with road wagon and tar dolly. This outfit visited the area for road maintenance fairly regularly. How times have changed. As boys we haunted the local lanes. Much of our time was spent in what we always referred to as 'Hudson's Quarry', reached by a track leading off Salts Lane.

There was at that time an exceedingly high and dangerous elevated wagon-way, extending out from the new

workings in an orchard to the centre of the quarry, and along which wagons of spoil were pushed to be emptied some 70 feet to the quarry floor below.

It was along this old wooden structure, rather like the Bridge over the River Kwai, that we boys crawled at great risk of falling through the gaps. Fortunately for us our escapades did not become known! Another engineering structure I recall was when the road bridge over the valley was widened to provide a footpath. Before this, even with the meagre traffic, pedestrians could be in some danger.

Shortly before the war a start was made on widening Linton Road, then relatively narrow. I well remember the section from opposite Salts Avenue being extended down to Old Loose Hill. This was a wide sweep of concrete, some six inches above the existing road, and with the onset of the war it remained like this, and unusable for traffic, until peace returned.

Just prior to the outbreak of war 'ARP' suddenly became fashionable and I believe that Loose Church Hall was designated a First Aid Post. A large crowd of male residents of the Linton Road area, and numerous children, filled sandbags with heaps of clay from the newly widened road.

Title picture: No. 43 Salts Avenue (right). Inset: Colin Mills (fourth from left) with his brother Pat, parents Lorna and Bert, and sister Molly on holiday in 1938. Below left: Salts Farm at No. 51 Linton Road, where John Frank Towner, owner of Salts Farm, lived in the 1930s. Below: the 'exceedingly high and dangerous elevated wagon-way' that Colin and his friends played on in the 1930s. (From a sketch by Donald Maxwell)







The sandbags were hauled by tractor and trailer down to the hall, where more people stacked them roof high as protection against the expected bomb blasts.

Unfortunately they were stacked in a very haphazard way and in course of time many collapsed and burst, giving the appearance of a refuse dump around the walls. Thus it remained throughout the war.

Most of my many war-time incidents occurred away from Loose, although I vividly remember a cluster of unexploded bombs falling close to Salts Avenue, in the nearby orchard. Also, it must have been in the winter of 1940, many bombs were dropped (jettisoned, probably) in the field, then under the plough, at the back of Linton Road water tower. The resultant explosions formed huge underground caverns.

A similar incident, when incendiary bombs fell in the field closer to Heath Road, brought crowds of people out from Maidstone to look at the burnt grass. The field at the back of our garden, which also adjoined that of Mr Joe Cloke, founder of a firm of estate agents, was much used by the Royal Artillery, dragging field guns behind 'quads' or tractors. Today the field is occupied by Cornwallis School.

One final wartime memory is of the Police picket post built of 'borrowed' kerbs from the thwarted road widening, and corrugated iron sheets and pieces of tram line from a builder's yard owned by my father above Star Cottages. This shelter-type structure stood beside the road just below the then Linton Road Cafe and was used throughout the war by the Police Specials, of which my father was one.

Other disjointed and somewhat faded memories are of the old Herts Farm House, with its catslide roof, demolished to make way for the aforementioned roadworks and replaced by a KCC estate house further back from the road.

From the top of a home-going No.59 bus I saw Hill House, opposite Loose School, well alight. It must have been extinguished quickly. I understood from Alan Birch, a subsequent owner, that it is almost entirely built of wood.





I recall paddling the length of the Brook many times, shepherding my Hornby Speedboat. It would go the length upstream with one rewind. Downstream it often eluded my grasp, to disappear in the culvert beneath the road, thankfully reappearing in due course on the other side. My father told me that German PoWs constructed the channelling for this stream during the First World War.

In about 1950 my family firm, Mills & Sharp Ltd, built a house in Pickering Street, near the junction with Walnut Tree Lane. This was a white brick house, built for a Miss White, a schoolteacher, who appropriately called it White House. She later married a Mr Baker (a 'Kent Messenger' editor) and they lived in a bungalow we built them for them at Boughton Monchelsea.

Other houses built by my family firm were the caretaker's house at Oldborough Manor School; No. 591 Loose Road, on the corner of Norrington Road, for a Mr Steed of the Kent Fire Brigade; a bungalow at the bottom of Lancet Lane for a Mr Eddie Matthews, father of a Maidstone dentist; and another bungalow on the turning circle at the end of Valley Drive.

There was a very small grocery shop opposite Linton Road Garage, run by Jack Lawrence in the front room of a cottage. The garage was owned by a Mr Hanson who lived at Park Avenue, near Linton Corner, where he made a small housing development. He named all of the houses after cruise ships he had patronized, such as the Barrabool and similar names beginning with 'B' used by that particular shipping company.

From 1938 and throughout the war there was a small garage at the rear of the main premises of Linton Road Garage and this housed a Fordson fire engine: 'the Loose brigade'.

Above left: Herts Farm House, Linton Road, showing its catslide roof. The property was demolished in 1939 during the widening of Linton Road. (Photo: Derek Pantony). Above right: the west side of Linton Road in the 1930s. Linton Road Garage is between the first and second telegraph poles. Below left: this tiny shop in the front room of No. 90 Linton Road is the one Colin Mills remembered. Below: No. 90. Linton Road (right) and its neighbouring cottages in 2010.



I well remember working on the slate roofs of the cottages immediately past Pickering Street (a tram shed stood on the other corner) in 1945.

At that time scores of roofs had been bomb damaged and almost every Maidstone builder had at least one gang of men around the Lancet Lane and Loose Road area. We were supplied with tea and snacks by a WVS mobile canteen.

I later lived in Arden, Linton Road, which I bought from Mr Thompsett's daughter, Mrs Kitchenham.

(After the war Colin went into business with his father and Percy Sharp.)

#### 'Piecemeal development'

Pat and I moved to Salts Avenue in 1985, when we bought Khanspur, a bungalow built in 1930 on a plot of land sold by John Frank Towner to Clarissa Helen Victoria Hastie (writes Paul Tritton). An Anglo-Indian, she had named the property after a tourist mountain resort in the Galyat area of Pakistan.

In 1930 Salts Avenue was 'an intended new road leading out of the road from Maidstone to Linton,' and only its western end, serving three building plots on the north side and four on the south, was 'adopted' by Maidstone council. The remaining and by far the longest part of the avenue, comprising Nos. 4 to 43, was, and is still, a private road.

Piecemeal development since the 1940s resulted in a somewhat haphazard house numbering arrangement, which among other things required Khanspur, which was originally No. 3 Salts Avenue, to become No. 2. To this day some of the houses on the north side have names but no numbers; a few have both.

In 1950 Khanspur was advertised for sale at £2,480 and bought by Miss Dorothy Le Grove, headmistress at Linton School. Her elderly mother lived at No. I Salts Avenue, on the corner of Linton Road.

When we bought Khanspur from Miss Legrove for £45,000 we found a private telephone line strung across the intervening garden on which mother could summon her daughter in an emergency. In the garden of No.1 there was a dilapidated wooden garage which, we were told, once housed a Morris Bullnose or Vauxhall 14 taxi.

Most of the 'large and immaculate orchards' that Colin Mills knew in the 1930s had, by 1985, become a vast 32-acre arable field that extended from the back gardens on the north side of Salts Avenue to Salts Lane and Hubbards Lane.

Peas were grown there for a season or two in the 1980s but for the next 20 or so years the field was neglected and abused in all sorts of ways, while successive developers sought without success to have the land 'zoned' for housing. Wheat was planted in the field in 2008, followed by broad beans.

The future of the field was finally settled when houses were built on the only two vacant plots through which a road could have been built from the avenue into the field, and the Boughton Monchelsea Amenity Trust acquired the field for £182,000. This has ensured that the field will never be developed and will be a valuable 'green wedge' between Loose and Boughton Monchelsea.

Do you have any memories or photographs of Loose Road, Linton Road and Salts Avenue in days gone by? Do you know the history of your house or neighbourhood? If so please tell 'Loose Threads'.

# 'Too important an item to lose'



### Ragstone relic relocated

When Kiln Cottage in Pickering Street was about to be demolished earlier this year, Roy Hood of Church House was one of several Loose residents who tried in vain to have the property registered as a 'listed building'.

The cottage was originally an oast house and its loss during the redevelopment of the Leonard Gould factory site, which extended across land that had once been part of Pear Tree Farm, means that yet another link with Loose's agricultural past has disappeared.

Fortunately, thanks to Roy, a ragstone cattle trough (pictured above) from the garden of Kiln Cottage was salvaged and has been placed beside the little stream that runs past the garden wall of Church House.

'The trough was going to be destroyed but it was too important an item of history to lose', said Roy. 'It was close to the window where the workmen used to throw the hop pokes into the kiln. It weighs over two tons. It took four of us to unload it from our trailer'.

Horses hauling wagons to and from the oast house, and the cattle from Pear Tree Farm, would have slaked their thirst at the trough. It was used as a flower planter after the oast house was converted into a cottage.

When, and by whom, the trough was made will never be known but it is hundreds of years old and may be one of two troughs that were in the bakehouse and buttery at Pear Tree Cottages, Pickering Street, and were listed in an inventory of the property of Frances Godden, who died in July 1727.

Stonemasons lived at Pear Tree Cottages for many generations throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and William Skinner, who owned a ragstone quarry, lived there for a while before building and moving to Slade House (then called Olive Farm) around 1840. These may be clues to the provenance of the trough, which now takes its place among the many ragstone relics dotted around the lanes of Loose, other examples being various dip wells and 'mounting blocks.'

Pear Tree Cottage and Pear Tree Farm were featured in 'Loose Threads' No. 3 and 'Loose Threads' No. 4, copies of which can be obtained from the Loose Area History Society.

# and his royal and religious ancestors

When a new Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone was erected in Loose Cemetery on the grave of Commander Aubrey Edward Duncombe Moore RN, Margaret Chapman, Pat Tritton and Paul Tritton decided to research his career and family history, with surprising results, including some royal Tudor ancestors!

Aubrey's grave had been unmarked for many years, its original headstone having been damaged, obscuring the inscription.

He lived with his wife, Annie, at Woodstock, No. 5 Pickering Street, Loose, and died on October 9, 1946, at the age of 66. He was buried in the grave of his parents, Rev. Edward Marsham Moore and Lucy Moore (née Russell). In a tribute in Loose Parish Magazine, Rev. H S Lawson, Vicar of Loose, wrote: 'Another link with the past has been broken by the passing of Commander Moore. He has earned well of his country, having served in both wars with the Royal Navy. His last illness was contracted as a result of his service in the late war. Many weeks of suffering had not lessened his courage'.

In 2005 Loose was visited by a CWGC official who was inspecting local graves of men and women of the British and Commonwealth armed forces who died in the two world wars. On finding that Aubrey's grave was not properly identified, the CWGC obtained permission to do so from our vicar at the time, Rev. Lee Townend.

Aubrey was born at Benefield, Northants, where his father was rector at the church of St Mary the Virgin. Although at least four of his Moore forefathers had been priests, Aubrey did not follow them into the church and instead joined the Royal Navy. By 1901, now 21 years old, he was in Vancouver, serving as a sub-lieutenant on HMS Amphion, a Leander Class cruiser which had recently returned to the Pacific after a refit at Devonport.

Just 13 years earlier Amphion had been the first ship on which Robert Falcon Scott ('Scott of the Antarctic') served after he was commissioned as a sub-lieutenant.

In 1908 Aubrey was serving as a lieutenant and commander on HMS Thorn, a Home Fleet destroyer. Two years later he joined HMCS Rainbow, a light cruiser which had been commissioned as a Canadian warship at Portsmouth in August 1910. She was delivered to Esquimalt, British Columbia, on November 7, 1910. Aubrey was a member of Rainbow's first crew and the only photograph we have of him shows him on board in November or December 1910, sitting second from the left in the front row. Rainbow's World War I operations included transporting \$140 million in bullion for the Russian government.

In 1913 Aubrey married Catherine Nelson in Kensington. In 1930 he married, secondly, Annie Dolton, in Paddington, and we surmise that it was around this time that they moved to No. 5 Pickering Street.

Aubrey served in the Royal Navy in the Second World War, although whether at sea or on shore is not known. During this time, according to the Vicar of Loose, he contracted his fatal illness. His death certificate, which describes him as a retired Commander, cites the causes of death as 'carcinoma of left lung' and 'chronic phthisis' (pulmonary tuberculosis).

In the case of Second World War casualties, the CWGC can grant headstones to members of the armed services whose deaths were related to their war service, and occurred between September 3, 1939 and December 31, 1947. Therefore, we have to assume that Aubrey's death was the result of illness caused or exacerbated by his war service.

Title picture: officers of HMCS Rainbow. Aubrey is in the front row, second from the left. (Courtesy of Maritime Command Museum, Halifax, Nova Scotia.)



Aubrey's early family history embodies several distinguished ancestors, including members of royal and aristocratic families, notably Mary Tudor ('Princess of England') and her second husband, Charles Brandon, 1st Duke of Suffolk.

One of their descendants, Dr John Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1783 until 1805, was Aubrey's great-great-grandfather. Dr Moore's son, George, was rector at St. George's, Wrotham and Prebendary of Canterbury, and married Harriet Mary Bridges, a daughter of Sir Brook Bridges and Fanny Bridges of Goodnestone Park.

George and Harriet's son, Edward, became an honorary canon of Canterbury Cathedral and was for many years rector at St Mary's, Frittenden, where he restored and enlarged the parish church, built a new school and rectory (all at his own expense) and created a Provident Society and a Penny Bank.

Edward's first wife was Lady Harriet Janet Sarah Montagu Douglas Scott, daughter of Sir Charles William Henry Montagu Scott, 4th Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury, whose family seat was Boughton House, near Benefield. Among their many children were the Hon. Evelyn Moore, who became a maid of honour to Queen Victoria, and Edward Marsham Moore (Aubrey's father), who was born at Frittenden in 1844.

Edward Marsham Moore was ordained in 1867 and married Lucy Russell of Biggin Hall, Northants. He held various offices in Peterborough Diocese. He was rector at Benefield for 31 years; an honorary canon of Peterborough; and archdeacon of Oakham. In about 1920 he and Lucy moved to Kent. He died aged 77 in September 1921 and was living at that time at Vale House, Loose. Lucy died in 1944, aged 93, while living in Bath.

So far as we know Aubrey had no children from either of his marriages, so his closest relatives at the time he died would have been his sister, Constance Evelyn Harriet Moore or his brother Noel Arthur Moore, assuming they survived him. Noel was an officer in the Grenadier Guards and married Angela Wynne, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs Freke Williams, at St John's, Ladbroke Grove.

In November 1953 the ashes of Walter Hugh Moore of Apple Trees, Pickering Street, and previously of The Limes, Loose, were interred in Loose Churchyard, followed in May 1966 by the interment of the ashes of Jane Moore of No. 36 Pickering Street, in a family grave on the north side of the church. Were they related to Aubrey?

Mary Tudor (1496 to 1533) was the younger sister of Henry VIII and, due to her marriage to Louis XII, Queen Consort of France. After Louis's death she married Charles Brandon. Mary was the fifth child of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York and was Henry VIII's favourite sister. He named his daughter, the future Queen Mary, and his warship, Mary Rose, after her.



It's likely that Aubrey knew he was a descendant of Mary Tudor. If so, did he, during his voyages into and out of Portsmouth Harbour, think of his personal link with the wreck of the ill-fated Mary Rose resting in the Solent silt, only a few fathoms below him?



Above left: HMCS Rainbow. Top: Cdr Moore's headstone on the Moore family grave in Loose Cemetery. Above: Vale House, once the home of Edward Marsham Moore and his wife Lucy.

Your Picture Gallery ... featuring photographs of people, places and events that illustrate life in and around Loose in years gone by. Please submit copies of your photographs or email images to the editor, scanned at 300 dpi



Maureen Barcham Green sent us this picture, taken in about 1921 in the 'rag room' at the Green family's Hayle Mill, which closed in 1987. Maureen is the author of 'Papermaking at Hayle Mill 1808-1987', published by Janus Press (USA). Did you work at the mill and, if so, can you share your memories of the papermaking process with us? (® Simon Barcham Green).



Frank Stannett (right) and a visitor at Heathview, Walnut Tree Lane, in the 1960s or early 1970s with a fine display of flowers grown at Frank and Winifred Stannett's nursery. Do you recognize the visitor or know anything about Walter Usmar, whose van is in background? In our next issue we will feature the Stannett family's nursery and poultry farm, and the King George V Playing Field and Copper Tree Court estate that were developed on the family's land. (Photo submitted by Jean Long)



Gertrude Jones with her Keep Fit Class at Loose School in about 1924. Gertrude was deputy headmistress at the school and later became headmistress at Yalding School. In about 1925 she married Walter Bartlett of Abbey Gate Farm, Tovil. Our thanks to Rosemary Curtiss-Fuller for donating the photograph. Many years have elapsed since it was taken but it is possible that mothers or aunts of some readers of 'Loose Threads' were in the class. Please let us know if you can identify anyone.



From Michael Passmore's archive photographs of his printing firm Alabaster Passmore & Sons Ltd we feature Bindery Department staff ready to set off on a 'wayzgoose' (print workers' outing) in the 1950s. We hope some of our readers will recognize themselves in the group or put names to faces of some of the many woman and outnumbered men who went on the trip. A history of the company will be published in our next issue.



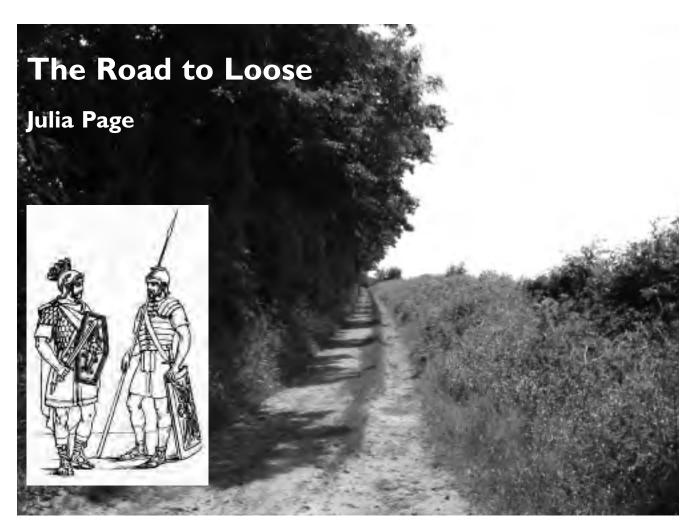
Our thanks to Paul Hardwick and Tony Shaw for this picture of the management committee of Tovil Working Men's Club, taken in 1988, when the club celebrated its centenary. From the left, back row: D. Moriarty, E. Beck (trustee), A. Smith, H.Tutt, M. Foley, B. Beal, W. Gilbert, B. Pettitt; front row: D. James, W. Jack (secretary), J. Chevis (chairman), W. Scott (assistant secretary), E. Janman. The club was originally in Church Street, Tovil, and moved to its present HQ, Tovil Memorial Institute, after the First World War. In a future issue of 'Loose Threads' we will feature the club and the Mackinnon family, who lived at Tovil Court, the house that originally stood on the site of the institute.

# ... And finally, can you help us solve two mysteries?

These photographs are from a batch of undated and unidentified pictures, provenance unknown, in the Loose Area History Society's collection. Our archivist is keen to identify and catalogue them. Do you recognize the lane or the house? If so, please tell us and take a comparison photo for our next issue.







When the Romans landed in Kent in 43AD they invaded a country which, from the time of the Stone Age, had become steadily 'settled', its peoples in the Bronze Age progressing from the sole use of stone into metal-working and later, with the discovery of iron, into the Iron Age. Originally starting from scratch to clear the land and, eventually, begin to farm, as the centuries went by the Ancient Britons gradually improved their lot and, with their children and children's children needing to set up their own farms and homes, these became recognized settlements, and the paths and trackways linking them were the beginning of a communication system, many converging at the river fords where more settlements were founded.

The last period, the Iron Age, began in BC600 when Britain's population was augmented by the arrival of the latest batch of immigrants, the Belgic tribes from north Gaul and the Low Countries. These newcomers were already beginning to work with iron and, possibly drawn by news of its discovery in the thick Wealden forest, paddled across the Channel. They began to excavate the pockets of iron in the Weald (the name derived from their own word, 'wald' a forest) and it proved good for trade; and their 'spiches' (causeway paths of brushwood) became the streets by which the iron was taken out of the low, swampy forest up into depots on the high ground from whence, via the rivers, it was transported and sold elsewhere.

The plateau, today's Coxheath above the Low Weald, provided a splendid site in the Loose area in which to store the iron extracted from the Brenchley/Matfield field or, as the Belgic tribes described it, the 'feld'. Mill Lane at Benover, crossing the River Beult and merging into the road up towards Hunton, and thence to Coxheath, was arguably one route leading to this depot.

The inter-settlement communications system worked

well for the Iron Age but not the invading Romans, who were a military nation and, principally, required roads for an entirely different purpose, that of marching their armies and accompanying stores by the fastest routes possible. The trackways and paths, which currently facilitated travel, were of little use to them and they began to construct a network of major highways, starting with that along the north Kent coast where an ancient trackway already existed, only requiring improvement, and became Watling Street.

However, it also made sense to thrust one directly south from Rochester to the Channel where another port, Anderida, could connect with France and, ultimately, Rome. Thus the A229 ( in south Maidstone called Loose Road) came into being and a glance at the Ordnance Survey map will show that only a few deviations from the original have been found necessary. Within the town one might believe it is the same road the Romans trod, entering along Sandling Road and, via Week Street, down Gabriel's Hill and over the River Len (the last possible crossing point before its confluence with the River Medway) and continuing to Lower Stone Street and Upper Stone Street, where it emerges at the top by Barton Road and opens out into Loose Road.

When I follow the route it never ceases to amaze me that, even now, in Upper Stone Street, the road is only the width of two carts, and I am regularly torn between the desire for the preservation of an historic route and the need for at least a three-lane one.

Title picture: the route of the Roman Road from Rochester and Maidstone to the English Channel survives today as a series of modern roads (including much of the A229), country lanes, bridleways and ancient paths and boundaries. Here, on the Chart Hills, it is clearly visible as a bridleway running from near Amberfield to Lucks Lane.



Above: the main drive through Maidstone Cemetery emulates the straight alignment of the Roman Road as it runs southwards towards the Loose Valley and the Chart Hills. Above right: The Roman Road emerging as a bridleway on to Lucks Lane, Chart Sutton, at the foot of the Chart Hills.

On reaching the Wheatsheaf roundabout the road continued a few yards up Sutton Road before turning right into Maidstone Cemetery, roughly in line with the wall bordering Pheasant Lane. It is possible the in-building at the junction of the Loose and Sutton roads, with the cottages and the Wheatsheaf pub, was made on the site of the original line. After two or three hundred yards within the cemetery it begins to incline to the left and skirts the back of Mangravet and the Kent County Police Headquarters.

Continuing alongside Pested Bars Road, where some Romans found their last resting place in a small cemetery, it crosses Brishing Lane (where there was a Roman bath house beside the Loose stream) and heads southward, eventually passing to the west of Amberfield. It may take this direction, slightly off centre, because the earthworks defining the Iron Age depot/camp, which the Romans referred to as the Oppidum, reach their known eastern extremity here. The original road may even have run alongside a part of it for a short distance.

In the construction of these earthworks the face of the northern slope of the Chart Hills probably exposed the ragstone, because when the Romans needed the finest stone to build the walls of London, it is said they came to these hills for it. The road eventually drops down the Wealden escarpment to join the lower end of Chart Hill and continues past The Lord Raglan pub and over the River Beult to Cross-in-Hand corner, where it rejoins the A229. After which, with only slight deviations, it arrives at the Channel.

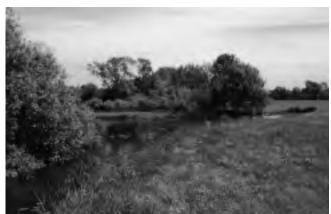
■ The Romans departed in AD 410. In our next issue Julia will tell us how the roads to Loose developed 35 or so years later, following the landing of the Jutish leader, Hengist, at Pegwell Bay. Recommended further Reading: 'The Jutish Forest' (K. Witney); 'Roman Ways in the Weald' (I D Margary); 'Continuity & Coloniziation: The evolution of Kentish Settlement' (Alan Everitt).







Above: the route of Roman roads in the Maidstone area. Below left: this dead-straight section of Chart Hill Road north of The Lord Raglan pub is evidence of its Roman origin. Below: where the Roman road crossed the River Beult near Cross-in-Hand.



# **Q&A** ... featuring questions and answers about local people and places, gleaned from our correspondence. Please send us your comments, queries or pictures

The Gurr family John Swallow, whose great-uncle, William Charles ('Charlie') Gurr, is listed on the Roll of Honour on the Loose War Memorial, sent us details of the Gurr family.



Charlie's father, also named William Charles, married Alice Avery in 1892. They had four children and moved from Abbey Gate, Tovil, to No. 3 Prospect Row, Loose Road, between 1901 and 1911 after William Charles, formerly a farm bailiff at Abbey Gate, had been taken on as a farm labourer by FT Thomas (presumably one of the Thomases of Loose Court).

In 1917 the family moved to Bagent's Cottage (aka Baigent's Cottage) on the former Peale Estate in Walnut Tree Avenue. Prospect Row has survived but Bagent's Cottage was demolished about 54 years ago to make way for two houses, Lyncroft and Wynsdale. Part of the wall of the cottage survives in Lyncoft's garden.

Charlie became a stockman on the local Foster Clark Estate. Then, in about 1914, aged 20, he joined Maidstone & District Motor Services as a bus driver. One of the company's first services ran between Maidstone and Hastings, via Loose and Linton. However, Charlie's new career was short-lived because like most other young men he joined the Army, serving with the 12th Lancers and the Royal West Kent Regiment. He was killed in action in Flanders in 1917.



John Swallow sent us these photographs showing (left) Charlie and his sister Emma; Charlie and a conductor with Maidstone & District bus registration number KT-1914 at Hastings (above); and an unidentified member of the family at Bagent's Cottage (below). At the foot of the page is a recent picture of the houses that stand on the site of Bagent's Cottage.

■ See 'Loose Threads' No. 3 for an article on Bagent's Cottage; 'Loose Threads' No. 7 for an article on Prospect Row; and 'Families of Wartime Loose' by Margaret Chapman for a biography of Charlie Gurr.







The Crusts We have helped Jonathan Crust confirm that members of his family once lived at The Nook, Paynes Lane (right) and Old Orchard Bungalow, No. 703 Loose Road (above).

Jonathan's father, Brian Ernest Crust, was born at Old Orchard Bungalow on November 13, 1926. He died in 1976. Brian's older brother, Roy, was born at The Nook on June 11, 1925. He died in 1993. A third brother, Derek, was born in Dover in 1930. The boys' parents were Sydney Thomas Crust and Gertrude Maud Elizabeth Crust (née Hicks).

'The next mention of Loose in the Crust family's records is on the death certificate of my great grandfather, George Hicks,' wrote Jonathan. 'He died in 1951 in Sidcup but his residence is given as The Nook.

'The timeline I have is: 1925, Roy David Crust born at The Nook; 1926, Brian Ernest Crust born at Old Orchard Bungalow; 1927, Sydney Thomas Crust, father, informant for



Brian's birth, address given as Old Orchard Bungalow; 1933, Maud Mary Hicks (née Rogers) died in Maidstone, usual address The Nook; 1951, George Hicks, usual address The Nook, died in Sidcup,

'So (and I'm guessing here, as no-one is alive to ask!) maybe George and Mary Hicks owned The Nook; Sydney and Gertrude lived with them for a while after they married (in 1924 in Boxley, Kent); Sydney and Gertrude moved to Old Orchard Bungalow between the births of Roy and Brian; and then moved to Dover before Derek was born. It seems likely that George Hicks lived at The Nook from 1925 (or before) until shortly before his death in 1951'.

According to David and Sandra Robinson, who bought the bungalow in 1982, the property was built in 1916 and enlarged in 1923. It was eventually sold to Wards, who developed nearby Copper Tree Court, and subsequently sold to the Owens, who ran the Papermakers' Arms pub in Loose Road.

## Looking for Woolletts

Wilson of Shoreham has found that her great great grandmother, Mary Field Woollett, was born in Loose on July 2, 1813, her parents being Robert Woollett, papermaker, and Elizabeth (née Field).

'I'm endeavouring to find out where they lived when they were married,' said Sheila. 'Is there any record of a paper mill in Loose?'

Whilst no address has yet been found for Robert and Elizabeth, we have sent Sheila dates of burials in Loose of people named Woollett, and advised her that at one time there were 13 working watermills in the Loose Valley, many of which produced paper.

## **My friend Mansfield** Dr. Kenneth Frank Smith, formerly of the US Foreign Service and US Air Force Reserve, emailed from Hawaii to say: 'I grew up in Busbridge Road and spent much time in Loose before, during

Busbridge Road and spent much time in Loose before, during and after WW II. I was a choir boy, belonged to the youth club and Loose Swiss Scouts, and spent many hours fishing for trout in the brook.

'I went to Loose School until getting a scholarship to Maidstone Grammar School. My dad worked for a while as plant engineer at Hayle Paper Mill. I was close friends with John and Rick Mansfield who lived in Salts Lane but I lost touch with them when we moved away. I later heard that John was killed while serving with the RAF in Malaya'.

The Mansfields lived at Old Mill House, close to the site of Gurney's Mill.

### Spurgeons and Eastups

Sondra Seamster wrote from Abilene, Texas, to say that her family is related to the Spurgeon and Eastup families, which were united when Henry Spurgeon, a coach builder and blacksmith, married Caroline Eastup.

They lived in Coxheath and one of their three sons, Frederick Charles, died aged 25 on June 1, 1915, after being wounded on the first day of the Battle of Gallipoli. His story is told in Margaret Chapman's book 'Families of Wartime Loose'.

Caroline's parents were William H Eastup and Ann Spurgeon. Caroline was the fifth of their eight children, the youngest of whom, Adolphus Aaron Spurgeon Eastup, went to America with his father to join William and Ann's first child, Elizabeth Susannah, who had married Thomas Love in Kent.

'We are eager to learn as much we can about the Spurgeon and Eastup families,' said Sondra. 'Many are buried in the churchyard at Boughton Monchelsea. We do have some parish records and some material in regard to the Spurgeons' property. We have been told that Henry Spurgeon received some sort of assignment from the crown in regard to his coachmaking'.

We are helping Sondra with her research and would be pleased to hear from anyone with information about the Spurgeons and Eastups. It appears that there are now few of the former and none of the latter in Kent.

**Can you help?** Gary Thomas asks if anyone knows where Bonnies Cottages, Loose, were? His grandmother was born there in 1909.

Hill House Daphne Reece, who lives in San Francisco, forwarded copies of letters written by one of her ancestors, Albert Frederick Morfill, to his parents while he was a pupil at Hill House Academy, Loose, from 1846 to 1848. The Morfill family, thought to be of Huguenot descent, lived in Maidstone for about 200 years.



Daphne also provided copies of several drawings by Albert, one entitled 'Loose Lane'. Can anyone identify the building? The closest comparison we have found is Quinnells, formerly known as The Change, which was evidently once a single, Tudor, house and is now Nos. 1, 2 and 3 Old Loose Hill.

The name Quinnells came into use when the property became the home of the Quinnell family (Gerry Quinnell was the village's milkman). One suggestion for the origin of the earlier name, *The Change*, is that it was here that horses were changed when wagons, carriages and carts were the only traffic that climbed the hill.

Hill House Academy was in Hill House, on the corner of Loose Road and Walnut Tree Lane. In 1834 the house and its 88 acre estate, renowned for its apples, filberts (hazel nuts) and hops, was sold for £14, 370. One hundred years later, on April 26, 1934, the house suffered a serious fire which reduced the original three-storey structure to two storeys. The fire brigade fought for four hours to extinguish the blaze, the cause of which was not discovered.

According to notes deposited in the society's archives by an anonymous local resident the property is a Georgian house, possibly on pre-Tudor foundations. It once belonged to Sir John Barker, Bt, of 'Barkers of Kensington' fame, in whose time it became a venue for a high-society wedding. John Barker's brother, Levi Barker, lived at *Shernold House*, Loose Road.

During the 1930s Hill House became a hotel, with a night club, a bar in the cellar, and a squash court. Later, Alan Birch, whose building firm Charles Walter had premises in Upper Stone Street, Maidstone, lived at Hill House. In 1944 he formed the Country Players amateur theatre company, which presented one-act plays in the squash court.

Valerie Sharp of Wateringbury wrote to say that her great great grandfather, Charles Childs, who died in 1864, and his mother lived at Hill House, and are buried at All Saints' Church, Loose. 'The gravestones are very hard to read,' said Valerie, but as announced elsewhere in this issue, transcriptions have now been published on the internet.

We have forwarded photographs and documents to Valerie relating to Hill House but she has one unanswered query: her ancestors also had connections with a local house named Bucklands Ross Villa but she cannot locate it. Can anyone help?







Above left: Albert Frederick Morfill and his wife Elizabeth in about 1920. From top of page: Hill House in 2010; 'Loose Lane' by Albert Frederick Morfill; The Change in 2010.



**End of the line** David Bathurst asked when the railway sidings at Tovil Goods Station came into use and whether they used the existing bridge over the River Medway.

'Tovil Goods was in use in 1968 when I commenced work in Tovil with Reed Corrugated Cases', (replied Noel Gibbons).

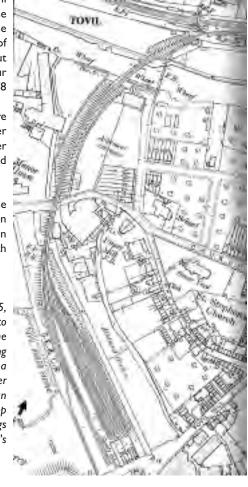
'We used it for despatching about 50 per cent of our output at that time. Reed's Tovil Mill, on the opposite side of the road, previously owned by Albert E Reed, also used the sidings, for waste paper delivered to the mill from various sources. The use of the sidings declined in the mid 1970s when National Carriers took over this aspect of British Rail's business. Prices were increased and both we and the mill could carry out the work more economically using private hauliers. Tovil Mill closed in 1982 and our business was sold to a competitor in 1985. We had ceased using the railway before 1978 and the land was redeveloped.

'Warehouses and shops now occupy the site of the former station and there are houses on the sites of the former mill and our factory. Most evidence of the former use has now disappeared. The existing bridge is only a footbridge and replaced an earlier footbridge. The railway bridge across the river ran parallel to it but this, and two road bridges, have now been demolished'.

■ Tovil Goods Station opened in the 1880s and closed in 1977. Tovil Station, on the opposite side of the Medway, closed in 1943. It was situated in Fant, not Tovil, between Maidstone and East Farleigh stations. You can read more about Tovil's railways in 'Country Railway Routes: Strood to Paddock Wood' by Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith (Middleton Press, 1993).



Top of page: Tovil in 1955, showing the Paddock Wood to Maidstone railway (left), the bridge over the Medway leading to Tovil Goods Station, and a footbridge across the River Medway. Right: from an Ordnance Survey map published before the sidings were dismanted. Left: Today's footbridge at Tovil.



## Sid Coulter's memories of old Loose

### Roger Thornburgh



On June 17, 1976, I recorded an interview with Sid Coulter. We sat in his front room at No. 2 Rose Cottages, Old Loose Hill, while he reminisced about his life and Loose village, where he was born on April 11, 1904. He died on October 23, 1988. In this first instalment of my transcript Sid talks about his boyhood. I have edited the interview where necessary and added occasional words in square brackets to clarify points.

#### Tell me about your parents and where you were born.

I was born at Fairview Cottages, No. 3. My father [Edward William] was a plasterer and my mother [Hilda, nèe Flisher] were an ordinary housewife, I suppose. And then we moved from there to here [Rose Cottages] when I was about one. When I was eight years old we moved to the bottom of Well Street [Forge House, Randall's Row, later known as Forge Cottage] and I lived there till I was about 43. [Then] I come round here [Rose Cottages] to live ... we bought this house ... me and my brother [William, born in 1902], we bought the pair. He lived there [No. I] and I lived here.

## And your father was a plasterer in the village, or working for someone else?

Wood's the builder at Boughton, 'til he got the sack. He used to down tools 12 o'clock Saturday and go to play football, 'cos he was playing for Loose, and they give him the sack in the end. And I think he went as estate plasterer on the estate at Cornwallis for a while. But they wouldn't put up with him, you know, leaving at 12 o'clock. He wouldn't give up his football.



#### And then what did he do?

Well, then he went malting for Style & Winch in Maidstone [and] in the brewery, he had his football time. 'Cos they used to leave off Saturdays, see.

#### Was it as good a job, financially?

No: about fifteen shillings a week, I think. Wasn't much money them days.

#### He joined the army at the beginning of the war, did he?

Well ... no, he joined when Kitchener was recruiting. He got called up. He didn't volunteer, they called them up, didn't they? I think he went up in about 1915/1916.

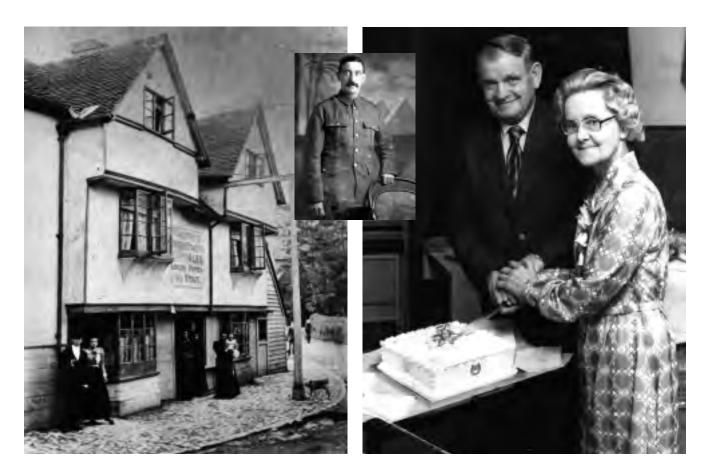
## Did he mind, did he really want to stay behind, or was he quite willing to go?

Quite willing to go, I think. He had two brothers, both in the army in the First World War. There was three of them in it. Two was in the West Kent Yeomanry. They went in when it first broke out. They were down at Crowborough. They used to have the horses there, and they used to ride horses them two did, and they used to have the lances and that. But my father, he didn't join up, he got called up like, and they put you where they wanted, and he had to go in the Suffolks.

#### Where did he serve?

Well, he went out to Palestine ... that's where he served his time. And the other two uncles, they went out to France. One got killed and the other got wounded. He got invalided out, he did, 'cos he got shot in the knee. The youngest one, he got killed out there. Never see no more of him.

Title picture: Loose at about the time Sid Coulter was born. Forge Cottage (previously called Forge House), his home from when he was about eight years old until he was about 43, is immediately above the white wall in the foreground, attached to one of the five weatherboarded cottages in High Banks known as Randall's Row. Left: Forge Cottage today. The extension is built over a tiny tributary to the Loose stream and replaced what had been a conveniently-situated Victorian 'privy'.



#### How many were there in your family then?

Altogether there was seven of us, but two died. My youngest sister – she would have been the youngest of the family – she died when she was only about 18 months old. And my brother what died, he was only about 4 or 5 when he died, 'cos he had diphtheria. He was up the isolation hospital [Gordon Court] and then he got pneumonia, and died with it.

## Forge Cottage is a pretty small house for a fairly large family, isn't it?

Well, there's a front bedroom and a small back bedroom, but then you've got a big attic, see, and three boys was up the attic ... two sisters in the back bedroom. And my father didn't live in there much, see, 'cos ... we went round there about 1913.

#### And then he was off to the war.

And then he went off to the war in '15, and, as I say, he never lived there, and he come back there and he only been home about three weeks when he died.

#### How did you manage after he died?

Oh, my mother got a pension.

#### And by that time, a number of you were working?

I was working and my older brother was in the army. He went in the army at I7 and he was out in Ireland when the southern Ireland was rebelling, you know. Then he went from there to India. He done seven years in the army afore he come out. I was at work and my two sisters and my younger brother at school. But, then my mother used to go out to work in the fields.

#### Doing what?

Everything there was going, used to work all the year round on the farm. Used to go all out Boughton, nut picking, cherry picking, apple picking, damson picking, pulling up ... used to go up Springett's Farm [now known as Forstal Farm]— that's where Holdens are now. Used to go there worzel pulling, swedes, all that sort of thing.

#### Were your uncles from the village as well?

Yes. All in the village.

#### Most of the family?

Yes. My grandfather and grandmother [James and Mercy Coulter] kept The Chequers. My mother always said that when they got out The Chequers, my father and my mother ought to have took it over. She always said that. So they must have kept it in the 1890s, something like that.

#### Can you remember your grandparents?

They used to live where the Hoods live [Church House].

#### This is your father's parents, is it?

My father's parents, yes. My mother's parents [Flisher] come from Boughton. Well they originally come from Lydd. My mother was born at Lydd. Old grandfather was a shepherd. I remember them too. He was a shepherd at Boughton. And my grandfather here, old Jim Coulter, after he come out The Chequers, he went gardening and after he give up gardening, he went groundsman.

#### And was there any shop with the house then?

Not when my grandfather had it, no. My aunt Doll, one of my father's sisters, she married one of the Hoods from Maidstone, newsagents. They were the main wholesale newsagents for Maidstone. They used to have all the newspapers come to Maidstone Station and all these, like, small places used to come down and they used to dish 'em out to 'em – so many quires of Mails and Mirrors and all that sort of thing.

And this George Hood [who married Aunt Doll] he come down to live with them. And he turned that into a grocer's and newsagent's. And then he went in for coal and wood. That's where his sons are now, in the wood line. He used to repair bicycles [too] and I worked there for a while. I left school when I was I3 and worked there 'til I was I4. I used to repair punctures and all that sort of thing round there.

Above left: The Chequers at about the time it was run by Sid's grandfather and grandmother, James and Mercy Coulter. Above: Sid and Gladys at their Golden Wedding celebration in 1978. Inset: Sid's father, E W Coulter.



And he used to, you know, get an old bike frame and strip it all down, and I used to have to help – sandpaper it all – and he used to bake it and put a coat of enamel on it and bake it in an oven. And if anybody come in with a bicycle with a broken frame, he used to mend it [using a] piece of tube and braise it, you know, used to put it in a coke – a big square thing, all full of coke – and then used to blow a blow-lamp on it.

#### You wouldn't bother to take it round to the forge?

Oh no, they wouldn't do a thing like that round the forge. They didn't do any welding. They did horse-shoeing, and putting tyres round wheels and all such things as that.

#### Where would the horses have come from?

Oh, the farms: old Duncanson's farm [Pympe's Court]. Afore Duncanson was Ledger. Ledgers had that farm then. And there was Thomas up Loose Court – oh, there was a lot of horses – there was Antrum's mills, they got horses … there was different farms … there was Ralph at Herts Farm up here – well, they call it Fairview Farm now.

#### Where did you go to school?

Up the back here [top of Malthouse Hill] for a while, then I went up there [Loose Road] ... there when that one was building [1912]. But I did go up this school up here, 'cos I lived here.

#### What are your memories of the Malthouse Hill school?

There wasn't much of a building – only two rooms to the boys' part and two rooms to the girls' part.



#### And you were kept apart, were you?

Oh, you was parted, you had a playground of your own. There was three teachers in the boys' school. Mr Richards was the headmaster. His sister teached the I and 2, and Miss Apps. I don't know whether she was in the boys' or the girls' now. Used to live where Sugar Loaves is. Miss Williams — that was Mr Richards' sister — she was one of the teachers in the boys' room. And old Tommy Richards.

## You had different teachers, did you, for different subjects or for different years?

No, no, a teacher took different years. See, you started in one — that was Miss Williams, see — I and 2 she took the two and you might be on Geography now and you'd all be on it ... in the room, see, all of you. And you'd all be on sums. Then 3 and 4, a teacher had those two — they was in the big room. And then 5 and 6. And X6, there were only a few boys there — the bright boys — they used to have special subjects of their own. They was more or less going on for scholarships for Grammar School and such things as that. But the majority of us used to be in our block and they all had the same.

You went there at what ... five or six years old?

#### And finished at about thirteen?

I finished when I was thirteen up at Loose, up at the other school.

## Can you remember it being very much different in the new school to what it was like in the old one?

Oh yes. Up here we were all sitting in like a long desk – about six of you – the seat was all joined. But up there we used to have it in twos, like two in a desk. Up there you used to have to put your books in a cupboard at night.

#### You had books, not slates?

Books and slates. Slates for some things if you were say going to rub out like, you know, drawing or something like that. But we had books for sums and writing and history or anything like that — to do any writing in. But we had slates — and the cane. I lost the cane down behind the cupboard. 'Cos we used to have what we called a Monitor — Head Boy, over that class — he was supposed to be, you know, one of the best. Well, [when it was] my turn to do it, there was a cupboard that was high which we put all the books in, and then there was a cupboard on top with a sloping lid to it. I was supposed to put the cane in that cupboard, in that top one, but I put it on the top and it fell down the back, right down behind the pillar. (Continued on next page)

Above left: No. 3 Fairview Cottages, High Banks, where Sid was born. Above: Rose Cottages in the 1980s. No. 1 (on the left) was the Coulter family's home from when Sid was one year old until he was about 8. In about 1947 Sid and his brother William bought the cottages. Sid lived at No. 2 until he died in 1988 and William lived next door.

## Well, tan our hides!

Tanning was once an important trade in Loose and Mary Price has kindly drawn this impression to show us what one of the village's four tanyards may have looked like.

One of the yards was owned by William Peene of Brook House. When he died in 1685 he had more than one thousand hides in his tanyard, situated between his house and All Saints' Church.

The Peenes ran tanneries in Loose from the 17th century until the early 19th century, making leather for saddlers and shoemakers from hides supplied by local farmers and butchers. Villagers living downwind from the yards would have had to endure a horrible stench from the tanning pits, which contained a noisome mixture of water and ground-up oak bark.

After Peene died Brook House was occupied by papermaker James Whatman. It remained in his family's hands until some time after 1760.

Brook House has an important part in our local history and is a subject that will be returned to in future issues of 'Loose Threads.'



#### You were trying to lose it?

Yeah, she kept giving it to me. I'd had more cane than anybody.

#### What did you do wrong?

Well, I used to do a paper round, afore I went to school, and I always used to be about quarter of an hour late every morning. I used to stop [to read] the comics; read all the comics them days. And they used to give you half hour's [detention at] dinner time [to] write so many lines out. And I got so far behind with the work: I got about six months in hand, and the old headmaster used to come round and look at the task book, see how much of what you got down; says well, you'd better start giving him the cane. So, I used to have four in the hand every morning. So I dropped it over the back of the cupboard. But she got another one though. When we moved up [to the new school] we carried all our books and that up there.

#### What did you do for sports: your games and things?

All the games we had was once a year we used to have a cricket match. It was held up on Salts Farm up there; it's where the main road is, where the cherry orchard [is], on the left-hand side. Them houses weren't built there then; it were all a big flat field, and we used to have a cricket match out there once a year. That's all the sport we had at school. Never had nothing else. Only playing in the playground. Never had no other sport, never had no football or anything.

#### You had PT presumably?

No, never had no PT. Not in my days. I never done no PT.

#### So, it was all classroom work, was it?

All classroom work, except for a little bit of gardening. But I didn't get no gardening when we was up here, only when I was up that [new] school. You had to get to a certain age and woodwork then I think you had to be II. Then you'd go to woodwork one morning or one afternoon, and you'd go gardening one morning or one afternoon. Sometimes you might have all day gardening; it all depends if there's much to do. But I had a garden up the school ... and you used to have a flower garden all round the border. Each one would have a vegetable plot and a flower garden plot, and you used to have to look after it. You knew you had to keep it clean and all that, and woe betide you if you didn't too.

Old gaffer [Mr Richards] used to be strict on it. Say you were going to sow onions and carrot seeds and such as that, he sends you out there in the morning and you go and prepare your ground get it all knocked up ready and then you got the rows drilled out, and he come and have a look at it. 'There you are, here's your seeds. You go and sow your seeds. I'll see if they come up straight,' he said, 'and woe betide you if they ain't.' He did too. A vegetable garden must be in dead lines straight. But a flower garden was just the opposite, all over the place. I was talking to him once about Shernold House they turned it into a school didn't they, [then] pulled it down and built houses there well, at that time old Levi Barker lived there. And he used to employ a professional gardener and I was coming home from work from Foster Clark's one Saturday dinner time, and old Richards was on top of the old tram, and I said 'That looks a picture Sir, don't it?' and he come and sit down aside of me, an old school boy. 'No it doesn't Coulter', he said, 'I don't believe in it', he said. There was geraniums and that, and they was in the beds, dead straight all ways, you know. ' No', he said, 'you never see flowers growing out straight like that, do you? They're all higgly piggly. And that's how you want a flower garden. I believe in vegetable gardens being straight but not flower gardens'.

A good old gardener old Richards was. He was Secretary of the allotments too, for years. And we used to come down his allotment [where] he used to have apple trees and rose trees. He used to have two allotments, he did, [and] he learned us all grafting and budding and all that.

#### You enjoyed your schooldays, did you?

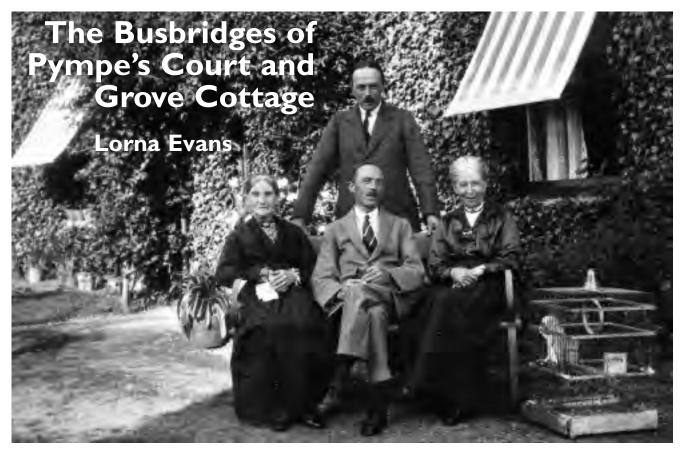
Yes, yes. It was all right. He was strict, old Richards was; he was a very strict master.

#### But respected for it?

Yeah, he was. He turned out some good pupils.

Was he, do you think, one of the foremost men in the village? He was. Everybody respected him. He was well looked up to.

Roger's interview with Sid Coulter will be continued in our next issue. Our thanks to Dennis Coulter for the use of photos from his family album.





The Busbridge family tree has recently been researched and the first person accounted for was Matthew, who was born around 1690. He was a cordwainer, or shoemaker, and he and his wife Elizabeth had a son, John, who worked as an apprentice to his father.

John subsequently became a papermaker. He married twice. His first wife, Mary, died in 1782. His second wife was Mary (née Cutbush). Both marriages took place at All Saints' Church, Maidstone, and neither John nor his two wives were able to sign their names.

John and Mary had seven sons. Nathanial, the eldest, was also a papermaker. He married Hannah Harris of Maidstone in 1781 and was made a Freeman of the town. Their son Thomas was born in East Malling, and was also a papermaker. He married Diana (maiden name unknown) from West Newton in Norfolk. They lived in an old house in Tonbridge Road called Sussex Place, which has recently been pulled down. They had seven children and their three sons became papermakers. All the children were baptized at All Saints', Maidstone.

The oldest son, Thomas, married Ann, daughter of Humphry Wickham of Birling, a carpenter, in 1837 at All Saints. Thomas and Ann's son, born in 1842 and named Thomas Harris Busbridge, was either the owner of, or manager at, Turkey Mill in Maidstone. He married Sarah Ann Poole from Orpington.



Title picture: family group at Grove Cottage, Pickering Street, in July 1923. Standing: William Clifford; seated: Sarah Ann Busbridge (née Poole), Herbert Wickham Busbridge, and Fanny Poole. Polly the parrot survived until 1947 but died of pneumonia in the harsh winter of that year, aged about 42. Left: Lorna's grandfather, Thomas Harris Busbridge. Above: on the road from Loose to East Farleigh.







Sometime between 1861 and 1871 Thomas became a farmer at Pympe's Court. The road where the farm is situated is now called Busbridge Road and presumably was named after him. He was probably well respected in the village. The farm covered 287 acres and 18 men and four boys were employed there.

Thomas and Sarah's two sons, Thomas Acton and Herbert Wickham, were baptized at All Saints', Loose, and after the death of their father Pympe's Court was sold. Herbert moved to Grove Cottage, Pickering Street, with his mother and Aunt Fanny. He married Daphne Cropper in 1927 and they had two daughters, Mary and Lorna.

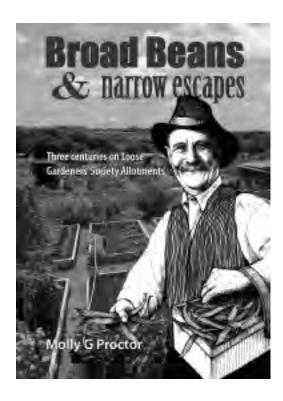
There is a village called Busbridge near Godalming, Surrey, and a house there called Busbridge Hall, but sadly there is no one from our branch of the family to carry on the Busbridge name.

From top of page: Pympe's Court, c. 1928. Inset: Herbert Busbridge, Lorna's father.

Grove Cottage, c. 1954.

At Grove Cottage in 1923, Back row, left to right: Horace Cropper, Daphne Cropper, Herbert Busbridge, the family's maid, and Philip Jones (Loose village's doctor). Seated: Aunt Fanny, Sarah Busbridge, Annie Cropper.

## Going for growth on Old Loose Hill



Loose Allotments have been cultivated continuously since 1884. Very few allotments have such a long history and even fewer have had a book published about them, yet they are a fascinating but neglected part of our local history.

Loose Cottage Gardeners' Society was founded by Mr Marsham of Hayle Place in 1884 at a meeting in the National School on Malthouse Hill. It was agreed to rent two fields at the top of Old Loose Hill and mark them out into allotment plots. The venture was an immediate success and monthly meetings, with talks and competitions, were held in the Working Men's Club (now Loose Post Office).

When Mr Marsham died the allotments were bought by Miss McAlpine who lived at Rosemount, and when she died she bequeathed the site to the Vicar of Loose and the churchwardens as Trustees in perpetuity, as long as there was a gardening society.

Much happened during the long period when the Church were Trustees but eventually, partly to safeguard the long, high ragstone wall on Old Loose Hill, Loose Parish Council bought the land. Some gardeners joined the Trustees and the allotments are now in very safe hands.

In spite of the long history there have been at least nine attempts to use the land for other purposes, including Cottage Homes for Poor Law Children, a new village school, a Memorial Hall and even a large car park. In 1912, when the landlord died, the allotments were sold as building land to a Maidstone building firm, but Mr Marsham bought it from them with his own money.

'Broad Beans and Narrow Escapes: Three Centuries on Loose Gardeners' Society Allotments' by Molly G. Proctor is now on sale at Loose Post Office, price £7.50. Order copies by post from Ivor Weeks (01622 74413) or Paul Dorrington (01622 746112). Add £1.50 to cover p&p.



For several centuries Loose was a prosperous industrial village, producing woollen fabrics, paper and millboard at various watermills along the Loose Stream. In recent times there was only one large manufacturing business within the parish: the Leonard Gould Group.

When the business moved to Bircholt Road, Maidstone, Loose lost its last factory. Demolition contractors moved on to the site in 2009, the offices and works were soon reduced to rubble, and this summer the first of some 60 new homes started to take shape on the site.

With more than 60 employees, Leonard Gould was an important part of our local economy. At the end of an era we look back over the firm's 82 years in Loose.

Dennis ('Ken') Wilson, who died in 2003, spent the last seven years of his working life there and wrote the following brief history when he retired.



Title picture: The factory in 1969. The tree was a landmark in Pickering Street and always suitably decorated at Christmas. Above: employee Michael Bunyard and some local residents watch Tri-Corr Containers' 'Mini-Matic' approach the factory entrance on a rather wet day. Right: supplies arriving at the factory in the late 1960s.

'Leonard Gould was formed in 1926 on a five-acre site in Pickering Street. It was then mostly orchards with a smallholding, together with Kiln Cottage and several outbuildings.

'Starting with an outbuilding where the present office block stands, and a single-span shed at the rear of Kiln Cottage, work began in general woodworking and turnery. This continued until 1950 when a Mr Sturgess was appointed a director. Eventually, with the retirement of Leonard Gould in 1955, he took over the running of the company.

'In that year Cyril Nicholls joined the company as a director and commenced a policy of expansion with special reference to the packaging industry.

'A subsidiary company, Waspak Ltd, was formed, specializing in woodwool mouldings for use in packaging. Machinery for the manufacture of cartons was installed in 1958, and housed in a larger building behind Kiln Cottage.

'Cyril Nicholls continued with further expansion in 1961 with another company called Tri-Corr Containers Ltd, to make cartons from heavy duty corrugated board, with Mr J.S. Kimball as director.

'The following year B.O.B. (Packaging) Ltd was purchased, a company with 'Ministry Approval': an asset in obtaining new business.











Some of the company's senior executives and staff. Clockwise from top left: Cyril Nicholls, Roy Nicholls, William Priest (sales manager), Gwen Hawkes and Kevin Kimber, Bob Francis (works manager). Below: an unidentified machine operator.

'In 1967 the woodwool mouldings made by Waspak were discontinued. Polyurethane mouldings were introduced and were found to be successful.

'Kimcote Packaging Ltd was formed in 1967 to shrink-wrap palletized products. In the process a prototype machine was designed to do this work. Kimcote went on to stock and sell such products as adhesive tapes, bubblepack sheeting and other packaging aids.

'With Cyril Nicholls as managing director the group continued to expand and became a large concern, with manufacturing and storage capacity of 100,000 square feet.

'Cyril died in 1986 and his nephew, Roy Nicholls, carried on his work as managing director.'





Leonard Gould was 20 years old when he started his business. He lived in a converted oast house near his workshop in Pickering Street. Among his first products were chandeliers, coffee tables, hors d'ouvres dishes and components for carpet sweepers.

During the Second World War, like all other factory owners, he was obliged to support the war effort. He produced thousands of crates for munitions and was well-placed to continue to win government contracts after the war ended. The group became specialists in making cases and crates to Ministry specifications and for the export trade; polyurethane converters and moulders; and manufacturers of printed containers and cartons.

Leonard died on October 22, 1990, aged 84, leaving a widow, Kath, and children Valerie, Audrie and Robin.

#### 190 years' service!

Among the firm's long-serving employees was Terry Sutton. When he retired on November 5, 2007, after 50 years' service, he told the 'Kent Messenger': 'I joined Leonard Gould in the workmill, as an assistant on the back of a saw! In the 1950s we all used to come to work by bicycle, wearing flat caps. The top of the factory was still an orchard. The working day was 7am to 6pm, and that included Saturdays. Many people would come in on Sunday morning for the overtime'.

Terry had the shortest possible journey to work because he and his wife Brenda moved into Kiln Cottage in 1970, three years after their marriage, and brought up their daughters Heather and Teresa there.

When Terry retired, he and colleagues Frank Giles, Dennis Pink and Derek Horton had between them worked at Leonard Gould for 190 years.



Moving in. With only inches to spare a new boiler plant 29 feet long, 9 feet wide and 13 feet high, is delivered to the factory on August 27, 1995. Terry Sutton (second from left) and colleagues look on anxiously.



Moving out. Heavy machinery leaving the factory in October 2008.

### Along a 'country lane'

There was only one way into and out of the factory and that was via Pickering Street, which is little more than a country lane. As the factory's output expanded it had to cope with an increasing volume of heavy vehicles delivering raw materials and despatching finished products.

The closure of the factory will not bring any relief. There will be more traffic than ever before when the new housing development is completed.

■ Our thanks to Anne Creasey for the pictures published with this article. Do you have any memories of working at Leonard Gould's factory or photographs of the people who worked there? Do you know anything about the farm that occupied the site the factory was built on? If so please tell 'Loose Threads'.

For a technical feature on Leonard Gould's early years see 'Loose Threads' No. 8.

## A report from our archivist

The cataloguing of our archives is taking shape more rapidly now that I have a new laptop computer and a scanner dedicated to LAHS use (writes our archivist, Margaret Chapman). This may have made a big hole in my pocket but has made life much easier! I hope to have the archive lists complete by January 2011 in time for the AGM. There will be four lists, rather than just one as we have had in the past:

There will be a 'General' list of items which do not fit in with any of the following three categories; a 'People' list initially giving just family names and brief details of content; a 'Properties' list, indexed under both the name of the property and by the streets or roads in which they are situated (we have a great deal of material for some properties but rather less for others); and a 'Maps' list. We have very many maps. I haven't counted them but there seems to be in excess of 100!

When the cataloguing is complete the lists will be made available to all, on our website. And then the real work can begin. The photographic collection and school photographs (hundreds, if not thousands, of them) must be scanned and the originals preserved in acid-free conditions: expensive but necessary. The 'Properties' and 'People' files will need to be studied, organized and indexed more fully, and our collection of taped interviews needs to be converted to CD format before the tapes disintegrate.

There are also many photographs that need to be identified, and we need to go through our collection of local newspapers to extract and relocate articles in their appropriate categories.

Meanwhile there are various documents which have been completed and can be accessed now, namely a list of wills and inventories; and parish baptisms from 1559 to 1843 (a 72 page document). Marriage and burial records are in process of preparation.

Our document of memorial inscriptions from All Saints' parish church, churchyard and cemetery, and also cremation records, can now be accessed via our own website or that of the Kent Archaeological Society. We also have new plans of the cemetery (drawn by Loose Parish Council) and the churchyard (drawn by Roger Thornburgh). These allow most graves to be pin-pointed accurately and will, hopefully, have been posted on our website by the time you read this report.

We also have an updated list of the people in the Tovil Burial Ground.

Our Research Group meets two or three times a year (I would like it to be more often) to discuss research interests and issues. If time allows we then transcribe documents and deal with some of the matters detailed above.

There is no charge to join the group and it is very informal. We don't have a hierarchy or committee and no minutes are kept. Those who, at present, are members of the group are Margaret Chapman, Anne Creasey, Helen Gallavin, Noel Gibbons, Jenny Harrison, Pat Jenner, Hilary Hunt, Julia Page, Roger Thornburgh (when he is in our area), Pat Tritton and Paul Tritton. Several others come along as and when they

Anyone is welcome and encouraged to join us. Why not come along to our next meeting to see how you go? All you need is an interest in local history and, perhaps, a magnifying glass! Let me know if you are interested and I will tell you the date of the next meeting. You can contact me on 01622 746630 or mchap53767@aol.com.

## **History Society News**



The LAHS 'came of age' in 2010. Our inaugural meeting on January 9, 1989 was attended by a number of local history enthusiasts and by members of the Loose Area Research Group, which until then had been part of the Loose Amenities Association. All present voted to form an independent society whose aims would be 'To research and record the history of Loose and its neighbourhood and pursue these ends by means of a research group, lectures, exhibitions, publications and other events of a supportive nature'.

By a majority vote the new organization was named the Loose Area History Society. The officers elected were Julia Page (chairman), Betty Searle (secretary), Shirley Wilson (treasurer), Roger Thornburgh (editor, 'Loose Threads') and Anne Creasey (archivist). Pat Jenner, Betty Sidebottom and Frank Allchurch joined the committee as 'ordinary members'.

Since 1989 we have enjoyed more than 200 events and published nine issues of 'Loose Threads,' (No. I was published in 1988 by the Loose Area Research Group) and a book, 'Loose & Linton: a Pictorial History' (first published in 2004 as a joint venture with the Friends of All Saints', Loose, and republished by the LAHS in 2008). We have also taken part in a number of local events.

Our 2010 programme included visits to St Margaret's Church, Barming, where our guide was Paul Oldham; and to Paul Bellamy's collection of mechanical musical instruments (*pictured below*), following his amusing talk last year when he retained our attention despite having to give most of his demonstrations during a power cut.



We meet once a month from October to May (usually on the second Monday of the month in Loose Infant School Hall, Loose Road) and arrange visits to places of historic interest in June and July. See our website

www.looseareahistorysociety.webeden.co.uk

for our full programme and look out for announcements about our meetings in local media, notice boards and shop windows.

In 2010 we said au revoir to Roger Thornburgh, who as our chairman for many years and in many other capacities did so much to ensure the success of our society and its creation of an archive of local, social and family history.

Roger and his wife Hilary have moved from Loose to Gloucestershire but they still keep in touch and visit us from time to time. We marked his departure by electing him as president of the LAHS and presenting him with a memento of his years in Loose in the form of a wood carving of a pig (see *picture below*), appropriate because the name 'Loose' is thought to be derived from the Old English word Hlose, meaning 'place of pigs'.



Roger's departure occurred shortly before he was featured in BBC Television's magazine 'Who Do You Think You Are.' The editor was seeking a suitable subject with which to launch a new feature entitled 'Your Projects' and chose Roger's Loose memorial inscriptions project. Alan Crosby, author of the feature, wrote: 'Loose has a very active local and family history community, working to record, preserve and research the history of the place and its people. The Loose Area History Society and its members deserve a warm tribute for their recording project. It has preserved for posterity inscriptions which are fast disappearing and provided a valuable resource for historians working on the area, as well as any family with Loose connections.'

Another of our very active members who was in the news recently was Pat Jenner (below), our Kent History Federation representative and a volunteer at Maidstone Museum. Pat and her colleagues put in a total of 4,495 unpaid hours at the museum last year and during National Volunteers Week received certificates in recognition of their efforts.





Our cover shows Loose Green Tram Terminus in 1909. In the background are The King's Arms pub and Gordon House and its shops. The terminus opened in October 1907, changing the lives of Loose residents by enabling them to travel to Maidstone in about 20 minutes, whereas previously they had to endure a one-hour walk. (Photo by kind permission of Maidstone Museum and Maidstone Camera Club) Below: Loose Green in 2010.



