

'Loose Threads'

Your local history magazine Number 14

Special Issue

commemorating life on **Active Service** and on the **Home Front** during the **Great War** and **World War II**



The Journal of the Loose Area History Society

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From the editor ...

Welcome to this second Special Issue of Loose Threads in which we commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War and remember the 70th anniversary of D-Day and the final phases of the Second World War.

In the following pages we feature the impact these momentous events had on local life, the experiences of people who were on Active Service, and the volunteers who served on the Home Front.

Many of the stories were gleaned from the archives of the Loose Area History Society. Others were contributed by readers who drew on their memories of wartime Loose and its neighbourhood, or researched the war service of members of their families.

We are also delighted to announce the publication of a new 290-page, comprehensively illustrated, edition of Margaret Chapman's book Families of Wartime Loose. Printed copies are available or you can download it free from our website.



You will also soon be able to download back numbers of Issues 1 to 13 of Loose Threads, dating from 1988. An index on our website will help you find references to all the subjects we have featured during the past 25 years.

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Answering the nation's Call to Arms in Linton and the Loose Valley one hundred years ago

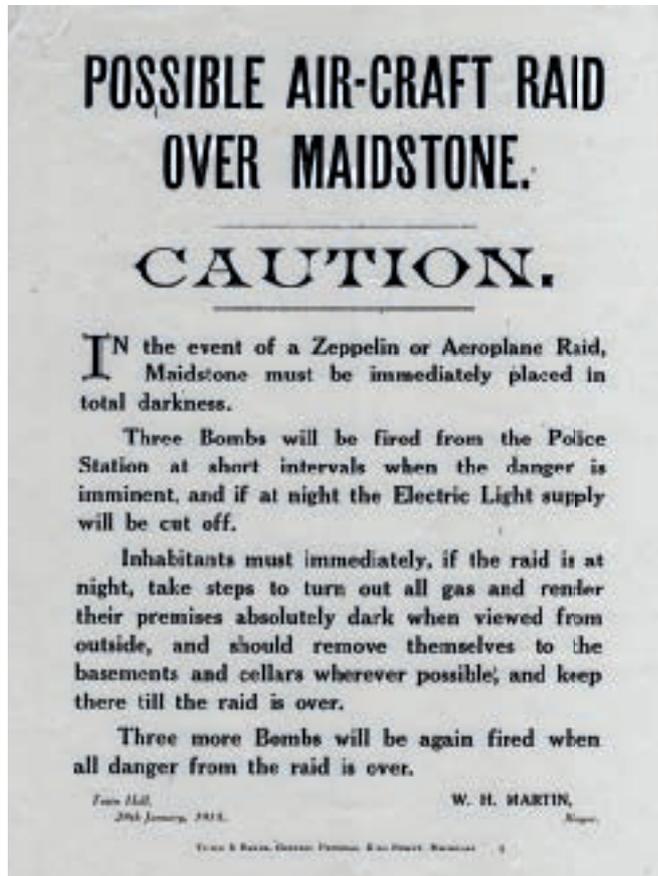
Within a few months of the declaration of war, 64 men from Linton volunteered to join the forces. Nineteen of them enlisted with the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment or the West Kent Yeomanry, a few with the 5th Battalion The Buffs Royal East Kent Regiment or the East Kent Yeomanry; the rest with various other units. The two regimental areas were separated by the Medway, which also divides the 'Kentish Men' to the west from the 'Men of Kent' to the east. Although on this basis Linton and indeed the centre of Maidstone are arguably in east Kent, the Royal West Kents, whose barracks were in Maidstone, drew most local men into their ranks, rather than to the Canterbury-based Buffs.

Sadly, many of the first recruits and those who followed them did not come home and are now remembered on Linton's war memorial.

After embarking for France and other war fronts, the soldiers wrote to their families whenever they could, and to the Vicar of Linton, Rev. Jacob Forrest, who published their letters in his parish magazine, together with his own war news. Fortunately the issues for 1914-18 have been kept in St Nicholas Church ever since they were published.

In September 1914 Mr Forrest wrote: 'Sir Edward Grey, our Foreign Minister, declined to be a traitor to either France or Belgium. On August 4 Belgium was invaded by Germany but Sir Edward still asked if Germany would desist. There was no reply and at midnight we were in a state of war with Germany. Every man of us may yet have to go, for sacrifice is in front of us and we mustn't draw back'.

In 1915 Mabel Cornwallis of Linton Park, whose husband Lt Col. Fiennes Stanley Wykeham Cornwallis had once commanded the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Yeomanry, set up a fund to buy



clothes and modest luxuries for the men who had joined up and by August had raised £14.15s.3d. (about £1,300 in today's money).

'A valuable lesson of what a village can do', said Mr Forrest. 'Linton always turns out all right when there is a need'. Blankets, shirts, pyjamas and socks were collected for the VAD Hospital in Hayle Place.

By February men by the name of Boyce, Brice and Rayfield had enlisted, as had W. Williams (National Reserve Guard), whose three sons were already on active service.

Nine months into the war came news of Linton's first casualty. Bert Wycherley of the 3rd Monmouth Regiment, son of Emma Wycherley of the Bell Inn, Coxheath, was killed on May 3 1915 (a month after he joined the Army) during the Second Battle of Ypres. May 3 was the day on which Canadian soldier John McCrae wrote his immortal poem 'In Flanders fields/the poppies blow/Between the crosses/row on row'.

'Kent has borne no mean share of the greatest struggle for liberty to exist which man has ever imposed on his kind', commented Mr Forrest. 'At last it comes to pass that Linton has had to make her contributions. But now the tribute has been paid in life. The name of Bert Wycherley is held in grateful and honourable memory in every Linton heart'.

Three years later Mrs Wycherley, a widow, lost her other son, Charles, of the Royal West Kents, who fell overboard

from a river boat and was drowned while serving with the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force. Neither brother has a known grave. Bert is remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial; Charles's name is on the Basra Memorial to the Missing.

Eight days after the first Zeppelin air raid on England killed four people and injured 16 others in Norfolk, the Mayor of Maidstone published the above notice on the precautions its citizens should take. On May 31 the air war came closer to home when Zeppelin LZ38 attacked London with 120 incendiary bombs, killing seven people and injuring 35. It was not until September 1915, with the establishment of the London Air Defence Scheme, that anti-aircraft guns and searchlights began to have much effect against the enemy's airships. It has been said that Linton Park was hit by a bomb during the First World War but we have been unable to confirm this.

In July 1915 Mr Forrest wrote: 'Another Linton name has to be enrolled among those who have given their lives, that of [F C] Spurgeon. He was in the Australian contingent in the Dardanelles. He was connected with us for he married Mrs Sharp's daughter of Coxheath.

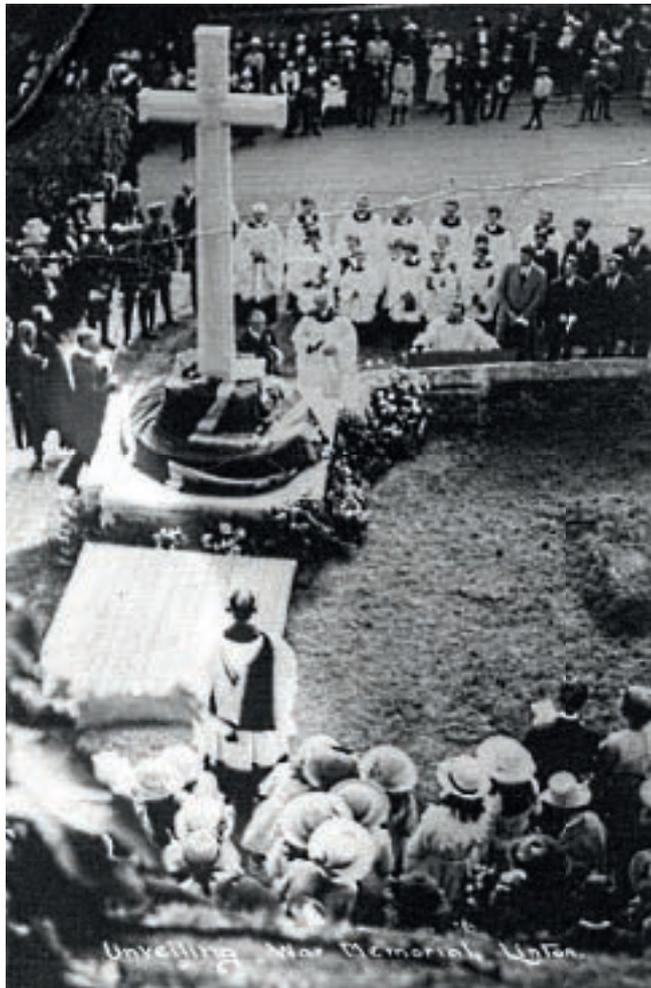
F N Farley (Army Service Corps) wrote to say: 'I think all the Germans are all gone mad today for the shells are dropping like hailstones all round'; George Fenner reported: 'I received the cigarettes in good condition. We had a bath last week and I can tell you it was great'; George's brother William said: 'I had a very narrow escape last night. We were carrying stretcher cases out of the wood just behind the trenches at Ypres when my pal in front got a bullet through the right leg, catching the artery, and all he said was "Thank the Lord, I'm for a Blighty. That's Tommies' word for England'.

F N Farley, was in church on June 27, looking 'bronzed, cheery and full of go'. Next day Linton's latest volunteer, John Neal, departed for a training camp in York.

'Some day John Neal will look back with pride to the day he joined the Army,' said Mr Forrest. 'The choir and church have lost a good principled fellow who did his bit regularly and well'.

In September Mr Forrest noted that Tom Williams (one of W Williams's sons), who was in the Royal Navy, 'is better of his wounds and hopping about alternately afloat and ashore. He had a bayonet through his foot'. D French (Royal Veterinary Corps) wrote home to say 'I am back at my old station. I had a nice time at Havre and could see the ships coming in all night with troops from England. When I come home prepare for seeing a black boy. The sun's like a fire'.

After nine months of active service Privates W H Fenner, W J Carter and E C Dalton of the Royal Army Medical Corps wrote home after landing at Le Havre where, after 'a hearty reception from the YMCA we began to realize the hardships of active service. We marched to a distant camp, arriving at 3am, travelling for 23 hours on iron rations on Christmas Day followed by a ten mile march to small village'.



Then came a two-day march to the British trenches in Belgium and their first experiences of modern warfare.

'Field ambulances dealt with great influx of sick and wounded. Most of the former were troops from India and China not acclimatized to treacherous winter conditions'

At St Eloi on March 14 they were involved in 'one of the sharpest battles of this war. It was a continual roar of cannon for 12 hours and it made one's heart ache to

think that so many brave fellows were sacrificing their lives, for we can honestly say that this battle accounted for some 1,200 men.

'Our division was defending the line at Ypres, previous to and during the great second battle. Here we first saw the real and destructive power of the 17-inch shell and also the effects of the first shell in Poperinge. It was pitiful to see the civilians fleeing from their homes. Our division suffered the ill-effects of gas shells and were forced to leave their trenches.

'In this short summary of nine months' service we should like to appeal to all those young men who have not yet realized the arduous task that lies before us as a nation ... and to try to convince themselves of a greater sense of duty to replace the great numbers of those who have fallen (heroes all), knowing that they had served their King and Country in this hour of need while you have lived at home in apparent luxury'.

1916

In January Lieutenant O S M Leigh of the Royal Flying Corps was recovering from 'a sudden acquaintance with shrapnel'; Harold Feaver was a prisoner-of-war; Robert Kneller was recovering from wounds, but his brother Richard had been home for Christmas, 'fit and hearty'. Lance Corporal E Evans of the RAMC was 'not far from the firing line and expecting to go up to the trenches any time'; and Jack Fryer was in the eastern Mediterranean and complained 'one could never strike a more miserable spot than we have'.

'Herbert Snashall turned up on Tuesday after Christmas looking fat and well fed after many weeks in hospital in Alexandria and

Manchester. He knows all about a place called Suvla Bay. Other people call it inferno and say it has simply awful memories'. An amphibious landing at Suvla on the Gallipoli peninsula in August 1915 was the final, unsuccessful, British attempt to break the deadlock of the Battle of Gallipoli.

Above: Linton War Memorial on the day on which it was dedicated. (© Maidstone Camera Club)

After his leave Herbert transferred from the Royal West Kents to the London Regiment to fight in the trenches on the Western Front.

Mabel and Fiennes Cornwallis's second son, Lt Wykeham Stanley Cornwallis (24) of the 2nd Dragoons (Royal Scots Greys), won the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal on the Western Front in March 1916 for consolidating, while under heavy fire, a position gained after a mine was exploded under the German lines. He was wounded at the river Aisne and was strapped to a limber for an uncomfortable ride to hospital in Rouen.

On recovery he was appointed to Earl Haig's staff and he continued in that capacity until 1919 when he was given the opportunity to play cricket for Kent.

His brother, Lt Fiennes Wykeham Mann Cornwallis (26) of the 17th Lancers, was serving with a machine gun squadron in France and would later win the Military Cross and the French Croix de Guerre.

'His section has had full experience of shell-hole warfare and all that it means in this weather', Mr Forrest reported. Fiennes survived the war, only to be killed by the IRA in the Ballyturn Ambush in 1921.

In the summer the youngest of the three Cornwallis brothers, Oswald, was an officer on HMS Caroline and, as Mr Forrest noted, he was 'at the great naval fight off Jutland'. The Caroline survived.

Clarence Williams, one of W Williams's sailor sons, came home on leave 'looking splendidly well. The terrible experience on HMS Russell has not depressed him'. On April 26 Clarence had been on HMS Russell approaching Grand Harbour, Malta, when the ship struck two mines and capsized; 126 sailors died, 625 were saved.

G W Cramp of the Royal West Kents 'has gone back to the front. He had a pretty bad time on Hill 60 but he is now in the trenches again'. Cramp had a wretched war. He was wounded three times, finally having his jaw broken by shrapnel. He was repatriated to a hospital in Orpington but later became seriously ill and was discharged from the Army.

Guy Bracher of The Buffs died on July 1, the first day of the Battle of the Somme, 'struck down when leading his men into action'.



From top of page: Wykeham Stanley Cornwallis; Harry Tolhurst. Below: Aveluy Communal Cemetery Extension, where Lt Guy Bracher (26), killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, is buried. Before the war he lived at Clock House, Linton, with his father Henry James Bracher, a Maidstone solicitor, mother Marian, sisters Marjorie and Ruth, and younger brother Philip.



Harry Carman had a 'miraculous escape when a piece of shrapnel which wounded his hand went through a small Testament he had in his pocket, and then turned downwards instead of inwards, so hitting his hand'.

'We regret the death of Charles Sone, after long hospital experience. His was the disposition which would have served so well in the RAMC, to which he was attached'.

In July 1916 George Fenner wrote from Salonika: 'We had a cricket match here last Saturday. I was unable to play owing to an inoculation, so I stood umpire. The bats were made out here and the ball was the best shape the saddler could make it. It was great fun and is believed to be the first cricket match played in Macedonia'.

1917

'A Boreman was torpedoed on the way to Salonika, picked up after being in a lifeboat for eight hours and taken to Quebec'.

'A Whyman has been on leave and had many thrilling stories to tell of the battles he has been in'.

'We are sorry to record the death of J E Foreman. He was universally liked and will be greatly missed by all who knew him'.

1918

For five months, Mr Forrest carried out educational and religious duties at Army camps at Stonar and Hythe. Rev W Gardner-Waterman from Loose and Rev F S Forster officiated at St Nicholas in his absence.

From Stonar Mr Forrest wrote: 'This camp is engaging some 18,000 men at present. I am supervising all the work of the YMCA and a great part of my time is in the camp, which is about four miles long. On Monday I have to inspect a dump where over 700 women are at work, to see what we can do for them. Lintonians and Coxheatheans may complain of damp. We live below sea level here, so damp reigns supreme.

'On Sunday I usually have an early celebration or a parade and in the evening I have services attended by about 700 men'.

Private Sharpe was taken prisoner; W C Williams broke his leg and suffered shell shock

when he was blown out of a tree while fitting telephone wires; Sgt Cheeseman was in hospital for 'extraction of metal from knee'; W. Hadaway lost his right leg and G Jenner lost his right eye.

Reports of casualties continued throughout the very last weeks of the war: W C Pettitt, Thomas Ranger and F Edmunds were killed, Philip Ranger and W Lukehurst were wounded.

Then at last came November 11 and the Armistice. The parish magazine's last wartime issue reported: 'It was a spontaneous outburst of joy which led to the hurriedly called service on November 11. Miss Foxwell, Miss

Benning, Mrs Forrest, Mrs Champion and Mrs Cornwallis called the people together and were amply justified in the thankful gathering which assembled in church. Mr Forster did just the right thing in making the service informal and letting people's hearts express, in the simplest manner, their great thankfulness'.

On November 14 Wykeham Stanley Cornwallis wrote from France: 'Dear people of Linton. It is over. We soldiers can scarcely realize this and perhaps the most wonderful part about the cessation of hostilities is the calm, quiet way in which all the men in the Army have received the news.

'There is one great fact that you must remember: that the British sailor and the British private soldier won this war. We have saved the world and on us now is the task of rebuilding dear old England. Let us rest true to our King, country and ourselves when peace comes again. I am going to Germany with the armies that are being sent there to enforce the Armistice until we get a just, honourable peace. I send my love to you all and I know there is no need to tell you to keep the home fires burning until the boys come home. Carry it on!'

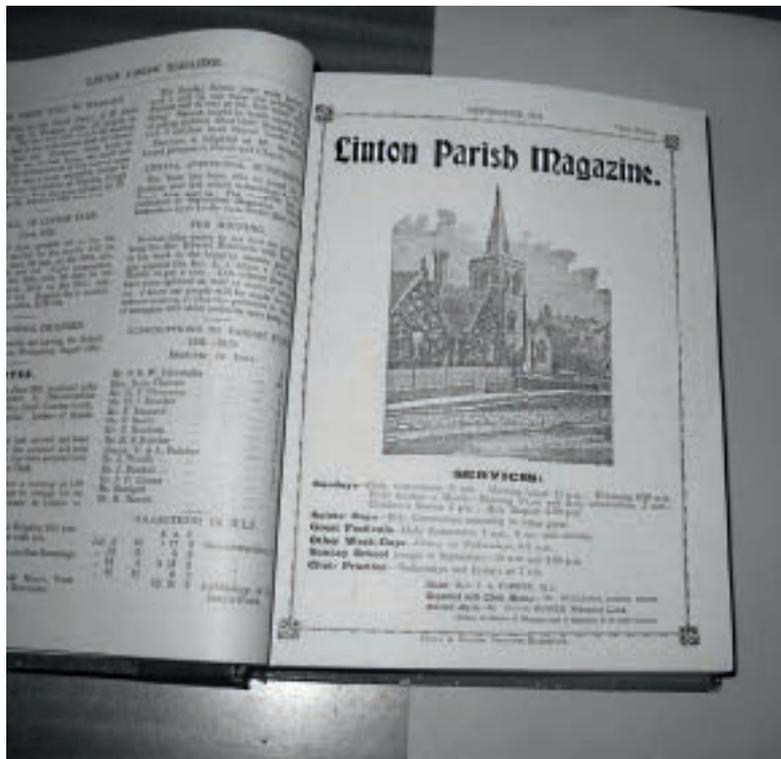
In 1919, after several public meetings, it was agreed that a war memorial would be erected on Church Green, inscribed with the names of men who had either been born in the parish and/or had lived there before joining the armed forces.

Details of all the men honoured on Linton's war memorial can be found at www.looseareahistorysociety.org.uk

Men who came home

Happily many Linton men returned home safely after the war. One of them was Thomas Sone (elder brother of Charles) who joined the RAMC in October 1914 at the age of 19, served in France, and was 'demobbed' in August 1919.

Tom was a keen bell ringer and the 'peal board' at All Saints' Church, Staplehurst, records that in 1922 he conducted a half-muffled peal of 720 changes in memory of his grandfather.



He was a Sunday service ringer at Linton, Staplehurst and Marden churches and worked for the Mid-Kent Water Company, retiring in 1961 after 36 years as District Superintendent in charge of water supplies to 12 parishes.

Another survivor was village blacksmith Harry Tolhurst of the Army Service Corps - known to soldiers as 'Ally Sloper's Cavalry', after Alexander ('Ally') Sloper, a comic strip character. The army's food, equipment, guns and ammunition were transported by the ASC using horse-drawn and motor vehicles, railways and waterways. (Pictures contributed by Derek Pantony)

Harry was a churchwarden at St Nicholas Church, where a plaque was erected in his memory after he died in 1963.

One of the first Linton men to join the Army was Bill Peach, who became a private in the Royal Scots Greys (Wykeham Stanley Cornwallis's regiment).

Bill worked on a farm and was in charge of a grey hunting horse, which his employer shipped to France for him to ride into battle. This was a well-meant but misguided gesture. As the play and film 'War Horse' have reminded us, hundreds of thousands of horses were killed on the Western Front by artillery gunfire or by poison gas. Those that survived were slaughtered after the Armistice to provide meat for Europe's starving population.

After war stopped play

'On May 31 1919 a cricket match was played at Linton between Linton Park and Maidstone Church Institute (**writes Derek Pantony**). This was the first match to take place on the famous ground since the players vacated it in July 1914. The Kent Messenger reported that 'The scores [Maidstone Church Institute 81, Linton Park 63] were not very high on either side owing to effective bowling coupled with the long grass in the outfield'.

'The Great War had intervened many social changes and not even the world of cricket could be excepted. In order to contribute towards food production the ground had been put down to hay. There had been suggestions that it should be ploughed up altogether but these had been resisted. Some years later W (Bill) Peach described how he, George Fenner and groundsman Bill Farley toiled for many hours to clean up the disused ground.

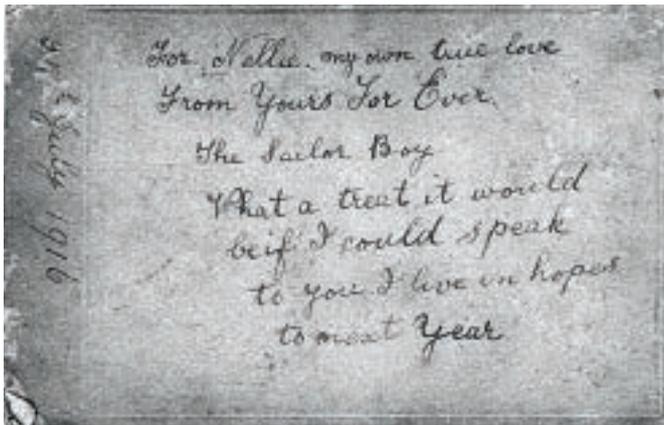
'The club was now having to re-establish itself under peace time conditions. Many had been forced to close for the duration and therefore Linton Park could consider itself fortunate in that respect. Also, due to lack of labour the ground was now reported to be in a poor condition.

'Much of the equipment needed to restore it was old and dilapidated. It was going to be necessary for members to put in a lot of work to put things right'.

Boughton Monchelsea's volunteers



In Boughton Monchelsea, 70 men had enrolled as special constables to maintain law and order by January 1915 and 70 others had enlisted voluntarily in the Army or Royal Navy.



In July 1916 George Potter was serving on HMS Odin in Bombay, from where he sent the above photo and message to his childhood sweetheart, Nell Tree. George and Nell went to Boughton Monchelsea Council School, were married at St Peter's parish church in 1919, and lived at Hill View, Green Lane, built in the garden of Elm Villa, Nell's parents' house.

George worked as a bricklayer for building firm Lawrence of Barming, where he trained many apprentices, and later for Maidstone Council, inspecting building repairs.

Our thanks to Valerie Harris, George and Nell's granddaughter, for this information. We featured George and Nell's Golden Wedding in Loose Threads 12 (page 32).

Hopes that the war would be over by Christmas 1914 were soon dashed and by the time it all came to an end with the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919, 27 local men had been lost.

Twenty-five of them had been pupils at Boughton Monchelsea Council School, where they are remembered on a Roll of Honour. The village's public memorial consists of four pillars in St Peter's parish church, one of Kent's most unusual war memorials.

One of the parish's most tragic stories concerns the Laight family of Church Street.

In August 1914, Petty Officer William Leeder Laight (47), who had been discharged from the Royal Navy in 1912, after 22 years' service, was recalled to serve on HMS Spey, a diving tender operating in the Thames Estuary.

On March 7, 1917, a ship carrying 1,000 tons of sludge collided with the Spey, which sank within three minutes. Laight and 18 other members of the crew of 37 lost their lives. He was buried in Boughton Monchelsea churchyard. He left a widow (Mary Jane, née Bengé), and a 19-year-old son, also named William, who was serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps.

On September 12, 1917 - the day after he arrived on the Western Front - William jnr died of shell wounds. In 1918, 16 days after the Armistice, his uncle, Private Herbert Laight, died in the Pas de Calais.

Also at the very end of the war, James Billett Genn and his wife Eliza (née Potter) of The Quarries, lost two sons: James, a private in the Labour Corps, on November 9, and Harry, of the Rifle Brigade, on November 30.

A memorial (below) in St Peter's Churchyard evokes tragedies that befell Lt Col George Bluett Winch (chairman of brewers Style & Winch) and his wife Ethel, of Boughton Place in both world wars.

In April 1915 their only child, Lt Ronald Bluett (aged 20) of the Royal East Kent Yeomanry was accidentally shot by a sentry while returning with his father from a recruiting concert. He died in hospital at Ramsgate on April 18.



A few years later Col and Mrs Winch adopted a baby boy, whom they named Anthony Desmond Winch. In September 1939 he joined the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment), later transferring to the 4th Tank Battalion, Grenadier Guards, with which he was serving on October 18 1944 when he was killed near Maastricht.



In his memory his parents erected a plaque in St Peter's and donated a sanctuary lamp to the church. In 1998, at a sale at Boughton Place, a portrait (above) of Anthony Desmond Winch as a boy, painted by Ralph Peacock, was sold for £3,680.

With acknowledgements to <http://www.kentfallen.com>, from which website the above details were obtained and where stories of all the men on the parish's Roll of Honour can be read. Details of parishioners and residents of East Farleigh honoured on the village's war memorials can also be found on www.kentfallen.com

An account of Boughton Monchelsea's experiences in the two world wars can be found in *Upon the Quarry Hills* by Paul Hastings, published by Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council in 2000.



This headstone in St Peter's Churchyard commemorates Company Sergeant Major William John Ewen of the 2nd Bn Norfolk Regiment and his family.

Ewen was killed in action in the Persian Gulf in April 1915. His wife was Agnes Elizabeth (maiden name unknown) of Boughton Monchelsea. Did news of little Phillis's death in March reach him before the battle in which he was killed?

Ewen's grave is in Basra War Cemetery. The 2nd Norfolks were in India

when the First World War broke out and were posted to Mesopotamia. Ewen was killed a few months before the siege and fall of Kut-al-Amara, 120 miles south of Baghdad, during which hundreds of prisoners were captured and ill-treated by the Turks.



Mother and fiancée in 'mercy mission' to Western Front

Among the local men who volunteered in 1915 was Frederick Arnold Brett (above). He was a junior partner in a firm of paper makers and importers with many artists among its customers, so he chose to join the Artists' Rifles, a special Territorial Army regiment raised in London in 1859 as a volunteer light infantry unit. His daughter, **Joyce Brett**, contributed this account of his life shortly before she died last year.

Frederick endured the horrors of war in France and was gassed twice. During the Battle of the Somme he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in the Worcestershire Regiment. He was a natural leader of men and when leading an attack he was badly wounded, losing a leg. He lay in 'No Man's Land' for three or four days until his batman crawled out under cover of darkness and rescued him, thus saving his life - a fact never forgotten.

Frederick was desperately ill and likely to die so his mother and his fiancée, Grace, were called to France to visit him. Prior to 1914 only the very wealthy travelled abroad. The Salvation Army helped them embark on a cross-Channel steamer which was escorted by a warship. The Red Cross in France helped them travel to Le Treport military hospital.

The padre told them that Frederick deserved a great honour for bravery but that it went to a high-ranking officer, several miles behind the front line. Later, Frederick returned to England by steamer with a warship escort. The former was badly damaged by the enemy en route.

Frederick was in hospital and convalescent homes for three years. He wanted to save his knee joint but the Government threatened to limit his pension unless he agreed to its removal. He endured ten operations and would not agree. He won!

When he was discharged he came to Loose to accept a position at Hayle Mill, owned by the Barcham Green family. Eventually he became managing director.

Frederick and Grace first lived in Well Street, Loose, where I was born, later moving to Loose Road. He made the very first crystal wireless set in Loose and later made one for Mr Duncanson.

Despite his injuries he lived a full life. He loved the sea, travelling and gardening and was a great reader with an interest in ancient Egypt and many other subjects.

He was always willing to be of help to others and in all ways he was encouraged by Grace. He died in September 1997, aged 81.

Loose Swiss Scouts were told 'Be Prepared for War!'



'Another suspected person was followed and a scout, having entered into conversation with him and given him directions, cleverly ran back and round and warned the picket - he was another in the bag'.

Jack himself was arrested one afternoon while watching out for a spy said to be disguised as a Scoutmaster! He had a busy time explaining his identity.

From early January 1915 until the end of the war a party of Loose scouts joined a Sea Scout patrol at Broadstairs, to help record the movement of ships and aircraft and look out for 'floating objects'. They were paid seven shillings a week, enough to cover their food bills and provide a few pence for pocket money, and were given leave in September 1916 to go hop-picking in and around Loose.

The Scouts kept a detailed daily log of their adventures from March 1915 to May 1916 and one boy kept a diary from January 1916 until the end of the war. These are among the fascinating mementoes and memorabilia now preserved at the scouts' HQ in Pickering Street.

Above left: Jack Barcham Green (in foreground) and Loose Scouts at Birchington. Above: Jack and his troop after arriving at Dover on August 5 1914. Below: a taxi and a Foden steam wagon at the Army picket on the Dover road. The wagon belonged to GW Chitty and Co Ltd, flour millers, of Charlton Mill, Dover. It was built in 1907 and had several interesting features, notably two large oil lamps which today are much desired by steam traction enthusiasts.

At 11 am on Wednesday August 5 1914, exactly 24 hours after Britain declared war on Germany, Jack Barcham Green, Loose Swiss Scouts' founder and scoutmaster, was ordered by the Police to take a group of his scouts to Dover to carry out security duties. They set off three hours later - Jack and his assistant, John Fulkes, on their motorcycles, five others in two motor vehicles, one driven by the Vicar of Loose, Rev W Gardner-Waterman.

Their instructions were to 'beat' the road between Dover Castle and Round House, Martin Mill, in pairs from 6am until 9pm and ensure that the telegraph cables were not tapped or sabotaged. Suspicious persons were to be kept under observation by one scout whilst another summoned the Police constable stationed at Swingate.

When they arrived the scouts reported to an Army picket and set up a camp at the side of the road and photographs were taken. Luckily, they have survived and a selection of them is published

here. They show the group and their paraphernalia, including Jack's small tent alongside a larger bell tent; cooking equipment; a small enamel bowl, and a large wooden barrel.

During their three-week stay Jack and his lads kept a log of their activities. They recorded that they observed 'a large number of aeroplanes and airships daily'; handed-over many 'persons' to the Police and Army; had two aliens registered; 'shadowed' many innocent persons whose movements were suspicious; mended punctures and bicycles, and made many good friends.

'We did all our own cooking and washing-up', wrote Jack. 'We dug our own latrines and refuse trenches and left our beat tidier than we arrived. One day a man was discovered sketching on our beat and was duly escorted to the military picket where he was searched and found to possess a profusion of maps and plans with various pickets and trenches marked.



Scouts' stamps helped pay for Victory



Loose Swiss Scouts' archives contain these 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Victory' war savings stamps, designed by Edmund Dulac and promoted in Lord Northcliffe's newspapers The Daily Mail and the Evening News.

Born in Toulouse, Dulac was a magazine and book illustrator who moved to London early in the 20th century.

He designed bank notes and postage stamps, notably at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth II's reign.

Many examples of his work can be found on Google but, so far as we know, the stamps in the scouts' collection are quite rare.

■ A full account of Loose Swiss Scouts' war service can be read in Molly Proctor's book *Never Give Up: Scouting in Loose*, published in 1992. In her book Molly reports an amazing coincidence.

Jack Barcham Green's brother, Lt. N Green, visited the Dover Road camp in 1914 and was made an honorary scout and given a scout badge.

In 1915 he was wounded at the Battle of Loos and sent back to a hospital in England. Later he returned to France and then realized he had lost his scout badge. In 1916 he was wounded again and taken to the same hospital as a stretcher case.

The only bed available was on an upper floor, inaccessible to stretchers, so the

bed and its locker were brought downstairs. Two weeks later Lt. Green looked in the locker and there, at the back, was the badge he had lost.

The pictures on this page were taken during Loose Scouts' three-week camp beside the Dover Road and show (top of page) their tents, Jack Barcham Green's or his assistant's motorbike and, in the background, a Burrell Gold Medal steam tractor passing by; above: a midday meal and 'brewing-up' around the camp fire; and (below) motorbikes at the ready, the troop enjoys its last meal before returning to Loose.



Trouble at Hayle Mill after war declared

As early as August 21 1914, Herbert Green, owner of Hayle Mill, along with other paper manufacturers, received an official request from William Henry Beveridge, Director of the Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Department in Westminster (**writes Dr Maureen Barcham Green**).

Better known for his role in the establishment of social security and the National Health Service after the Second World War, Beveridge requested manufacturers to report 'any appreciable change in the conditions of your business and employment' on a weekly basis.

The first report submitted by Herbert Green stated that 'we are working exactly the same as we have been doing for the last year or so'. However, Herbert made a note that goods could no longer be shipped 'to Switzerland or Germany'. There were 97 men, women, boys and girls listed as working at the Mill at this time.

A week later, Herbert added in a memo the somewhat alarming statement that, 'I am only expressing the feeling of my firm as to our own financial position. If our customers pay, we can carry on our business as usual, but if the moratorium is continued they may not pay us and as we then should be short of money and no one would deal except for Cash down, we should be unable to purchase materials or pay wages and might have to close down'.

By Christmas 1914, employees at Hayle Mill were working short-time as insufficient orders were being placed to justify keeping the workforce on site. Herbert Green informed the ministry that 'our chief troubles are in connection with transit & the Railway Co. who often refuse goods altogether'.

As the war progressed, 1916 reports reveal that 'if any more skilled men are taken, we should have to shut down - we are making a lot of Bank notes for Scotch, Irish & Colonial Banks and filter paper, previously made in Germany - much of which is for Gov. Service & a large proportion for Export to the U.S.A'.

Although men employed in paper mills were generally exempted from service (on grounds that the industry was of national importance), paper mills still lost many skilled men who signed up for duty voluntarily.

Alfred Langley, aged 20, left Hayle Mill before completing his apprenticeship - such was the feeling that any able-bodied man should be at the front fighting for King and country. Alfred never returned from the battlefields. Despite the loss of good men like him, Herbert refused to let 'women to do men's work', adding that in his opinion 'it is not possible'.

Rags were 'dear and scarce'

Another pressing problem for paper mills in the district was the 'impossibility of getting Old French Linen Rags'. The handmade mills producing banknotes, filter paper and other finer grades of paper required a steady supply of good quality linen rags from Belgium and France. With supplies cut off and transportation proving a problem, there remained the chance that production would have to cease owing to a lack of materials. According to one of Herbert's reports, 'orders for filter paper from the USA and British Colonies' continued to be received, but these were difficult to execute because

rags had become 'both dear and scarce'.

By March 1917 three more men had left Hayle Mill to join comrades at the front and Herbert wrote that 'rags are at famine prices also coals, chemicals and practically everything - we lose a skilled man tomorrow and this will probably close a vat down & very likely compel us to shut our Mill before many weeks'.

Ironically, there was no shortage of orders at this time but supplies of raw materials, in combination with a further loss of manpower, limited production significantly. By September 1917 the situation was worse with Herbert noting that 'skilled papermakers, Handmade, cannot be obtained'.

The cost of the war in terms of the loss of skilled men was incalculable, and the paper trade, especially the handmade industry, suffered this loss more than some. However, by the time a ceasefire was declared on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day or the eleventh month, 1918, Hayle Mill remained one of a handful of mills which survived the war relatively intact.

Remarkably, the Mill continued making paper in the traditional manner, by hand, until production ceased in 1987.

■ The Hayle Mill Archive has a complete set of reports dating for the First World War.

The group pictured below at Hayle Mill soon after the end of the First World War includes many employees who kept the mill running during the war, and others who had recently returned from Active Service. (Contributed by John Webb)



Wounded and taken prisoner in 1918, Ernie came home to Annie in 1919

Terry McKeown of Church Villas, Loose, tells the story of his grandfather, Ernest John Clifford, who survived a war wound, a tropical disease and life as a prisoner of the Turks while serving in the Middle East.

Ernest was born on February 7, 1887, in Ulcombe, where his father was a farm carter. His family lived on several farms, including Great Bettenham, then part of the Sissinghurst Castle Estate, and Park Farm, Broomfield.

He served an apprenticeship in bricklaying, eventually becoming a master bricklayer, and on Christmas Day 1913 married Annie Edith Collins of 3 Kirkdale Cottages, Loose. They lived at 3 Brewery Cottages, Loose Road (now 515 Loose Road).

Ernest joined the Territorial Army before the outbreak of the First World War and on November 13 1914 enlisted in the 2/20 London Regiment, with the rank of Corporal and service number 5781.

On November 1 1915 he was transferred to the Royal Army Medical Corps with a new service number, 632784, remaining attached to the 2/20 Londons, serving in Salonika and later in Egypt.

On April 30 1918 he was in what is now Syria and about seven miles from the east bank of the River Jordan, with a platoon led by Lieutenant Guy Priest. They were ordered to capture a Turkish gun battery and while advancing were surprised by fire from a machine gun.

Ernest and Priest were hit and the



platoon was overrun by the Turkish forces, and ordered, in English, to surrender. All except Ernest and Priest managed to escape. They were marched across Syria to Turkey.

There were no formal prison camps there and they were kept in accommodation previously used by the local Armenian population, which had been driven from the area by the Turks in what would now be called 'ethnic cleansing'.

Treatment in the camps and on the march was harsh. More than 60 percent of the men captured by the Turks did not return home.

Ernest contracted malaria during his incarceration and suffered recurrences for the rest of his life.

He returned to England on February 4 1919 and after a short spell of recuperation at a military hospital on the Isle of Wight returned to Loose, to continue working as a master bricklayer.

Ernest and Annie raised three children: Doris Florence Elizabeth (born 1920, died 1998), Daphne (born June 16 1926 - Sept 6. 2012) and Donald, my father, born in 1931 and currently living in Cheshire.

Ernest worked on many buildings around Maidstone, including houses in Norrington Road, Berwyn Grove and Pear Tree Lane and a number around the Wheatsheaf pub.

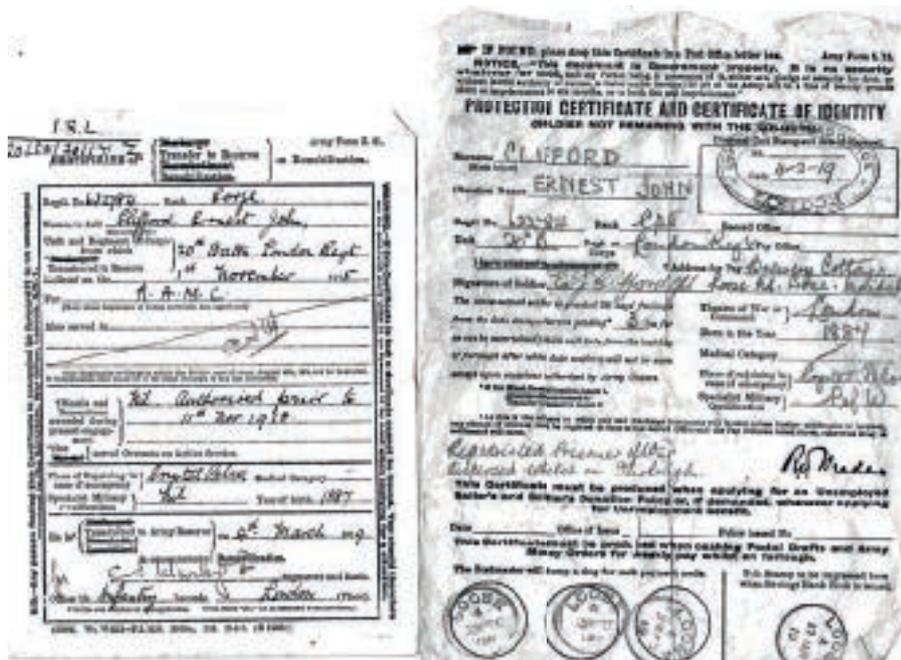
He worked beyond retirement age, until the week before he died, aged 70, on October 24 1957, at 515 Loose Road. His final job was a large retaining wall on the north side of the railway line at Swanley Station.

'It is too soon to despair'

On August 2 1918 A L Mather of the British Red Cross wrote to Annie with news about Ernest, saying: 'There seems a real ground for hope that he is safe as a prisoner of war. Two of our informants claim to have seen his capture with their own eyes. Private H J Draper says, "I saw him go over the top ... I distinctly saw him fall as though wounded"'. Mather's letter quoted more details from a report by Corporal W Oakley: 'There was a battery of guns near a ravine which we had orders to take but were unable to do so, being outnumbered ... we were in extended order when about 40 of the enemy took us by surprise ... Clifford was wounded through the breast, the bullet coming out of his back ... it was a clean wound and a dressing was clapped on at once. He did not fall and no doubt would have attempted to bolt had he not been surprised. Guy was wounded in the wrist'.

'One shrinks from raising false hopes', wrote Mather, 'but in your husband's case I think hope is justifiable for some time longer ... it is quite too soon to despair'.

'One shrinks from raising false hopes', wrote Mather, 'but in your husband's case I think hope is justifiable for some time longer ... it is quite too soon to despair'.



Top of page: Ernest and Annie Clifford. Left: Ernest's 'demob' papers and identity certificate, issued when he was repatriated and date-stamped at Loose Post Office.

Army ancestry surprise for Sue



Sue's great grandfather, Sergeant William Thomas Hogdon, in front of a parade of recruits at Folkestone shortly before they embarked for France in August 1915.

A soldier with two families, another who served with the SOE, and a wife and mother who twice in one day received bad news from the War Office, are among the ancestors that **Sue Black** of Boughton Monchelsea found when researching her family's military history.

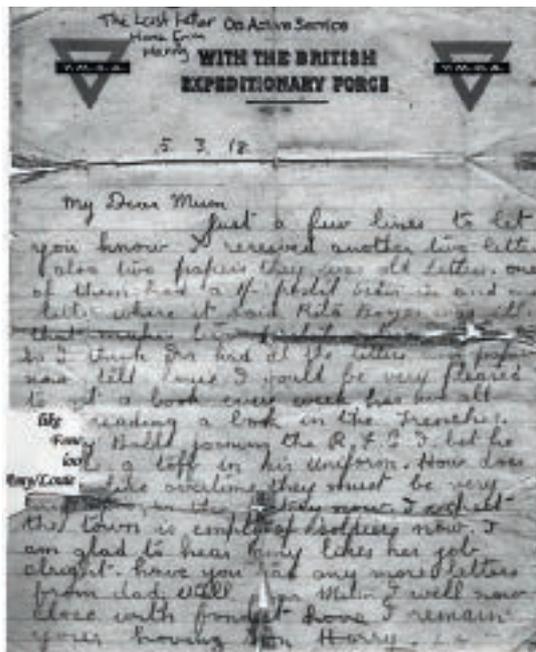
'My great grandfather, William Thomas Hogdon, joined The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment at Maidstone Barracks in 1892 and served in India and Aden for eight years.

'When he embarked for India in 1894 his wife, Mary-Anne Matilda (née Price), was pregnant with my grandfather, William Henry. Soon after he was born she left him with her brother, Henry Price, to bring up and moved from Maidstone to Chatham.

'When great grandfather William left the Army in 1902 he set up home with an Annie Fancett and became a postman, rejoining the Royal West Kents in 1914 as a sergeant. He was wounded and taken prisoner on September 26 1915 (the second day of the Battle of Loos) and despite his injuries was marched to Germany where he died in Mersie Hospital, Gaschen, on October 9.

'He and Annie Fancett had five children between 1906 and 1913 but it appears that he continued to see Mary-Anne after they separated; in 1915 they had a son, who died when only three years old.

'Mary-Anne (known as Tilly) did not divorce William and received his war widow's pension. She married Frederick Rogers in 1918 and died in 1943.



'My great uncle, Henry (aka Harry) Charles James Price, and his father Henry Edward Price (my great great uncle) were in the Army in the First World War. Harry was in the Lincolnshire Regiment and was killed at Rossignol Wood, France, on April 5 1918 during the Second Battle of the Somme. A recognized marksman, he was in charge of his section's Lewis gun - which of course made him a prime target for the enemy.

'He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial Roll of Honour in Faubourg d'Amiens Cemetery, on which more than 35,000 names are recorded.

'Louisa, who was Harry's mother and Henry's wife, had the shocking

experience of being told, on the same day, that both Harry and Henry were missing in action. Fortunately Henry survived.

'Only one month before he died, Harry had written what was to be his last letter [right] to his mother, in which he asked her to send him a book every week to read in the trenches and says he expects that "the town" (Maidstone) is "empty of soldiers now" [Germany having launched a massive attack on the Western Front in an attempt to end the war]'.

'My grandfather, William Henry Hogdon, also served in the Royal West Kents, from 1914 until 1919, and during that time was stationed in India. When he came home he worked at Sharps toffee factory in Maidstone as a sugar boiler. He died in 1967, aged 73, leaving a widow, Ethel Kate (née Calver), a son, William Henry Joseph, and a daughter, Lilian Ethel (my mother).

'My father, Colin Douglas Green, enlisted in the 10th Bn The Buffs in 1942 and after initial training was posted to the 1/6 Surrey Regiment, with whom he embarked to Naples. On arrival he was made "company sniper".

'The regiment, now part of the 8th Army, crossed the heavily mined Rapido river near Cassino and progressed towards northern Italy.

'According to his service records, on November 22, at some point before his unit reached Forli, he was field court-



martialed for going absent without leave, but I can find no record of this. The next information I have is that six months later, with his rank of sergeant restored, he had been transferred to the Cheshire Regiment and was living with the partisans in the hills, behind enemy lines.

'Although still with the partisans it appears that he was transferred again to the Middlesex Regiment and then to the Kensington Regiment, though he never mentioned all this to me or told me of any comrades he had made there, as he had with the 1/6 Surreys.

'He was eventually sent to Greece, but returned earlier than the rest of the regiment. After leave in the UK he was sent back to Italy and seconded to the American Embassy in Rome, attached to the military police as a driver/interpreter.

'When he returned home at the end of his service he went back to his job on the Railways. I remember that, when I was a child, my father insisted that we should go on holiday to Italy at least once a year, often for three weeks. Even though he progressed in his job it seems strange that we were able to afford to do this, as no other children I knew went on foreign holidays.

'We would travel by train and stay in some very nice hotels! We would always stop for at least one day in Milan. My father spoke fluent Italian and although dark-skinned, with jet-black hair, he was not of Italian descent.

'In 1991 he started to plan a trip with me to Italy, saying he would then tell me what he had done during the war. Sadly, he died in October 1991 before we were able to take that trip.

'I finally went last year, following his wartime progress through Italy, visiting Commonwealth War Graves where I laid poppies on the graves of the soldiers of the 1/6 Surreys.

'Whilst staying in Cassino I unexpectedly met Chris, a New Zealander, who told me he was a military historian at Sandhurst. After I told him my story he

concluded that it was very possible that, while with the partisans, my father had been part of the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Chris said that the field court-martial was the Army's way of getting my father out of his regiment and into the SOE'.



Above left: Sue's grandfather, William Henry Hogdon and (right) her great uncle, Henry (aka Harry) Charles James Price.

Left: Sue at the grave of her great grandfather, William Thomas Hogdon, in Cologne Southern Cemetery. Above: her father, Colin Douglas Green.



From D-Day to Doodlebugs to VE-Day Memories of local life 70 years ago

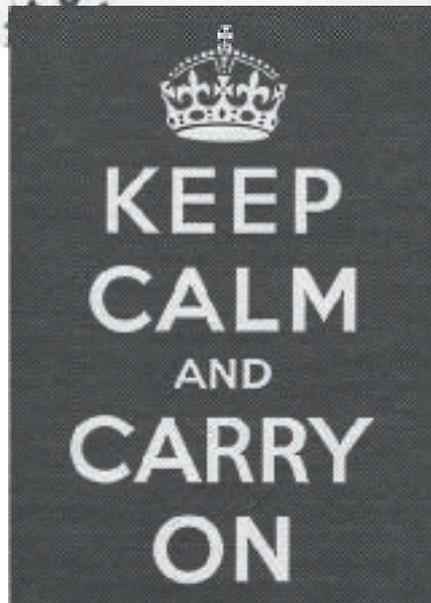
During the first few days of June 1944 the thousands of soldiers who had been stationed in and around Loose suddenly disappeared and headed for bases on the Channel coast. Then, in the early hours of Tuesday June 6, General Dwight D Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, announced to the soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force: 'You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you.

'In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

'We will accept nothing less than full victory! Good Luck!'

But victory was by no means assured and Eisenhower had prepared two messages, one saying: 'Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops - if any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone'.

Happily, the early morning bulletins on the wireless on Tuesday, June 6, and the first editions of that day's newspapers, reported that a foothold had been achieved and the invasion of occupied Europe - 'Operation Overlord' - had begun. As the Allies fought their way across Normandy some may have hoped, as in August 1914



From top of page: a 'V1 at treetop height, moments before exploding (Bob Ogley Collection); a poster intended to raise morale in the aftermath of air raids; ex-Army huts on the site of a wartime camp near Heath Road.

only 30 years earlier, that the war would be 'all over by Christmas'.

One uncorroborated local story about D-Day is that before the invasion General Bernard Montgomery, Commander of the 21st Army Group, had his headquarters at Boughton Mount. Requisitioned by the Army in 1940, the property was within a few miles of the camps set up for British and Canadian soldiers at Heath Road, Linton Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place. It was even said that Montgomery had been seen jogging around Boughton Monchelsea with his staff.

All this is probably a combination of rumour and mistaken identity - or perhaps part of Operation Fortitude South, the cunning plan that fooled the German High Command into believing that the main invasion force to liberate Europe would be launched across the Pas de Calais. The deception included creating a phantom 'First US Army Group', commanded by General George S Patton, in south-east England, and transmitting, for months on end before D-Day, Montgomery's units' radio signals by land-line to Dover Castle and then transmitting them, further convincing Field Marshal Rommel that Montgomery was closer to Calais than he really was. In actual fact Montgomery's HQ was 75 miles away, in Reigate, Surrey.

The presence in the south-east of 'high profile' military leaders was deliberately publicized or leaked. Montgomery had his own train, codenamed Rapier, in which he travelled around to give his famous 'pep talks' to his troops - sometimes inspecting three parades, each of 10,000 men or more, a day.

In late 1943 or early 1944 a gang of schoolboys heard that Montgomery was about to arrive at Maidstone East Station for a visit to the town. The boys ran to the station and saw him on the platform – much to the annoyance of the Police, because the visit was supposed to be 'hush-hush.' The full story can be read on www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/

Their fathers served in Normandy

Two local residents, **Roger Mayhew** of Salts Avenue and **David Bryden** of Shernolds, have researched their fathers' Operation Overlord experiences.

'Cyril Mayhew was born and raised in Suffolk', writes Roger. 'He joined the Military Police in 1940. His unit was attached to 53rd (Welsh Division) and was based at Old Loose Court. While on duty in Maidstone he met Olive Gordon; they were married in November 1943.

'At the beginning of June 1944 his unit moved to Tilbury and on D-Day +11 he landed in Normandy, spending the rest of the war moving across France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

'His younger brother, Gilbert, a driver in a tank regiment, had driven ashore at Arromanches. In April 1945 Cyril was on duty at an intersection in Germany when Gilbert suddenly appeared in a convoy. This was their first meeting in almost two years. They quickly arranged to meet later that day.

'Cyril arrived in Hamburg on the final day of the war and somehow managed to get back to Maidstone the next day. He was demobbed in 1946 and lived the rest of his life in Maidstone'.



Top of page: Lance-Corporal Cyril Mayhew (right) taking over point duty from Private D M Newgard, US Army, at Hilden, North Rhine-Westphalia, when the US 22nd Corps handed-over the zone to the 53rd British Division in June 1945. Above: Jock Bryden. Below: Soldiers of the 53rd Welsh Division at Old Loose Court.

Lance Bombardier Jock Bryden of the Royal Artillery left his family a personal account of his experiences from D-Day until D-Day +11. Here are some extracts:

'June 2 - 6. We made for the docks at Gosport but not until we had spent three

days on the water did we know our destination ... We slept wherever we could on the boat ... My choice was under our tank ... I prayed that night for everyone I know ... Jerry gave us all he had from his shore batteries ... We were lucky to beach without being hit ... Soon we were cutting a way through the sands to pick a position ready for action ... Our gun was manned by myself and two others ... Within half an hour our troops were covering ground fast and rooting Jerry out wholesale ... They were soon put to work as stretcher bearers, picking up the dead and wounded (there were many hundreds by now) ... Jerry was still shelling us like blazes ... I was glad when orders came for us to move further inland ... It was about 10am and we were still looking for our air cover ... Jerry had swooped from the skies on us many times but we didn't have any luck in bringing him down ... It got much too sticky and we had to move again, this time into a field full of mines ... Two hours sleep on D-Day'.

Gordon Kitchenham of Coxheath was in 1944 living with his family at Heathville (originally the Upper Star pub), Linton Road, where his father Les was a haulage contractor and coal merchant.

'In the run-up to D-Day there were Army camps all around and one day a Matilda tank broke down outside our house. The crew parked it in our yard, because if they had left it on the road they would have had to stand guard on it all night'.

'We were not sure if we would see him again'

Jim Walder of Sheppey Road lived with his mother Eileen and grandfather at Garden



Cottage, Loose Court Farm in 1944-5.

'The Army occupied Old Loose Court for a large part of the war and many of the soldiers were housed in Nissen huts in the grounds of the house, which I believe was used for offices and also to accommodate the officers. When the army moved out after the war there was considerable damage to the wooden floors caused by the studs in the soldiers' boots.

'Lancet Lane was then only a track made up of stones and earth. During the summer, when the ground was very dry, the Army lorries generated large clouds of dust, and in the winter there were large muddy tracks.

'My father [also named Jim] was in the Royal Artillery and we were not sure whether we would see him again. As it worked out he was transferred to another regiment and never left England'.

Jim jnr clearly remembers everyday life in what was then still largely a rural community, despite being only two miles from the county town.

'My mother worked on Loose Court Farm, fruit picking (involving climbing up long ladders to harvest cherries, apples, plums and pears) also packing fruit to go off to market. She also picked gooseberries, black currants, and red currants, hoed the weeds between rows of vegetables, and in the autumn was involved in harvesting wheat and oats. This involved stacking up the sheaves of corn when they were first cut and then helping with the making of the large stack of corn in the farmyard to await the threshing machine which came round later in the autumn.

'The cottage did not have electricity, gas or running water. Lighting was by oil lamps or candles. Cooking was by a coal fired kitchen range in



Jim Walder with his parents, 70 years ago.

the dining room. The other rooms had open fireplaces. It was only on special occasions that a fire was lit in the lounge. Fires were only lit in the bedrooms if a person was ill in bed in the winter.

'Water for drinking and cooking had to be carried in buckets from a standpipe at the bottom of Lancet Lane. Water for washing and bathing was pumped by a hand pump in the kitchen from a tank in the garden which collected water from the roof of the house. This water was heated in a copper in the corner of the kitchen when required.

'The outside toilet was flushed by the waste water from the sink in the kitchen when the plug was

removed from the sink'.



Above: The Loose air raid siren, photographed at the Battle of Britain Museum, Hawkinge, in 2014 by Tony Parslow. Below: Dick Waldron (in front row), Loose School's wartime headmaster, and his staff.

Six days after D-Day, Germany deployed its secret 'Vengeance Weapon', the V1 'flying bomb' (nicknamed the 'Doodlebug'), capable of blitzing London from launch sites in France and, later, Holland.

As in the air raids of 1940 - 1943, Kent again became 'bomb alley'. Between June and March 1945 thousands of V1s growled overhead; nearly 1,500 of them ran out of fuel or were shot down miles short of their targets, crashing and exploding in our county, often with devastating consequences.

Loose's air raid siren, in a builders' yard on the corner of Walnut Tree Lane and Loose Road, howled almost every day and night as salvo after salvo of V1s were plotted by the Royal Observer Corps's monitoring post in a bunker on Goodwin's Chicken Farm, between Heath Road and Haste Hill Road. Our first 'close encounter' came on July 3, when a V1 hit an Army camp at Marden, killing 11 people, but later that month, at 3.25 on the afternoon of Thursday July 27, a Doodlebug exploded above Lancet



Lane - perilously close to Loose School.

Here, a rota of schoolboys had for several weeks been keeping watch from the kitchen garden, ringing a large bell when they heard a VI approaching, whereupon staff and pupils ran to the air raid shelter or dived under their desks. By now, attendance at the school had fallen. Most parents were keeping their children at home due to the danger from Doodlebugs, and from shrapnel and shells falling to earth from 'ack-ack' gun batteries.



One of the batteries that attacked the Doodlebug was located between Loose and Stockett Lane, in the field south of the right-angled bend in Well Street, scattering hot shards of metal over a wide area.

The July 27 blast merely broke a few of the school's windows and dislodged the heavy pendulum from a classroom clock. No one in the school was injured.

The headmaster, Dick Waldron, had left school 40 minutes earlier to attend a meeting of the Maidstone Rural Food Committee. Later, he wrote in the school log book: 'During my absence a flying bomb fell in the vicinity and the staff carried out instructions for such an emergency. Mrs Ovenden reported to me that the children and staff were all very cool and calm and the children were dispersed immediately. No casualties. The building suffered very little damage, i.e. 30 panes of glass and a little plaster'.

Earlier entries read: (June 16) 'Owing to enemy activity with the flying bomb I deemed it advisable to disperse the children so sent them home at 11.30am. The school closed for three weeks fruit picking holiday. (July 10) 'School re-opened this morning. A large number of children away. I have ascertained that this is due to the nervousness of the parents about the gun fire and the flying bomb. While the school is in session I have arranged for a system of spotting so as to get as much warning as possible of the approach of enemy activity. It is exceedingly difficult to arrange for children to go to shelters under present conditions except when they are actually in the playground. I have doubled the supervision of the children when out'.

John Webb of Boughton Lane was a nine-year-old pupil at Loose School.

'I was in the boys' playground at Loose School. It must have been a PT



period. We heard the familiar engine note of the Doodlebug, turned to watch it and waited for the engine to stop. It did! Our

From top of page: John Webb, pictured 70 years later in the garden of one of the properties in Lancet Lane damaged by the Loose Doodlebug; The Horseshoes, East Farleigh, after a VI raid, and in a better statetoday; Cliff Cottage, Boughton Monchelsea, where ARP warden 'Tommy' Reynolds was killed.

teacher - I think it was Mrs Cobbett - told us to get into the air raid shelter. I was so preoccupied with the Doodlebug that I ignored her.

'By this time all the other children were in the shelter and she was standing in the doorway, screeching at me. I reluctantly followed her into the shelter but I stopped just inside the doorway and turned around just in time to see the explosion. Lancet Lane was about 150 yards from the school boundary. It must have

been a soft landing. There were no flames, just a huge broad plume of earth rising about 80 feet in the air.

'We were sent home from school almost immediately and I cycled home to Bockingford along Loose Road trying to avoid the broken glass that was strewn everywhere. On reflection, my lack of fear was not surprising; we boys were more fascinated than afraid and we would watch the flying bombs knowing that the majority would continue on bound for London. But if the engine stopped we would be on our bikes, aiming to get to the crash site to collect souvenirs. It sounds crazy and highly dangerous. It probably was, but in reality, even in gliding mode, the Doodlebug was much faster than boys on bikes'.

■ The wrecked VI fell between two houses, providing the likes of John Webb with a few souvenirs but yielding nothing of interest to scientists trying to discover what made Doodlebugs tick.

Elsie Elliott remembered that she first saw a Doodlebug - 'a strange aeroplane with flames coming out the back' - while fire-watching one night at the ARP post in All Saints' Church, Loose.

Richard Tadman recalled: 'The teachers and children had to stay in the air raid shelter until the All Clear was heard. It was not made known to us that four of the biggest boys were seated near the entrance, to dig us out in the event of a bomb falling near or on the shelter.'

'After air raids the local boys would trawl King George V Playing Field picking up pieces of shrapnel, the result of the anti-aircraft guns sited at Coxheath. These trophies were taken to school and swapped for other souvenirs, such as spent bullets dug out of the rock face at the

quarries in Boughton Woods, which were used as firing ranges by soldiers garrisoned in the area.

'Many of the local boys would stealthily creep up to vantage points in the woods and watch them fire at empty water and petrol cans, until spotted by the soldiers and chased off.'

Derek Pantony, then a farmer's son living with his family at Herts Farm (now Fairview Farm), Linton Road, recalled: 'I was with my father, Ted, at Aylesford that day, cutting corn for my uncle. On the way home we saw that all the windows of the cottages opposite Lancet Lane were broken and their curtains were blowing in the wind.'

'Another VI fell behind The Horseshoes pub in Dean Street, East Farleigh, and another near the corner of Stockett Lane and Busbridge Road. There were no casualties.'

'I was in the Royal Observer Corps and we would fire a signal rocket if we saw a fighter aircraft chasing a VI as it approached the balloon barrage at West Malling. One of the rockets hit a fighter but I don't think it crashed.'

The Lancet Lane VI had been chased by a fighter aircraft and exploded at the north-east corner of Lancet Lane. The roof of one of the houses, No 18, was lifted several inches off its walls by the blast; it fell back more or less into its original position! More than 300 houses were damaged, six of them so badly that their occupants had to move out. Fourteen people, eight of whom needed treatment in hospital, were slightly injured. A mobile National Fire Service canteen was sent to the site to provide refreshments for the rescue workers and residents. It took many weeks to repair the damage.

Olive Culver was living in Pickering Street and was about to wake up her toddler daughter from her afternoon nap when she heard the VI approaching. 'Snatching her up, I hurled us both into the indoor shelter, where we were joined by our old cat, who always flew into the shelter at the sound of a doodlebug. For a moment there seemed to be complete silence, then a rush of noise of shattering glass, falling tiles, calling voices and falling objects.'

'My father had a narrow escape. He jumped from his armchair a split second before the chandelier fell on it. A vase of flowers that had been on a window sill was found intact on the hearthrug without a drop of water spilled'.

Christine Fenton (née Thompson) was a radar operator on a gun site on Romney Marsh in July 1944.

'Our Battery had moved quietly and quickly from Middlesbrough to help deal



Derek Pantony and his father Ted at Herts Farm.

with Flying Bombs. We were living in tents, in rather less than comfort, so I accepted an invitation from my pen friend, Anne Harvey, to visit her home in Loose Road. Perhaps I could sleep in a real bed and even have a bath! Unknown to me, Anne was on holiday, so she did not receive my letter telling her of my plans.

'I secured a 36-hour pass and hitched a lift to Ashford on an ammunition lorry. It seemed easy to get a train to Maidstone and quite simple to board a trolley bus to Loose. Various bangs in the distance and even the drone of VIs were part of the Greek chorus of everyday living in those days. I travelled happily on regardless. We reached The Wheatsheaf and it was "Everybody out! We're turning round here. There's been a bomb!"

'There was a road block manned by the Civil Defence, turning back the populace. I was in uniform so, flourishing my pay-book, I marched through.'

'I was relieved to see that No 560 Loose Road, though slightly damaged, was still standing. It seemed to be swarming with people, some in uniform, some not. The scene was all too familiar and I could easily take my part in the action - check for casualties, look for structural damage, reassure the relatives, move the broken glass - in those days we were all used to joining-in.'

'I noticed someone was up a tree, and someone in the bushes. And the hens were not too happy.'

'Eventually the tumult and the shouting died, the captains and kings departed, and I was left wielding a vacuum cleaner to clear up the soot and dust. My involuntary hostess must have thought I was a cuckoo left in her nest. I was sure she would realize who I was but, of course, with Anne being away, my arrival was completely unexpected. I was wonderfully welcomed and cared for'.

Shirley Wilson was at home at 647 Loose Road. 'It was a very hot day. Mother had been making a batch of raspberry jam, which

was cooling in the larder. I was making a frock.'

'We heard the engine stop and I raced under the stairs. Mother rushed to the back hall and as she closed the kitchen door she saw a complete pane of glass blow out of the window frame, go across the room to smash on the opposite wall and end on top of the Morrison table shelter, where Hilary [Shirley's sister] and I slept every night.'

'We had windows blown out in every room except the drawing room. We never found the net curtains that used to be at the front windows, although the curtain rods were still there.'

'Mother suddenly remembered the old lady over the road would be on her own. I was sent over to see if she was all right. I found the door had blown open and I called out to her. She was shocked and furious with Hitler. She had been in the bath and had got out to get dressed. As she went along the landing the hatch cover in the ceiling fell down, missing her by inches.'

'I made her some hot sweet tea as recommended in our guide handbook and went home again to find mother making tea for all and sundry. Some people couldn't go back to their homes and had to find alternative temporary accommodation. We found ourselves with a visitor who stayed for a week or two until we persuaded her relations to fetch her. This was Mrs Noel-Thomas and her fat spoilt white dog, Missy.'

'My father arrived home to see the damage and cleared up most of the mess. My mother was nearly in tears over her jam - now plastered with broken glass. Father went along to the Peacock's house, Tree Tops, as he knew they were on holiday and were expected back that night. Mrs Peacock could not understand how he got in; she seemed quite oblivious of the fact that the back door was off its hinges.'

'We heard afterwards that although all the chickens but one had been killed in the garden where the bomb fell, one was running around, dazed and completely naked as its feathers had been plucked in the blast.'

'All the roofs that were damaged had tarpaulins on them by 6.30pm, which shows how ready everything was for an emergency.'

'My mother was called up for nursing service and after a short spell at the hospital in South Park she went to Preston Hall to nurse the military as they returned from France. She caught the bus each morning and used to tell us how the driver of the hospital bus always stopped when the planes were going over; everyone had to get out and help him identify them'.

■ Shirley's parents were Graham and Marjorie Wilson. After the war Shirley lived

at No 647 Loose Road, built next door to No 649 for her by Graham, who was Town Clerk of Maidstone before the war.

Earlier in July 1944 there had been other casualties and damage in our area. At 13 and 15 Paynes Lane a shell exploded; several people were treated for shock. In Boughton Monchelsea an unexploded cannon shell was detonated when someone accidentally struck it with a bagging hook; Cyril Bailey, 19, suffered multiple facial injuries. At East Farleigh, cannon shells damaged Mill Farmhouse and a VI, shot down by a fighter, damaged about 40 properties.

Then, on August 7, Frederick James ('Tommy') Reynolds (59), an air raid warden, was killed when a VI destroyed his home at Cliff Cottages, Boughton Monchelsea. He is commemorated on the Civilian War Dead Roll of Honour in Westminster Abbey.

This was the last attack on the Loose Valley, which escaped being hit by any of the V2 ballistic missiles aimed at London between September 1944 and March 1945.

The air raids prompted **Mrs L H Bray** of Selby Cottage, 580 Loose Road, to transform her home into a cottage hospital.

She told the Kent Messenger: 'I suddenly wondered what would happen to people if they were injured in an air raid in the vicinity, particularly if hospital accommodation was already taxed. I made up my mind to equip my two front rooms with beds and first aid equipment so that injured people could be brought here.

'In the drawing room are three beds for women and in the dining room two for men. The summer house has been made comfortable so that slightly injured people can sit there until an ambulance arrives. I also have another room upstairs that could be utilized.

'A doctor who has seen my little hospital complimented me on it and assured me that if



Loose Cottage Hospital

ever the occasion arose I would get free nursing assistance.'

Dozens of bottles of medicines, lotions and packages of lint adorned Mrs Bray's drawing room, while beside one of the beds there was a violet ray lamp, bought from a friend.

Mrs Bray stocked her larder with food suitable for patients. 'I would do my best to feed them for a while', she said, 'but naturally I should expect support from their relatives.

The dining room table became an improvised bed. Near it were several padded splints Mrs Bray made herself. In her summer house she kept towels, nightlights and rugs, and she had covered the seats with blankets.

While Mrs Bray was equipping her hospital, a fund to buy an ambulance for Loose for air raid casualties was set up by L

G Venall of Salts Place. Following a sherry party at the vicarage (now the Loose Valley Nursing Home) hosted by the Vicar of Loose, Rev A Neville Hare and Mrs Hare, £37 (£1,390 in today's money) was raised and an anonymous local resident advanced a loan.

The ambulance was bought and ready for use the following week.

■ Selby Cottage, previously called Sion Cottage, is the larger of four houses at 576 - 582 Loose Road once known as 'the hen and chickens'.

In the late summer of 1944, despite the V1s and V2s, air raid precautions were relaxed. The 'black-out' regulations were enforced only after the sirens were sounded; at other times 'dim-out' lighting, equivalent to moonlight, was permitted. From April 1945 full street lighting, prohibited since September 1939, was allowed; no longer did drivers and pedestrians have to inch their way along Loose Road in the pitch dark, using shielded torches and dimmed headlights while following black-and-white patterns painted on the kerbstones and around obstacles.

The trolley-bus cables glinting in the moonlight above Loose Road would also have aided navigation.

In November 1944 the Home Guard was 'stood-down' from active duties. There were several battalions of Dad's Army in Loose whose posts, and those of air raid wardens and other civil defence and voluntary groups, included the Iron Room on the corner of Malthouse Hill and Old Loose Hill (where the WI ran a canteen); a room in All Saints' Church; and the Vicar's Hall (which stood on what is now the Brethren's Meeting House car park in Linton Road). The Home Guard trained at Loose School. **Richard Tadman**, a pupil there at the time, recalled that 'various pieces of their equipment were left and stored there, noticeably wooden rifles!'



The Wheatsheaf, Loose Road, in September 1939. (Contributed by Andrew Clark)

John Webb remembers when his father, Ernest, was one of our air raid wardens. 'When war was declared he was 31 and working for A E Reed & Co at Straw Mill, Tovil. His beat was centred on Bockingford, where we lived, but included the Loose Valley towards Tovil and halfway to Loose, and also extended as far as East Farleigh. Quite a large area, but he had a bike!

'He demonstrated how to use a stirrup pump in a neighbour's garden. This was a hand pump that fitted over the side of a two gallon bucket and was held in place by a foot plate or "stirrup". It had about 15 feet of hose with a nozzle on the end. Every time you had to refill the bucket the fire would flare up again. They were very useful for watering the garden, though. An instruction was sent out requiring wardens to check that the pumps were not being used for illicit purposes but this was a lost cause.



The Vicar's Hall photographed by Peter Hall in 2007

and Taffy fired his .22 Rifle at it. It only dented the helmet'.

At last, on Monday May 7 1945, Germany surrendered - 11 long months after D-Day. There was a public holiday next day - VE-Day. In a matter-of-fact manner, school headmaster Dick Waldron wrote in his log book: 'May 8 and 9. School closed for two days to celebrate Victory in Europe'. Victory over Japan came on August 15. The troops were demobilised, life began to return to normal, but the families of wartime Loose remember to this day the men and women who did not survive.

As life returned to normal, the area's sports clubs regrouped, one being Linton Park Cricket Club which in February 1946 held its first AGM since November 1938. Tributes were paid to members who had been killed during the war: Lt Stan Pierce (who died while serving with the British Reconnaissance Regiment in Italy), Sgt J Short (air gunner), Sgt T J Smith (Observer, RAF), and Sgt J Wenham (Flight Engineer, RAF).

It was decided to play cricket on Sundays. This was a highly controversial issue; at least one player refused to turn out on Sundays and Derek Pantony, who had just joined the club, remembers having to persuade his parents to be allowed to play Sunday cricket!

Fixtures were arranged with such sides as 'The Desert Rats' and 'The Home

Guard Old Comrades Association', and efforts were made to recruit more young players. It was also agreed that fielding standards would have to improve. Linton Park's players were not very agile and had acquired the habit of returning the ball 'first bounce' to the wicket keeper, giving batsmen an extra second or to reach the crease. Spectators and village cricketers alike were amazed when, in 1948, they saw the Australian tourists' full-toss returns fly straight on to the tops of the stumps!

During the VE-Day celebrations the Loose air raid siren sounded the 'all clear' for the last time but it remained in place in Mortimer's yard for many years. It was dismantled in 1993 and the Loose Area History Society then arranged for it to be included in an exhibition at Loose School. In 1999 it was donated to the Kent Battle of Britain Museum at Hawkinge, where it is exhibited alongside two replica VIs, one of which was built for the 1965 film Operation Crossbow.



'In the early years the Germans used a lot of incendiary bombs. They did not always explode and were dropped in huge quantities. After attending an incident my father would bring home shrapnel for me as souvenirs. One morning as I came down for breakfast I was greeted with, 'Don't touch those three objects there'.

They were unexploded incendiary bombs so I had breakfast with one wary eye on them standing side by side on the mantelpiece.

'Dad worked part-time for Taffy Jones in his garage at Bockingford and one day got into a debate about the level of protection afforded by his ARP steel helmet. Taffy was quite dismissive. To settle the argument they hung the helmet on the wall



Father was in the Royal Navy, mother joined the Fire Service, son became a Loose Swiss Scout



In the summer of 1944 Dorothy ('Dolly') Smith (née Fullman) of 7 Busbridge Road was a telephone operator at the local

Ken went to Loose School and Maidstone Grammar School, and belonged to All Saints' Church Choir and Loose Swiss Scouts.

'Before the war my Mom worked for a while at Tomkin's Shop, on the corner of Busbridge Road and Well Street', said Ken. 'When I visited Loose last year I saw a new building there, with a dentist's sign on it.

'Dad was a career sailor from 1917 until 1946 - a SPO (Stoker Petty Officer). Our neighbour Charlie Knight of No 9 Busbridge Road served with him. I was pals with his sons John and Brian; they had an elder brother, "Bunny", who joined the Navy during the war.

'In the early 1930s Dad served on HMS Kent on a China Cruise and subsequently was on HMS Pembroke, HMS



National Fire Service HQ at The Godlands, having been an ARP warden earlier in the war; her husband Frank was serving in the Royal Navy; and their son Ken had recently returned home after being evacuated to Cardiff during the so-called 'Baby Blitz' on Kent that began in January that year.



Mansfield (a minesweeper) and several others. He was torpedoed twice - first on an Atlantic Convoy, after which he was hospitalized briefly in Newfoundland; and secondly on the Murmansk run, and hospitalized in Cheshire! He was then "home ported" at Chatham.

'I picked up these tidbits while drinking Vimto and eating Smith's crisps in the kids' area at the Chequers, while dad and his mates were drinking inside. After being "demobbed" he worked as a maintenance engineer at Hayle Mill.



Top of page: 'Dolly' and Frank Smith. Centre, far left: Flying Officer John Mansfield of Old Millhouse, Salts Lane, a wartime friend of Ken Smith who was killed in Aden in 1957 when his Meteor fighter caught fire and he had to eject at low level. Centre of page: Ken at his wartime home in Busbridge Road in September 2013. Above: 'Dolly' and Ken in 1944. Left: Loose Swiss Scouts in 1943. Ken is the only boy in the group not in uniform. He won his First Class Scout badge and became patrol leader of the Kestrels.

Local hero 'Basher' Bain and his D-Day 'Swimming Tanks'

An unsung local hero was in charge of a Top Secret operation with the 79th Armoured Division in 1944 (writes **Stuart Burgess**).

Douglas Archibald Bain (33) was the second son of Emily and Kenneth Bain, who lived at The Ramblers, 516 Loose Road, where Emily ran a private school. Douglas was the chief instructor for the crews who operated the amphibious Duplex Drive ('DD') 'Swimming Tanks' that made their debut on D-Day. These were conventional 30-ton Sherman tanks made buoyant by collapsible canvas screens and rear propellers. They were required to float to the Normandy beaches and provide armoured support to the first wave of Infantry.

Educated in Maidstone and at Exeter College, Oxford, Douglas joined the 9th Hampshire Regiment and married Stanella Audrey Milner in Bromley in 1938.

In 1943 he led the instructional wing of two schools that trained men to operate DD tanks. He was in charge of 129 men and arranged the training for five UK tank regiments, two Canadian regiments and two US tank battalions. Training began in June 1943 and the crews undertook two weeks of freshwater training which included waterproofing the tanks' hulls, escaping from submerged tanks, and perfecting launching and landing techniques.

Then came a course on which the crews launched their tanks into the Solent and landed on Osborne Beach on the Isle of Wight.

Douglas had to ensure that secrecy was maintained, troops and instructors were disciplined and orderly, and strict deadlines were met. Nicknamed "Basher", he was awarded the OBE by King George VI for his levels of thoroughness, commitment and achievement with this previously untried and unique equipment.



He led the training of more than 1,200 men before June 1944 and another 450 men after D-Day in preparation for crossing the Rhine. Out of 240 DD tanks involved in the Normandy landings, 125 were launched into the rough seas and 60 per cent made it to the shore after swimming up to 6,000 yards.

Losses of life among the infantry may have been considerably higher had it not been for the role these tanks played on D-Day and the crossings of the Seine, Rhine and Po rivers.

After the war Douglas became Commanding Officer for trials and experiments with amphibious tanks at the Specialised Armour Development Establishment (SADE). In 1963 he emigrated to Victoria, Australia, with his wife and daughter Alys (22) and died three years later.

Douglas was one of thousands of brave heroes of World War Two. He was fundamental to the successes leading up to D-Day

and his courage should be remembered. To quote directly from his OBE citation: 'Bain has displayed soldier-like qualities and leadership in danger comparable with gallantry on active service'.

[The 'DDs' were known to soldiers as 'Donald Ducks;! - Ed]

■ **Stuart Burgess is Visitor Services Assistant with Norfolk Museums Service and former manager of Fritton Lake Country Park. He is currently writing a book on DD tanks.**

Top of page: Douglas Bain (front row, centre) with fellow officers of the 9th Hampshire Regiment at their DD Tank training establishment at Fritton in 1944. Above: launching a DD Tank from a landing craft in the Solent during preparations for D-Day. Below: a DD Tank with its collapsible screens in place ready for launching and retracted ready for combat.



With thanks to Pat Tritton, Alice Millea (Exeter College Archives), David Cross, Bovington Tank Museum and Somerleyton Estate. For further information about DD Tanks visit http://www.somerleyton.co.uk/downloads/FrittonLake_DuplexDriveAmphibiousTanks.pdf

Peace at last - and life gets back to normal

The war finally ended on August 15 1945 ('VJ-Day'), after the surrender of Japan. It took some time for everyday life, which had been so rudely interrupted by Hitler in 1939, to return to normal but eventually our area's trades and businesses recovered.

One of them, printing firm Alabaster Passmore of Tovil, had been unable to celebrate its centenary in 1944 but finally did so in 1948. As our picture below shows, the event was well-attended and no doubt a good time was had by all.

The early years of the war had been difficult for the company, with many commercial printing contracts being cancelled, but output was maintained largely due to orders for government publications such as those pictured here and for thousands of copies of the historic Beveridge Report, which in 1942 laid the foundations of today's Welfare State.

The printers also found time to publish their own light-hearted staff newspaper, Hard Case News, containing many amusing photographs such as the one above right, (showing the works' ARP warden attempting to start an 'old jalopy'). (Pictures contributed by Michael Passmore)



The dried berries should be crushed in a fine grinder with a rolling pin and stored in a dark place in air-tight bottles.

SLICE AND CARROT CHEESE
2 lbs. of slices, 2 lbs. of sugar, 2 lbs. of carrots, 2 pint of water

Cut the carrots into small pieces, put them into a preserving pan with the slices and the water and cook very slowly over a low flame. When the carrots are tender and the slices quite soft, rub all through a sieve. Put the puree back into the pan with the sugar. Leave for about eleven hours while the sugar dissolves, then boil up and allow to boil briskly for 20 minutes. Stir all the time as this preserve is a "boomer". Put and seal in jars.

SLICE AND MARROW CHEESE
2 lbs. slices, 2 lbs. of marrow, 2 lbs. of sugar

Peel and wash the marrow. Cut it into small pieces. Cover with the sugar in a bowl or on a large dish.

Put the slices into the preserving pan with sufficient water to moist the slices, and cook over a slow flame until the slices are quite tender. Have done, put the puree back into the pan, and stir marrow and syrup. Bring to the boil and boil briskly for 20 minutes. Put and seal immediately. If possible crush some of the marrow and add to the preserve before boiling, to keep it a juicy berry.

These slices always have a slightly waterlog flavour, but in cold-weather when fruit is only a memory they will be appreciated.

BERRY NETS

The layers of cloth with aprinidised with salt and bleach will give you a good substitute for rubber sheets. Call your car to be washed by the same way.

Printed by
Alabaster Passmore, 101
101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113, 115, 117, 119, 121, 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157, 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171, 173, 175, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, 203, 205, 207, 209, 211, 213, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239, 241, 243, 245, 247, 249, 251, 253, 255, 257, 259, 261, 263, 265, 267, 269, 271, 273, 275, 277, 279, 281, 283, 285, 287, 289, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 303, 305, 307, 309, 311, 313, 315, 317, 319, 321, 323, 325, 327, 329, 331, 333, 335, 337, 339, 341, 343, 345, 347, 349, 351, 353, 355, 357, 359, 361, 363, 365, 367, 369, 371, 373, 375, 377, 379, 381, 383, 385, 387, 389, 391, 393, 395, 397, 399, 401, 403, 405, 407, 409, 411, 413, 415, 417, 419, 421, 423, 425, 427, 429, 431, 433, 435, 437, 439, 441, 443, 445, 447, 449, 451, 453, 455, 457, 459, 461, 463, 465, 467, 469, 471, 473, 475, 477, 479, 481, 483, 485, 487, 489, 491, 493, 495, 497, 499, 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Papermaker's war wasn't over until 1946

John Webb looks back to events in his family in 1944, 1945 and 1946, and to his father Ernest's war service in the RAF Police, which took him nearly 4,000 miles away from his home in Bockingford.

In December 1944, soon after my sister, Margaret, was born, Ernest came home to Bockingford on 10 days' leave, before being posted overseas. He embarked from Glasgow on January 2 1945, arrived in Egypt on January 15, and after two weeks in transit camps and two weeks at the Police School at Heliopolis he was posted to Air Headquarters Levant, in the centre of Jerusalem in what was then Palestine.

The RAF Police provided site security at the Headquarters. Before May 1945 the Jewish resistance groups had remained relatively quiet but they saw victory in Europe as the time to pursue their aim of a separate state of Israel. This led to increased acts of terrorism. Britain had to divert large numbers of troops from the UK and Europe. For my father this meant a high state of alert at all times while on duty, but off duty there was no recognised threat; in their billet they were served by Jews and Arabs and were friends with both.

At home VE Day and VJ Day had come and gone but for us the overriding feeling was, 'when is Dad coming home?' During the war he had been based at RAF Biggin Hill and had been able to come home every eight days for 48 hours. Amazingly, our dog Gyp quickly worked out this routine and always went down the road at Bockingford to meet him.

But Gyp did not survive the winter of 1944/5. He had continued to go down the road to meet Dad and could not understand



why he did not come home, so he just pined away.

Demobilisation ('demob') was a well-structured affair. Generally it was 'first in, first out', but certain professions, skilled tradesmen and married personnel were given priority. My father had been called up in late 1941, was married, and had a job with J Barcham Green Ltd at Hayle Mill to come back to, but this did not carry any weight.

Dad made the most of his time in Jerusalem. He visited all the sacred sites, swam in the Dead Sea and enjoyed a week's leave in Tel Aviv. One day in 1945 he received a parcel from a group of women in Washington DC. They were sending food, sweets, socks and gloves to servicemen in the Middle East. Mrs Issac C Collins of Haddenfield, New Jersey, enclosed her name and address. Dad wrote and thanked her; this led to a continued correspondence and

in due course Mrs Collins also wrote to me. I sent her a copy of the 'Where the Doodlebugs Crashed in Kent' map, published by the Kent Messenger, and this was reproduced in her local paper.

Mrs Collins wrote to us for many years, sending us a cake at Christmas and sending me the National Geographic magazine.

In late March 1946 my father was called into his CO's office and asked to consider staying in Palestine until 1947, in return for promotion to Sergeant. He politely refused, saying his 'demob' was due and that he looking forward to getting back to 'Civvy Street' (ordinary life away from the armed forces). As he left the CO's office the Orderly Room Corporal called out, 'Webby - you're on the boat'.

He left Jerusalem on April 2 1946, spent a week in transit in Egypt, and on April 8 1946 embarked on a troopship at Port Said bound for Marseilles. He arrived there on April 13, travelled the length of France to Dieppe by train, crossed to Newhaven, and was demobbed from RAF Hednesford, Staffordshire, on April 19, 1946, arriving home the same day.

I still have the telegram he sent us from Newhaven: HOME SAFELY - DAD

He had promised me a new bike when he came home. I was all set to go shopping for it the next day, but he said he needed to get his breath back. I got the bike eventually. I gave him no peace until I did. My father was glad to be home and we were very pleased to see him. I do not think he regarded his war experience as time wasted; in fact like most of his generation he would not have had such experiences had it not been for the war.

When he arrived home he opened a letter from J Barcham Green. Posted on the day he left Port Said, it asked when he hoped to return to work at Hayle Mill. For Ernest, eight months late, the war was at last over.

'Ten a penny'

Until November 1941 my father was in a reserved occupation at A E Reed & Co's papermill at Tovil, and had previously worked at Hayle Mill, but within three months of moving to Alabaster Passmore, the printers, he was called up into the RAF. He applied to become a wireless operator but the sergeant who interviewed him said, 'Nah ...



Top of page: Corporal Ernest Webb, RAF Police. Left: Ernest's telegram from Newhaven.

they're ten a penny' and, noting that he was six feet three and well built, said 'RAF Police'. That was the end of the discussion.

After his basic training and 'square bashing' he was posted to RAF Coltishall, RAF Neatishead and RAF Old Catton, north of Norwich. When Norwich suffered one of Hitler's reprisal raids Old Catton went into 'lock down' and everyone was confined to camp, causing ugly scenes which the RAF Police, who were always armed, had to contain them until dawn, when the gates were opened.

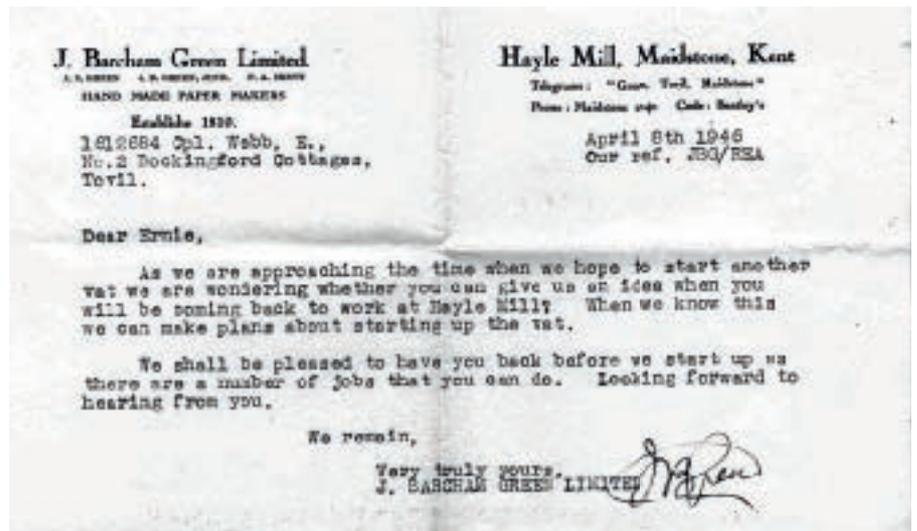
'You can't come through 'ere,' said 'Ern' to 'Winnie'

Dad then completed his training at RAF Uxbridge, was promoted to Corporal in July 1942, and posted to RAF Biggin Hill, from where he could come home regularly on 48-hour passes. The main road running through the station was closed to normal traffic and the RAF Police checked passes at a guardroom at each end. While working a late shift my father stopped an approaching car and said, 'You can't come through here mate, you need a pass'.

The car's chauffeur showed a wallet containing at least twenty passes. 'Will one of these do?', he asked. When he returned to the guardroom his colleagues told him, 'That was Churchill's car. You'll know it next time, won't you?'

Although the Battle of Britain was long over, Biggin Hill was still experiencing low level, hit and run raids and the station's perimeter defences were augmented with Twin Browning machine guns.

Dad was trained how to operate them during a course at RAF Langham but soon after returning to Biggin Hill he was detached to an Operations Centre at Towerfields (known as 'The Rookery'), Keston Mark, two miles from RAF Keston.



Dad was still billeted at Biggin Hill so we still saw him regularly.

A few days before D-Day he 'rode shotgun' with a senior officer from 'The Rookery' who toured all the RAF stations in

the south-east, handing them their sealed orders.

At the end of June 1944, during the VI raids, Biggin Hill was closed down and barrage balloon crews took over. Many flying bombs fell on the station, one exploding on a Nissen hut and killing three men. From September 1944 RAF staff returned to Biggin Hill.

The station became operational again in early 1945 but by then Dad was on his way to Egypt.



Top of page: Ernest's wife Mollie with their son John and three-month-old daughter Margaret in 1945. Above: the letter Ernest received when he arrived home, offering him a job at Hayle Mill. Left: the Webb family in the 1960s, left to right: John, Ernest, Margaret, John's wife Heather, and Mollie.

Your Views

Pictures and comments contributed by our readers

Those remarkable Barkers

David Barker, a grandson of Levi and Harriet, commented on our article in Loose Threads 13: 'My father, Henry Levi Barker, was born at Spring Head, Salts Lane, in 1923. He left Maidstone Grammar School in 1940, joined the RAF, and after training in America and Canada he returned to England as a member of a Stirling Bomber crew.

'He completed a tour of 33 operations and was awarded the DFC. Sadly he died in 2008 at the age of 85 in his plane, a Piper Arrow 300, in which he was the pilot on a solo flight'.

We would like to correct an error in the caption to the picture at the top of page 24 of Loose Threads 13. 'Isabella Barker does not feature in the picture', writes Robin Gould. 'The lady in the basket chair next to Joseph is my grandmother, Isabel. Judging by the possible age of the small child in the picture I would guess it was taken in about 1922 - 1924. Isabella died in 1922. For the record the people in the photo are, from the left, front row: Hannah (Joseph's daughter), Joseph Barker, Isabel (Joseph's daughter), Margaret Dickenson (Hannah's daughter) and Alice (Joseph's daughter); back row: Alfred (Joseph's son), Eileen Gould (Isabel's daughter), John (Joseph's son), Annie (Joseph's daughter) and Janet Gould (Isabel's daughter).

The car that Taffy built

John Webb commented on Tom Sankey's doubts in Loose Threads 13 (page 44) about the performance of the car that Taffy Jones built at Bockingford. 'The car, a Shelsley Special, was the brainchild of John and Richard Bolster and was first built in 1929', said John. 'It started life with a 12 hp Jap V Twin Motorcycle engine but within a few years of continuous development it was producing over 100bhp and winning classes at Shelsley Walsh, Presscott and other Hill Climb venues.

'John Bolster named the car Bloody Mary, to taunt race commentators who would struggle to describe this unique vehicle. The story of Bloody Mary, including the involvement of Taffy Jones, is covered in Bolster's book *Motoring is my Business*, published in 1958.

'The Bolster brothers first met Taffy prior to the 1935 season and Taffy put himself and his small machine shop at Bockingford at their disposal. In his book John Bolster lists the work done and says that on its next appearance one would not have known that it was the same car, such was the gain in performance. He credits Taffy with a large part of this improvement. 'Numerous sprint and hill climb successes followed, including a ten-lap race at Donnington. The four-engined car featured in my article on pages 39/40 of Loose Threads 13 was a new car, built at Bockingford for the 1938 season'.

A Coxheath corner

Ron Kemp contributed the pictures at the top of the page, showing the corner of Heath Road and Stockett Lane, Coxheath, as it was many years ago, reminding us of 'how things were' before the construction this year of a new Londis store on the site of the Bird in Hand pub and J A Dadswell's grocery shop.

'We were part of their family'

Ken Smith sent us this picture of the Thorne family, friends and neighbours of Ken and his parents when they all lived in Busbridge Road in the 1940s. In 2013 Ken, who lives in Honolulu, met Peter Thorne (far



right) for the first time for many years while on holiday in England. Also in the picture are, from the left, brothers Geoffrey and Alan and parents Nora and George.

'Peter and Alan worked in Bockingford', said Ken. 'The family were motor cycle enthusiasts, but definitely NOT "Hell's Angels", riding them for transportation and fun with a sidecar on the dad's bike. That was a big step up from pedal cycling in those days.

'The Thorne's home at Number 10 was the centre of the Busbridge Road kids' world because the Thornes were always working on several motor bikes in various states of repair.

'Mrs Thorne was like a surrogate mother to me and others. The Thornes welcomed us and made us feel part of their family. George was a skilled craftsman but had poor health, so didn't serve in the military, but worked away somewhere and usually came home at weekends, then worked in his shed.

'He was very friendly and always had a smile and chatted with us kids as he worked.

'Alan and Peter served as Army dispatch riders for their National Service. I went into the RAF. The Thornes moved to Edmonton, North London, in 1949 and later Geoffrey emigrated to New Zealand. Peter was my Best Man when I married and has been my lifelong, though mostly absent, friend, since I emigrated to America.

'I enjoyed meeting up with him and his wife Joyce in Cambridge'.



colleagues. The three children (does anyone know their names?) are collecting water flowing from Salts Pond, the main sources of the Loose Stream that provided most of the water that powered the valley's many watermills. The picture was taken from the footpath that runs from Salts Lane to Boughton Quarries. The picture of the shops at Loose Green shows the Post Office in the centre of the row, next door to its present premises, during a visit from the village 'Bobby', seen standing in the doorway. Two dogs are in evidence and no doubt were usually 'hanging around' hoping for a juicy bone or two from the butcher's shop. Note the window displays and the enamelled advertisements on the walls!

Flowers and prayers

Among **Sue Black's** souvenirs of past events in Boughton Monchelsea is the picture below of a Rose Festival service at St Peter's Church in the 1950s. The service is held annually in the churchyard at the end of June or at the beginning of July (this year it was on June 29) and its guest preachers have included archbishops, archdeacons, retired clergy and previous vicars (among them Bob Coates from Loose).



The charming pictures above, taken in Loose about 100 years ago, are from the Kent Archaeological Society's collection of hundreds of glass plate negatives that, despite being exposed to

heat, smoke and water, survived a fire in a room next door to the society's library at Maidstone Museum in 1977. The negatives are currently being conserved and catalogued by volunteer Ann Pinder and

Grave footnote

Moira Pounder wrote to tell us about a stone slab, inscribed 'A.S. 1808', that was unearthed when the original driveway at her 1939 house at 457 Loose Road was rebuilt. 'We are all enchanted with it, but very intrigued', said Moira. 'It was face down and I wondered if it was a marker of some sort'.

Our assessment is that it is a footstone from a local graveyard that was closed in the 1930s and 'improved' by having its gravestones removed to create a more manageable greensward.

In such cases, headstones with full memorial inscriptions were often placed against the churchyard wall and footstones, bearing only the initials of the deceased and a date, were removed by builders and used when surfacing paths and drives.

So RIP, 'A.S', whoever you are. Your memorial is now a feature of Moira's garden.



Ink in their blood – Tovil’s ‘printing Passmores’



As recently as 20 years ago Tovil, at the confluence of the Loose stream and the River Medway, was one of Maidstone’s busiest industrial areas but now it is mainly residential and retail, with a rural fringe.

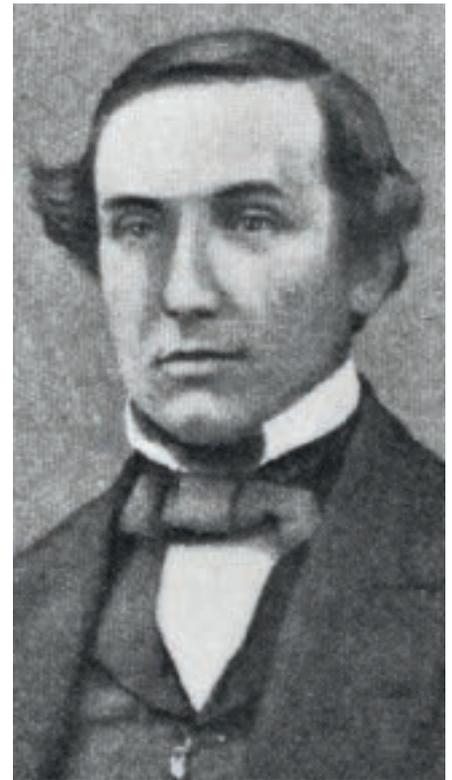
Tovil was where, from 1894, Albert E Reed developed and expanded his papermaking empire. His factory closed in 1996. The site was redeveloped for housing but street names like Bridge Mill Way remind us that ‘Reed’s’ sprawled all the way from Farleigh Hill to the Medway.

The other major industry was printing, with Alabaster Passmore & Sons Ltd, nationally renowned fine colour printers, occupying 4.5 acres of land between the east side of Farleigh Hill and the face of a disused ragstone quarry.

The redevelopment of the AP&S site completed the de-industrialisation of Tovil. Passmore Way, the name given in 2005 to the road into the residential estate that stands there now, reminds us of the site’s former owners, but nothing remains to evoke its former use. For a time the estate was called The Printing Works but that name now seems to have been dropped.

The Alabaster Passmore story began in 1844 when Joseph Passmore set up his own business in Southwark, after completing a nine year apprenticeship in the printing trade. Joseph was a close friend of Dr Charles Spurgeon, a charismatic pastor at New Park Street Baptist Chapel, and in 1855 Joseph began printing and publishing Spurgeon’s sermons in a weekly publication called The New Park Street Pulpit.

‘Penny sermons’ were in great demand during the Victorian religious revival and Spurgeon’s became so popular that



Joseph had to ask a friend, James Alabaster, to help him run his publishing department. Alabaster the publisher and Passmore the printer linked their names into what became a formidable partnership.

When Joseph died in 1895, having outlived Spurgeon by three years, his three sons - Joseph jnr, James and Alfred - carried on the business with James Alabaster. And what a business it was! The firm sold one hundred million penny sermons during Spurgeon’s lifetime and 400,000 copies of one of his books alone, John Ploughman’s Talk. In 1899, 20,000 of Spurgeon’s books and sermons were sold every week. One religious society ordered one million volumes of his sermons; another 500,000 volumes were exported to the USA. Spurgeon’s books were outselling the bible!

Fortunately the Passmore brothers did not let this phenomenal success and resultant prosperity distract them from other opportunities. They diversified into, among other things, printing high quality mail order fashion catalogues for Liberty & Co. and other posh shops.

They rapidly outgrew their original works and over a period of nearly 50 years



Main picture: Dr Charles Spurgeon (second left), on whose published sermons the prosperity of Alabaster Passmore was founded, with members of the Passmore family, including Joseph (fifth from left) and his wife Ellen Emma, in December 1889. Top of page: The firm’s founders, James Alabaster (right) and Joseph Passmore.

moved time and again to ever larger premises. By the turn of the century their factory, offices and showrooms occupied an entire eight-storey building in Whitecross Street, in the City of London. When they outgrew these premises they decided to open a printing works 'in the country', where rents and transport costs would be cheaper. The move became possible in 1907 when Albert E Reed, a friend of Alfred Passmore, sold him a plot of land alongside his papermill at Tovil for £300 (about £31,000 in today's money).

Reed probably hoped the Passmores would buy paper from him for their mail order catalogues and other 'long run' publications, but that was



not to be. The catalogues contained hundreds of pages, and hundreds of thousands of copies of every edition were printed. Each copy off the press had to weigh exactly the same as the previous one, otherwise they would all have to be weighed individually to ensure they carried the correct postage. However, the weight of Reed's printing paper varied from batch to batch, so supplies had to be bought from other manufacturers. A 'coals to Newcastle' situation developed, in which paper was transported from faraway mills to a printing works opposite a papermill!

In 1910 the publishing division was sold and from then on the firm concentrated solely on contract printing, using letterpress and stone litho machines. In 1911 it became a limited private company. Its directors were James and Alfred Passmore; James's sons Wilfred and Arthur; and Fredrick Elstone and Harry Algar. Alabaster was a shareholder but not a director.

The First World War brought hard times. Annual profits slumped by £10,000;

Top of page: An advertisement published soon after the company opened its 'country works' at Farleigh Hill. Above left: The 'country works' in the 1960s. Above right: The site after redevelopment in 2006. Right: Printing machine minders c. 1930. Left to right, back row: C English, H Austin, F Cochrane, F Davis, F Jefferey, J Woodward, ?, Bob Love, ? Front row: F Peacock, I Faircloth, J Coates, G Bromley, T Mason, T Saxby.



Arthur Passmore was killed in action while serving in the Army; hopes of obtaining Government printing contracts were not realized; and a Russian customer failed to pay for a considerable amount of work. After the war prospects improved, Alfred Passmore's son, Brian, joined the business, and Alabaster sold his shares in the company - though his splendid surname was retained in its title.

Presses moved to Tovil

Production of some litho and letterpress publications continued in London until the early 1920s, when the Whitecross Street property was sold and the head office moved to Cannon Street. Then, litho printing was discontinued and all letterpress work was transferred to Tovil, where the original single-storey premises had grown to 28,000 square feet. Several more extensions were built during the next 60 years. Always self-sufficient, the firm had Monotype and Linotype typesetting machines; huge presses in vast machine rooms; bindery departments, and warehouses.

Tovil was usually working flat-out, producing millions of mail order catalogues for Liberty's, Selfridges, Dickens & Jones, the 'Army and Navy', Swan and Edgar, D H Evans

and Kays. Cigarette cards, calendars, chocolate box lids ... these and many other items rolled incessantly off the Passmore presses.

In about 1936 the firm embarked on an unusual venture with the artist and writer Donald Maxwell, who lived at East Farleigh. Together they published Maxwell's series of County Prints, comprising 54 tinted pen and ink sketches. These became very popular and are now highly collectable. The Southern Railway became a good customer and displayed the prints in its carriages and under the glass tabletops on its Isle of Wight ferries.

Another joint venture was Maxwell's The New Domesday of Kent, a



pictorial and topographical survey of the county, with a separate sheet for each village or town. Maxwell also wanted to publish a set of William Turner sketches on blue grey hand-made paper matching that used by Turner himself. After much trial and error, Maxwell and AP&S developed a suitable paper, perhaps with the assistance of Hayle Mill, hand-made paper specialists. However, Maxwell died before this project and The New Domesday of Kent could be completed.

AP&S weathered the Depression despite a drop in profits and when the Second World War broke out had nearly 400 employees. With Wilfred's sons, Roy, and Dennis, now on board, three generations of the family were working for the firm, but Dennis and Brian were called up in September 1939. Within a year the war had





caused such a reduction in orders that Alfred and Wilfred, the joint managing directors, decided not to draw their salaries. Emergency Government contracts, transferred from London printers whose premises had been bombed, saved the day. In 1942 the historic Beveridge Report was printed in Tovil.

After the war the works and the company went through many changes. Wilfred Passmore died, Alfred retired, Roy and Dennis became joint managing directors and Brian was elected chairman. The mail order catalogue trade declined but the slack was soon taken up by contracts won from advertising agencies and house journal publishers.

In the 1950s the factory was extended, to cover 42,000 square feet;



houses were bought for key workers; and a sports field was opened in Aylesford. When most of the workforce reluctantly joined a national strike for a shorter working week and higher wages, the directors and their wives, together with the apprentices, worked together on the shop floor to complete urgent orders.

New processes were quickly adopted, an example being offset litho. By the early 1960s this was proving to be a faster and cheaper way of producing high quality colour work, so an extension for litho presses and associated photographic and platemaking equipment was built. In



1972 the company was running six sheet-fed offset litho presses for catalogues, leaflets and brochures and had installed the first of many web offset machines. Between 1970 and 1980 nearly every machine in the works was replaced.

House journal printing led to contracts with publishers of more than 40 trade, leisure and professional magazines, including *What Car?*, *Anglers' Mail*, *Practical Caravan*, *The Grocer* and *The Lancet*.

Dennis Passmore died in 1970 and was succeeded as managing director by Brian's son, Michael. He and Roy, who had been chairman since 1966, were the fourth generation of the 'printing Passmores'. The fifth, and last, generation consisted of Michael's sons Stephen and Christopher; Roy's son, Nigel; and Dennis's sons, Tony and Colin.

More jobs were created at Tovil in 1973, when most head office functions - estimating, paper-buying, invoicing and accounts - were transferred from London. The new office block needed for these departments just about filled the Tovil site, leaving no room to expand production. This problem was solved in 1982 by taking-over Ambassador Press, a company with two web offset presses in Radlett. AP&S and Ambassador then traded as autonomous but wholly owned subsidiaries of a new holding company, The Passmore Print Group, with Michael Passmore as chairman.

In 1983, nearly 80 years after AP&S bought their site from Albert E Reed, they were able to buy another plot from Reed's, close to the mills' two chimneys.

Into receivership

Michael Passmore retired in 1989, after 40 years with the company, during which he had been largely responsible for introducing sheet-fed offset and web offset litho printing processes. He was succeeded by Tony Passmore.

In 1993 diversification plans, together with the purchase of additional capacity, overstretched AP&S's resources and the company went into receivership. Its assets were sold to Duncan Web Offset, who soon afterwards moved to Park Wood. The site was then sold for residential development.

That, though, was not quite the end of the story of the printing Passmores. Until recently, at his home two miles from Tovil, Michael operated one of the last working Monotype printing processes in the country; it is now used by a craft printer in Faversham.

Top of page: A busy day in the Bindery in 1931, and a group of the department's staff. Far left: The firm's first Monotype caster, installed at Tovil c. 1910. Left: Michael Passmore in retirement, operating his Monotype caster at home.

Snapshots from Alabaster Passmore's history



Children's entertainer Richard Hearne ('Mr Pastry'), who lived near Tovil, starting up a new Roland VII press in 1967.



An undated picture of building workers on the firm's site, taken soon after one of Reed papermill's two chimneys had been demolished.



Frank Peacock, letterpress manager (fourth left, front row) with machine room employees in the 1950s.



The 'printing Passmores' and their co-directors in 1983. From the left: Tony, Michael, Tony Herridge, Roy, Nigel, Colin and Arthur Overall.



Tovil Works and Head Office cricket teams at one of their annual cricket matches in Maidstone in the 1950s

Memories of the Barkers, Harnetts and life in Loose before and after the war

In Loose Threads 13 we told the story of the 'remarkable' Barker brothers. Here, **Ann Luckhurst**, one of Levi's granddaughters, remembers her family.

My father was John Barker, youngest son of Levi, and my mother was Dora Harnett. They had three boys and two girls. Sadly my brothers have died. When they went to Sankey's farm [in Bockingford] to play with Tom and Alan, mother would say "take Ann!" Oh, how they hated that! There they tried to teach me to smoke and make smoke come down my nose, and tried to make me eat pig food!

I remember Molly Pankhurst working in the dairy – she was always smiling – and Harold who delivered the milk, pushing a lovely cart with a long-handled milk measure to ladle out the milk. When his round was finished he would lean on the cart and free-wheel down Cripple Street. How I envied him.

At a Men of Kent and Kentish Men Dinner I was seated next to a Liberal councillor who told me that they were told to look, as a warning, at the certificate kept at the Town Hall and given to my grandfather when he was arrested for bribing the public. I was also told that Lord Cornwallis organized a procession, plus band, to lead Levi through the town afterwards, and that pictures were in the Gazette.

I started school in a hut opposite the turning to All Saints' Church. It was such a trek each day for my mother that, during the week, I stayed with the Mansfields as they had a son my age and lived by the school.

I was in Mrs Parker's class at Loose School with Denis Gay and Billy Esland during the war. When the sirens went we had to go to the shelters, which were underground in front of the



school. At break time they gave us mugs of soup down there. Our house had black tape criss-crossed over the panes, so that if the blast from a bomb broke them we would not be cut by falling glass. There were many incendiary bombs dropped around us. One fell by our front door.

I later went to Maidstone Girls' Grammar

School with Hilary Wilson, whose father was town clerk, and also with Valerie Gould, Len's daughter. My mother joined up in the First World War with her cousin Rita White (their mothers had been daughters of Doctor Furber, a Maidstone GP). Mother gave her age as 18 instead of 17.

They were straight-away sent to France. The

crossing was very rough and they were very sea sick. They were at a place near Ypres. Rita drove ambulances and mother drove an officer. I have her medals.

After the war they returned and opened a café in Bexhill called the Dorita Tea Rooms. Rita married Freddie Sowery.

In the Second World War my mother would join the neighbours round a piano to sing the war songs. On washing day the neighbours said they could all hear her (she had a very powerful voice) as she pinned-out the washing - no washing machines then! I could write a book about my mother's exploits! Her brother Frank married Mabel Butcher (she had a brother Arthur) and her parents farmed at Linton.

Both my grandfathers were hop farmers but when wilt hit the hop farms they had big losses. Grandpa Barker sold the farm and retired. Grandpa Harnett started Harnett's Nursery at Bearsted and won gold medals for his roses at the County Show. When first married father worked on the nursery - he had always planned to return to Canada where he had worked before meeting mother.

My father grew prize sweet peas in Shernold greenhouse. When grandpa died my father had some allotments at the top of Loose Hill and grew many vegetables, plus prize winning sweet peas, chrysanthemums and dahlias. Mother had the garden at home as father liked everything in straight rows and mother liked little pathways and rockeries. We had an Anderson shelter in the garden.

■ Freddie Sowery was a First World War flying ace. In September 1916 he shot down a Zeppelin over Billericay. He received the Distinguished Service Order for this feat. He retired from the RAF with the rank of Group Captain in 1940.

Above: Ann's mother, Dora Barker (nee Harnett), pictured near Ypres while serving as a driver in the First World War.

35 years of 'best foot forward' from Loose



On the Loose Boundary Walk, 1980.



Above left: leading ladies at Bodiam in 1992. Above right: assembling at The Chequers for the 35th anniversary walk. Below: a picnic lunch at Hawkhurst in 1992. Foot of page: en route from Askrigg to Hawes in October 2000.



At Cobberly, Gloucestershire, 1991.



On a 'Breakaway' trip to Dovedale, 1996.



At Ulcombe, 1999



In Linton Park during the 21st anniversary walk. Below: at The Shant, East Sutton, during a Christmas walk in 2001.



Loose Footpaths Group celebrated its 35th anniversary in April 2014 by retracing the steps that its founder members, led by Roger Thornburgh, took on April 1 1979, when they walked 9¼ miles from Loose to Langley and back.

Over the years members have enjoyed rambles in Kent and beyond; helped to maintain footpaths; had 'Weekends Away' and 3-5 day breaks at hotels and guests houses; arranged barn dances; wined and dined; and enjoyed themselves in many other ways.

The group has its own newsletter, appropriately titled Footloose, and has now published a history of its first 35 years on its website, <https://sites.google.com/site/loosefootpathsgroup>, on which can also be found a programme of forthcoming walks. New members are always made very welcome.

One wealthy widow, six hundred working men

The long, high brick and ragstone wall at the top of Tovil Hill conceals from the view of most passers-by the site of one of our county town's several 'lost mansions', where a woman who was widowed during the Crimean War lived in style with a retinue of servants for more than 40 years. After she died, her house was demolished to make way for Tovil Working Men's Club, which meets there to this day.

Charlotte Lavinia Mackinnon was born at Kew in 1828. Her parents were Colonel Sir Dudley St Leger Hill, who was born in Ireland, and his wife Caroline (née Hunter). Dudley came from a well-to-do family and had a distinguished military and public service career with the '50th Foot' and '95th Rifles' regiments and the 8th Portuguese Cacadores, and subsequently as Lieutenant Governor of St Lucia.

In 1847 Charlotte married Captain Daniel Roger Lionel Mackinnon of the Coldstream Guards. They lived at Marsh Farmhouse, Twickenham, and had a daughter, Ada Emma, and two sons, Lionel Dudley and Ernest George St Leger; but all hope of raising a large family and enjoying a long and happy marriage came to an end soon after Mackinnon was posted to the Crimea.

In November 1854 he was among 92 soldiers of the Coldstream Guards who were killed when 30,000 Russian soldiers overwhelmed the British forces in the Battle of Inkerman.

Charlotte was well provided for in Mackinnon's Will but had to start a new life with her three children, all under five years old. She moved to Tovil Court, overlooking the industrialised areas of the Loose and Medway valleys but standing in a secluded 16 acre estate comprising gardens, paddocks and a lake encompassed by woodland walks.

In the 1861 census Charlotte was described as a 'fund holder'. Her unmarried sister, Julia, aged 37, was staying at Tovil Court at the time the enumerator called. The family was outnumbered by Charlotte's servants in residence, consisting of George Field (butler), Susannah Field (housekeeper), Eleanor Dixon (lady's maid), Eliza Thompson



(housemaid), Hannah Chapman (kitchen maid), Robert Peale (page) and Pessita Emery, the children's Swiss governess. Curiously, no cook was living with them so perhaps cooking was part of Susannah's job; or a cook who lived off the estate was employed.

In the grounds were Lodge House, home of her gardener William (whose surname is illegible in the census return), and The Coach House, occupied by coachman James Stocker, his wife Harriet and their children Sophia, Elizabeth, Eliza and Henry.

On census day in 1871 Lionel, who was by now 20 years old, was away, probably having joined the Coldstreams, in which he would become a lieutenant colonel. Ada and Ernest were no longer scholars, so their governess had left Tovil Court. Thomas Teesdale and Susannah King had taken over as butler and housekeeper, Marshall Eagles had been appointed footman, Elsie Webber was Charlotte's personal maid, and Alice Prime and Eliza Burn were the house and kitchen maids.

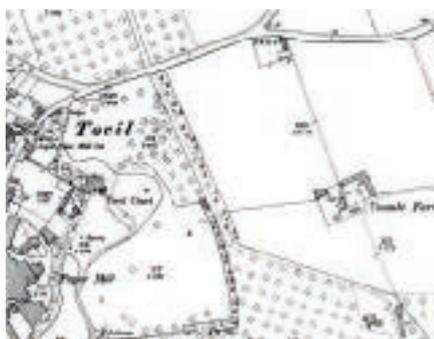
Lodge House was now the home of 'domestic gardener' Thomas Fitness, his wife Sarah, and their children Edith, Blanch and Arthur; and the Stockers were still living in The Coach House.

In May 1871 Charlotte experienced another tragedy in her life when her son Ernest died, aged only 19.

Charlotte and her children were away from home when the 1881 census was taken but the house still had its full complement of servants, though there had been a complete turnover of staff. Edward (surname illegible) was now the butler; with Eliza Gurney (housekeeper), Catherine Ondy or Ongly (housemaid), Elizabeth Saunders (kitchen maid), Thomas Holland (footman) and James May (groom).

William Beale and his family were living in The Lodge House and coachman

Top of page: Tovil Court in 1900. (Maidstone Camera Club Collection). Below: Tovil Working Men's Club, built on the site of Tovil Court. Below left: Tovil Court and neighbourhood in 1897.



James Stocker was still at The Coach House, having completed 20 or more years' service.

Lionel Mackinnon had married and was living with his wife Elizabeth at Ash, near Farnham, Surrey.

In 1891 Charlotte's spinster daughter Ada, now 42, was present on census night and had probably become a permanent resident. Charlotte's butler was either away or his situation was vacant, but there were still enough servants around to cater for her every need – Elizabeth Mary Vowles (housekeeper), Charlotte Cox (lady's maid), Thomas George Phillips (footman), Alfred Bridges (groom), Emily Henham (housemaid) and Florence Gyles (kitchenmaid).

James Stocker, now a 72-year-old widower and Charlotte's longest-serving and oldest retainer, was living at The Coach House with his unmarried daughter, Annie, a dressmaker; Lodge House had become the home of a new gardener, William Horace Martin, his wife Sarah and their children Linda, Edith and William.

The 1901 census suggests that Charlotte's wealth and her need for servants in every quarter of her house and estate had not diminished. She was registered as 'living on her own means' and had three grandchildren living with her: Lionel Neil Alexander (16), Sheila Helen (14) and Olive Mary (13). The presence of Fraulein Kepler, 'governess, born Germany, British subject' and Elizabeth Hill (schoolroom maid) suggests that the children were enjoying a long stay at Tovil Court.

Yet another turnover of servants had occurred and Emily Henham was the only one who had been on the staff ten years earlier. The house was now being run by Horace Pattenden (butler), Elizabeth Fatham (housekeeper), Lillian Haines (lady's maid), Annie Satheridge (kitchenmaid) and Thomas Hammond (footman). Alfred Browning was living in the Coach House with his wife Elizabeth and children Daisy, Florence and Arthur; and their neighbours at The Lodge were George Simmons, head gardener, his wife Susan and their children Frank and Edith.

An era in the annals of Maidstone's upper classes came to an end on December 14, 1902, when Charlotte died, aged 75. She had, we may assume, made the best of her life during her long widowhood, thanks to having so many servants to take care of her and several members of her family to keep her company at various times.

Her obituary in the Kent Messenger praised her 'benevolent disposition' and said 'there was scarcely any good work carried on in the neighbourhood which did not benefit by her generosity. This was especially so with the parochial agencies



at Tovil, the extension of the infants' school being a case in point. To the widows of the poor of the parish she was a great benefactor, especially at Christmas'.

Charlotte's funeral service was held at St Stephen's Church, Tovil, followed by interment at Maidstone Borough Cemetery. If the list of mourners published in the Kent Messenger is accurate her daughter Ada, who was living at Tovil Court in 1902, was not present, though many relatives and friends, as well as the servants from Tovil Court, were there.

The lost memorial

Charlotte's estate had a gross value of £24,174, equivalent to about £2.5 million in today's money. Her son, Lt. Col (Retd) Lionel Dudley Mackinnon and Ada were the main beneficiaries but Ada died in London in 1905 and Lionel was killed in action in the Great War in November 1915.

In 1914 a tablet in memory of Charlotte was erected in St Stephen's Church. The church became redundant and

was demolished in 1987. It seems no one knows what became of the tablet and therefore a vital link with Tovil's past has been lost forever.

Sometime after 1902 the grounds of Tovil Court became Maidstone's Zoological Gardens, with 250 specimens of lions, leopards, bears, hyenas and other animals; enclosures of reptiles; and collections of feathered species such as parrots, pheasants and ostriches. This was the forerunner of the Zoo Park at Cobtree Manor, established by Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake, 12 times Mayor of Maidstone, who began collecting animals in 1900 and eventually created the largest privately owned zoo in Britain.

In 1916 Tovil Court and its estate were bought by Albert Edwin Reed, who had founded his papermaking empire at nearby Tovil mills in 1894. Most of his employees belonged to Tovil Working Men's Club, which opened in Church Street in 1888. About 500 men from Reed's mills in Tovil and elsewhere in Kent fought in the First World War and 59 of them lost their lives.

To commemorate their sacrifice, Reed built a new HQ for the club, the Tovil Memorial Institute, on the site of Tovil Court, at a cost of £5,000.

Reed died 11 months before work was completed. The building was opened on December 18, 1920. Commander Bellairs, MP for Maidstone, handed the keys over to the club's chairman, W E Langley; its president, Herbert Green, signed the lease, and for the next 63 years the club rented the premises from Albert E. Reed & Co., initially for £5 a year. A memorial plaque to Reed millworkers who died in the Great War was unveiled in the entrance hall, where it can still be seen together with Tovil's war memorial, fortunately salvaged from St Stephen's Church.

We are told that 'certain rooms were provided for the accommodation of a women's club, with a separate entrance'. There was also a youth club, a public recreation ground and a children's play area.

A decline in employment in Tovil developed in the 1980s, threatening the club's future. In 1983 Reed & Co. closed its mills at Tovil and sold the Memorial Institute to the club. For two years it struggled to survive independently but it pulled through and is now well-supported, with 900 members (640 men, 260 women) enjoying a variety of activities.

Tovil Bowls Club, Tovil Petanque and the Maidstone Masonic Centre are also located on the site of Tovil Court, so there's a lot going on behind that high wall.



Top of page: Albert Reed. Left: 1936 guide to the Zoo Park at Cobtree Manor. (Sue Black Collection)

Hayle Mill in the 19th and 20th centuries

Dr Maureen Barcham Green concludes her history of one of the Loose Valley's most important paper mills. For previous instalments see Loose Threads 12 and Loose Threads 13.

In the autumn of 1838, Samuel Green found himself in the unenviable position of having to find sufficient funds to pay off his brother's remaining creditors as well as undertaking sole responsibility for Hayle Mill's existing mortgage. Near the end of his life, he wrote in his diary:

'I found trouble and sorrow in the buying of the paper business. Mr John Beeching was upon taking the business and then Mr. Golding was to have been partners with me but both was held back by the kind and merciful hand of God and I was left in trouble I thought and did not see the blessing a kind and merciful Providence intended me in taking the business. I was obliged to borrow a large sum of Mr. Beeching's Bank and other places to the amount of about £2400.00. I am thankful to the kind provider that has blessed the labour of my hands and I have paid of all I borrowed and no money wanting in the business but what we can meet thanks be to God'.

Accounts listed on two sheets of paper dated November 1838 under the title 'Money paid by Sam Green to get possession of Hayle Mill on account of my Brother's Bankruptcy', reveal that the total amount he raised came to £4,005 11s 8d to be paid over a four-month period. Samuel had already lent his brother £2,000 at an earlier date, which meant that a not inconsiderable sum (roughly equivalent to £471,400 today) had been invested by him in the business.

By late November Samuel had secured the Mill and all the equipment necessary to begin to produce paper. With no stock to hand, he reinstated production immediately. While Samuel maintained tight control over the business's finances, he arranged to keep his brother employed in the capacity of overall manager of the Mill at a salary of £200 per annum.

Part of the agreement with John Green included the mill house, which he and his family lived in rent free. No provision was made for John's sons, John and Charles,



who left Hayle Mill to work in Wales and Scotland respectively. Instead, Samuel's youngest son, John Barcham Green, from his second marriage to Rachel Barcham, went to live with his aunt and uncle at Hayle Mill House and began his seven year apprenticeship.

John Barcham Green had been a sickly child with signs of early behavioural problems, probably the result of his being overly indulged when young. At an early age, whether by accident or due to some congenital defect, his left eye had to be surgically removed. The operation would have been performed without the use of a general anaesthesia, which was not introduced until after 1846. Aware that his youngest son's disability severely limited his career options, and in the knowledge that his eldest son in Australia had become a 'sad incorrigible drunkard', Samuel Green recognised that the Mill could possibly secure the boy's future, provided he applied himself and made something of the opportunity by learning every aspect of the trade.

Upon taking over the business on June 30 1853, John Barcham Green still had to accommodate his uncle, who was continuing to draw his salary while living rent free in Hayle Mill House. By this time, John Green was in his eighties and unable to work due to poor health. Writing to his cousins, John and Charles, John Barcham Green suggested that his uncle consider retiring from the business. He further proposed that his uncle receive his full salary until Christmas, then £100 pounds per annum, for the rest of his life. Although his cousins pressed for a larger annual sum, business at Hayle Mill was less than inspiring

following an economic period in constant flux.

The Mill, as did other businesses, suffered in the years 1842-3 and 1848-9 during periods of severe civil unrest. It was for this reason that John Green's family finally acquiesced and accepted John Barcham Green's offer which, considering the Mill's poor turnover, was a generous one.

Included in the final agreement was the right for the business to continue to



Top of page: Samuel Green, the first member of the Green family to own Hayle Mill. From a portrait painted in 1836.

Centre: Hayle Mill's 'vat crew,' c. 1870. John Wood was the foreman; John Potter became Maidstone's first artisan mayor.

Above: The mill and the owner's house c. 1880. The house was extended for John Barcham Green and his wife Emma to provide bedrooms, a nursery and schoolroom for their 11 children, and quarters for their governess. A bell in JBG's bedroom connected to a pulley in the mill enabled the night foreman to wake him in an emergency!



trade using the watermark J Green & Son. The mark, or derivations of it, would appear in every sheet of paper produced at the Mill - an indication that the paper purchased was of good quality.

Between 1853 and 1883 business at Hayle Mill flourished. What is remarkable is that paper continued to be made one sheet at a time by hand, when a single machine could produce prodigious amounts of paper at a fraction of the price. What kept what remained of the handmade industry viable was the fact that the requirements of some speciality papers continued to elude the machine - significantly, speciality watermarked bond, share certificate, cheque and banknote paper. The light and shade watermarks, an important security device, could not be executed as effectively by machine as they could by forming sheets by hand in the traditional manner.

By 1862, John Barcham Green was turning away new customers on the grounds that he had 'more orders than I can manage'. A large number of those orders were for banknotes, share certificates and other speciality makes. With an unprecedented demand for paper in the 1860s, orders for these highly specified papers helped secure Hayle Mill's future to the end of the century.

As late as 1879, a sample bundle of banknote blanks held in the company archive was labelled 'Clydesdale Banking Company One Pound' and included the comment 'Old Make for De La Rue & Co. after losing this order they tried a machine make and eventually returned to us on a plain opaque watermark &



Hayle Mill was owned and operated for 150 years by successive descendants of Samuel Green, who died in 1853. He was succeeded by his son John Barcham Green (above left), grandson Herbert (centre) and great-grandson John Barcham Green (right), known as 'Jack' (or 'Skipper' after he formed Loose Swiss Scouts). Pictured below are Jack with the last two owners, his son John Barcham Green III, always known as 'Rémy', and grandson Simon (centre).

great strength'. It is fair to say that during the mid-to-latter part of the nineteenth century the Mill was making money to make money - a result of which was the expansion of the business.

In 1860 John Barcham Green had also invested in Soho Mill, located near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, forming a new company - Thomas, Stephens and Green. By 1872 he had also purchased Great Ivy Mill and Lower Tovil Mill from the Allnutt family, in partnership with his brother-in-law, William Laurence. Upon his death on 5 September 1883, at the age of 59, he left a considerable estate including securities and investments to a value of £86,356 18s 0d. The estimated value of Hayle Mill was



£8,000 with the business retaining capital reserves of £13,840 8s 9d. (roughly equivalent to £1,919,000 today). This amount did not include the value of Great Ivy and Lower Tovil Mill, nor did it include his share of the Soho Mill business.

When John Barcham Green was 10 years old he received a five page letter from his teacher, the naval surgeon, Colin Arrott Browning. The letter, dated June 1833, reads in part: 'You are inclined to be untidy and even filthy in your person. One might suppose that you absolutely have pleasure in dirty hands, dirty nails, dirty face, nasty ears, unclean teeth, filthy feet, in short in nastiness of skin all over your body. Now, John, as you have been faithfully told this disposition is exceedingly disgusting and as such it is manifest and indolence and unsightliness of mind as well as rude disregard to the feelings and comfort of those into whose presence you present yourself'.

By the time of his death in 1883, this unruly and disgusting child had become both a pillar of the community and a highly respected and well-established business man. In 1903, John Potter, an employee of longstanding who became a magistrate as well as the first working-class councillor in Maidstone, paid tribute to his employer: 'Mr.

J.B. Green had a thorough knowledge of paper-making combined with a great business capacity, and during his life the trade of Hayle Mill was developed very largely. It was a three vat mill when he took possession, but about 35 years ago he put a forth vat in, and in a very short time he added another. He not only increased the capacity of the Mill, but also greatly improved the quality



of the various papers made at the Mill, viz.: Ledger papers, loans and special water-marked papers; and for many years he held a very high position among the Paper Masters of the Trade, and perhaps there was no one more tenacious in carrying out the customs of our trade than he was'.

John Barcham Green's obituary in *The World's Paper Trade Review*, 14 September 1883 mentions that: 'The funeral took place at St. Stephen's Church, Tovil, at midday on Saturday the 7th instance, and following the bier on foot, besides the relatives, there were the whole of the men employed at the mills, and their manager Mr. Wood; Mr. John Potter; Mr. J. Eve; Mr. Wells, manager Lower Tovil Mill: Mr. Eve, manager of Ivy Mill, and others'.

John Barcham Green married Emma Crandall in 1853 and the couple had 11 children. His will stipulated that 'Hayle Mill and lands (and Upper Crisbrook Mill) and all plant and stock, book debts and money at the bank (subject to debts owing in connection with the business) to son Herbert subject to an annuity of £400 to wife'. Herbert also inherited Great Ivy Mill.

Laurence Green inherited 'all shares in H Allnutt & Son, (including £7,200 owing by the firm)' in the form of an existing mortgage which was taken over by his uncle, William Laurence, who became a silent partner, while Roland Green, retained John Barcham Green's share of what had been Thomas, Stephens and Green, Soho Mill, in Buckinghamshire, as well as ancillary property in the form of a house left to him in trust. All John Barcham Green's remaining children were allocated funds in the form of cash settlements which were invested and held in trust until marriage (for the girls) or until such time as his younger sons came of age. The bulk of his estate was awarded to his wife, Emma, throughout her lifetime with the remaining funds apportioned between their surviving children upon her death in 1903.

When John Barcham Green's eldest son, Herbert, inherited Hayle Mill he was 28 years old - the same age his father had been when he inherited the business from his father, Samuel Green, in 1853. Herbert Green inherited a thriving business but found the business facing new competition from the machine trade.

Herbert married Gertrude Miéville, of Dunedin, New Zealand in 1884 and moved to Bydews, in Tovil. Herbert and Gertrude eventually designed and built The Godlands, a fine Arts and Crafts house which is presently the headquarters of the Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Through his childhood, Herbert had displayed an aptitude for painting and drawing and retained a longstanding interest in the arts. He did much to further the development of the William Morris School of Painters and Writers and was a close friend of the artist Albert Goodwin RWS (1845-1932), as well as several other



members of the Goodwin family - all of whom were highly regarded water-colourists, as was his wife, Gertrude, who exhibited her paintings under the name Dunedin.

While his father had cultivated his interest in currency, bond, share certificate and other speciality watermarked papers, it is not surprising to find that it was Herbert Green who expanded the Mill's repertoire of papers to include fine artists' papers. By 1895 he had signed an agreement with the OWP & ACL (Original Water-colour Paper and Arts Company Limited) to produce watercolour paper made purely from fine linen. The contract also provided for the production of a printing range and pastel papers. In 1898 he invested briefly in Chafford Mill, near Tunbridge, in partnership with his brother, Laurence Green. While their father successfully entered into partnership at Soho Mill and further expanded his business holdings by purchasing the Allnutt family's mills, Herbert Green and his brother Laurence's attempts



to expand their business holdings by investing in Chafford Mill proved less successful.

In 1900 Herbert Green undertook an analysis of the various kinds of paper made and sold at Hayle Mill. He calculated that ledger and stationery papers comprised seventy per cent of the Mill's business while security watermarked, loan, share certificate and banknote papers comprised twenty five per cent of the business.

Artists' papers only accounted for five per cent of the Mill's production at the beginning of the twentieth century. By 1918 production of artists' papers had risen to twenty five per cent of the Mill's total output. Herbert Green's broadening of the Mill's repertoire of papers to include fine artists' drawing, printing and watercolour paper helped secure the Mill's future well into the twentieth century.

■ All quotations in the above text have been faithfully transcribed from the originals. Beeching's Bank was the Old Bank, Tunbridge Wells. John Beeching was married to Samuel Green's youngest daughter, Ann, which may explain why the bank was willing to lend him what was considered then a very large sum of money on a heavily mortgaged property. Samuel's diary is dated 1851.

Top left: Sorting finished paper in 1921. Top right: Isabel Gasson, the mill's oldest employee, pictured in 1925 when she was 86 and had been working there for 76 years. Her first job, when she was ten years old, was to walk along the Loose Valley in the early morning and 'knock up' the mill workers. Centre: 'Vat man' Norman Peters producing the last sheet of hand-made paper before the mill closed in 1987 (all photos by kind permission of Simon Barcham Green).

'Last knockings' in Boughton Quarries

Quarrying continued in the Loose Valley long after the Roman occupation ended (see Loose Threads 13, pages 20-21). The area is pockmarked with the sites of many small pits dating back several centuries, but larger disused quarries can be explored by following the Loose Stream from Salts Pond to Langley.

Ragstone was extracted hereabouts until the 1930s and one hundred years earlier a guide book published by J Brown of the Kent Arms Office, Week Street, waxed lyrical thus: 'The glen of Boughton Quarry has charms for the admirers of the picturesque and romantic which are unrivalled in this neighbourhood.

'The valley is bounded by broken precipices of the rock and abruptly rising grass banks, while neat cottages peep here and there between the trees.

'There was formerly at the north eastern side of the quarry a curious cavern commonly called Tinker's Hole from its being used for many years as a dwelling and workshop by an itinerant brazier. The cave was in the solid rock and covered with a dome of rough crags which formed a ceiling not very pleasing to the eye of him who stood beneath it.

'At the farther part of the cavern was a recess in which the tinker spread his couch. He also cut several smaller holes in the rock for storing his provisions, tools and other necessaries. Many fossil remains were found near this spot, among them those of an animal much resembling a hyena'.

Some years ago the wreckage of Hurricane P2793 of 501 Squadron was found in an orchard at nearby Furfield Quarry. Flown by Pilot Sgt James ('Ginger') Lacey, the aircraft was shot down during the Battle of Britain. Lacey baled out safely and landed at Abbey Farm, Leeds. Four days later, on September



JAMES WOOD & SON,
Ecclesiastical, Residential,
 AND
HORTICULTURAL
Builders & Contractors,
 SAW MILLS & JOINERY WORKS,
BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA,
MAIDSTONE.

Plumbers and Decorators.
 Painters and Paperhangers,
 Monumental Masons.

DRAINS TESTED AND REPORTS FURNISHED.
Sanitary Work a Speciality.

BRICK & TILE MANUFACTURERS.
 RAGSTONE MERCHANTS.

Branch Yards—
SUTTON VALENCE and LOOSE.



17 1940, another 501 Sqn Hurricane flown by Pilot Sgt M E Crosskell was shot down over Boughton Monchelsea and crashed in

the grounds of Kent Police HQ in Sutton Road. Crosskell also survived..

James Wood & Son were among the merchants who sold Boughton Monchelsea ragstone. Their advertisements (left) appeared in local directories from 1898 until 1927. The firm owned a 5-ton Coulthard steam wagon from 1905 until 1908, followed by two Garrett 4CD steam tractors (one of which is pictured below, left).



Top of page and below right: Workers at Boughton Quarries with the simple tools and equipment they used for their strenuous work. Some of the men are holding 'jumper bars', with which they made holes in the quarry face for gunpowder charges. (Contributed by Alan Ross). Below left: wagons and railways in Boughton Quarries, with Rock Cottage in the foreground and Rock House in the distance. Above: a recent view of an abandoned quarry face.



Tovil and East Farleigh people and pubs

Sue Black tells us about some people and places in East Farleigh and Tovil in years gone by.

My great great grandmother, Esther Ada Calver (née Bartholomew) was born in the Sevenoaks area in 1856. She married George Henry Calver, a grocer's porter, in 1877. They firstly lived in Mote Road, Maidstone, but in 1890 George died, leaving Esther to raise their six children.

In 1901 she was night nurse to a lady in Maidstone, Ann Snelling, and in 1911 she was living with her son, Walter Henry, a builder's labourer, at 32 Wyatt Street, Maidstone, where she described herself as a midwife. In the following year she moved to East Farleigh. It is said she delivered most of the babies in East Farleigh and Tovil, even though she was not a registered midwife!

Esther's grand-daughter, my great aunt Florence Pretoria Calver (always known as 'Floss'), lived with Esther, because her mother (who was my great-grandmother, Florence Alexandra Gertrude Calver, née Bonner) had run away and left Floss and her four other children.

Esther took Floss in, because she was the eldest, and she helped Esther with her midwifery duties. Esther died in East Farleigh in 1929.

Penny a bunch

Floss lived with George Beckett, who came from Tovil. George worked on a local farm, where Floss also worked. During hop-picking George was the 'Tally man' and I remember him letting me ride on the tractor and trailer loaded with hops. George's father, Frederick Beckett (known as 'Monkey'), lived at 47 Church Street, Tovil, with his wife Ada. Frederick had a



barrow which he pushed round Tovil selling rabbits. Ada went along the Loose valley and picked watercress, which she sold for one penny a bunch. George died in 1957 in the White Horse pub at 14 Farleigh Hill, which years before had been run by Thomas Hoar, another of my relatives.



Thomas was born in Boughton Monchelsea in 1834, the illegitimate son of Sarah Hoar. He and his wife Emma lived on Tovil Hill, where Thomas was employed at one of the oil mills. He and Emma later ran the White Horse pub and Thomas died there on February 11 1894.

Emma then moved next door, where she died on January 10 1900, leaving their son, Walter Henry Hoar, to take over the business. Walter was a journeyman carpenter by trade and had married Kate Sage in 1891. She was born in Tunstall and had been working as a cook to John Day, a farmer, of Barton

Walter Harold was employed as a clerk with Maidstone Borough Council. Kate died in 1935 at 4 Marion Crescent; Walter died in 1944; and Walter Harold died on April 29 1966. In 1931 the White Horse was run by Mrs Harriet Smith.

Other pubs in Tovil were the Old English Gentleman at 1 Church Street, whose landlord in 1903 was GT Sergeant; the Royal Paper Mill (run by George Clarke in 1901 and Charles Robinson in 1931); the Rose Inn (Mrs Rebecca Burley, 1903); and the Victory at 42 Church Street (Mrs Eliza Drowley).

Lucky escape

The old cottages at Tovil Green were built in the 18th century to house the stable-hands for the large house called 'The Manor House'.

During the war my mother, Lillian Hogdon, was living at 142 Coombe Road and told me that in 1940, moments after she and her friends left the tennis courts in Old Tovil Road, a bomb dropped on to that very spot.

My grandmother said she had been hanging out her washing when the plane came over; it was so low that she could see the pilot's face.

A character often seen pushing a barrow around Tovil was known as 'Bushy' Ring. He lived with his parents in Kingsley Road and I believe he went to Maidstone Grammar School. When they died he fell on hard times and my mother often gave him money to get a cup of tea in Woolworth's.

Pictured on this page are 'Floss' Calver with her daughters Pam and 'Prissie', and with George Beckett.

Seamstress looks back on Workhouse life

Emily Cramp of 8 Greens Cottage, Gallants Lane, a seamstress from 1923 until 1947, wrote these memoirs for East Farleigh history society shortly before she died in 1972, aged 87.

In 1923 what is now Linton Hospital was known as the Maidstone Union Workhouse. I commenced work in December of that year and during my 23 and a half years' service I saw many changes.

The building itself is of great age and was under administration from the Board of Poor Law Guardians. It served many purposes for the Maidstone area and many surrounding villages.

The chronic sick, the aged and infirm, the mentally deficient, tuberculosis and cancer patients were all accepted for medical treatment and careful nursing. There was a maternity block in the hospital and a day and night nursery in another part of the building for mothers in convalescence. If there was any family, the children over two years old were placed under care of foster mothers in the children's home, and boys and girls over five years had to attend East Farleigh school daily on the Lower Road.

It was a very long hard walk, twice daily, in all weathers, and some winters were very severe. The children were called at 7am, breakfast was at 7.30 and they left for school at 8, taking with them lunch, which consisted of bread and margarine, occasionally cheese, a few biscuits and either an orange, apple or banana, the gift of the Guardians or visiting committee. Home from school at 5pm, there was their hot dinner, which was always welcome.

There was meat, two vegetables, and either milk pudding, or a suet pudding with syrup or jam, and at 7.30 always a cup of hot cocoa. Bed was at 8, which was much appreciated, especially among the travellers' families. Usually they began to arrive after hop picking was finished and the huts closed for the winter. There was no alternative for these unfortunate people – no work, no homes, which meant very little food. Not all these people were vagrants. It was just misfortune or perhaps another baby was expected. And so these



people were admitted and most of them stayed on through the winter months. The younger men were placed in numbers to prepare the land for vegetable planting, as all the vegetables were grown on the grounds

Above: vagrants and tramps frequently sought food and shelter at workhouses. Below: a mother and son outside the hovel in which they lived when working on farms in the summer months. (Kent Archaeological Society)



surrounding the building.

They worked from 8am until 12 noon, and from 1pm to 4pm every day, except Saturday, when they finished at 12 noon. For their labours they each received one ounce of tobacco each Saturday morning.

The women who were able to help around the body of the house, making beds and sweeping and cleaning the wards, washing up and doing any housework required of them. The younger ones worked in the laundry and ironing room, the washing being done by hand.

The pregnant mothers had to help with the mending. Unless they were ill, nobody was allowed to be idle, and they used to receive a quarter of a pound of sweets on Saturday morning.

On Saturdays, from 2pm till 4, the parents were allowed to have all their children with them in the Board room and each mother was given a bag of sweets for each of their children. These again were gifts from the House Committee. It was a pathetic picture sometimes to see these little ones greeted by their parents for just two hours a week. If either side was ill, then arrangements were made for visiting.

On Sundays they all had to attend Morning Service, the men sitting on one side, the women on the other and the children in the front pews, under the watchful eye of the Chaplain, Rev. B Littlewood. How the children loved him, and he loved them! In those days everything was in scant supply and the accommodation was typical Workhouse.

For instance, there were only enamel mugs for the men and cups for the women with no saucers. Enamel plates for all meals, leaden forks and spoons, and knives which would hardly cut. The dining tables were long wooden trestles, which were kept scrubbed. No table cloths, no chairs, only long forms which were drawn up to the tables at meal times and placed back around the walls after meals. The floors were just bare boards – no mats or rugs, and nobody was allowed to sit around the fires. Although it was cold comfort to the onlooker, you would hear them say,

At least we have got some food and a bed to lie on, and we are in the dry'. Also, the beds, although spotlessly clean, were only straw mattresses on slatted iron bedsteads – no springs, but they slept!

The bedding was in short supply, but each bed had one thick and one thin blanket. As the men used to say, 'better than huddling together on the Embankment'. And so these things lingered on until April 1930, when these old buildings were taken over by various councils and renamed 'Institutions', and the stigma of Poor Law was abolished.

After about three months everything began to change and vast alterations were made. All the pots and pans were done away with and replaced by crockery. Then the tables went and others arrived. Table linen was rushed from County Stores and hurriedly made into table cloths. Chairs were sent by the dozen and the forms collected and chopped-up for firewood.

Mats were placed on the floors, curtains made for all the windows, and cushions were made for the chairs in the two Infirmary wards; and armchairs were sent for the really old people. And so it gradually built up to a place which could be called home. All the old cutlery was withdrawn and good serviceable replacements were made.

In the main kitchen all the old pots and pans were condemned and replaced by more modern ones. It was a transformation after seeing all the old dented and discoloured utensils. After a routine check was made, and everything found to be much more comfortable for the inmates, concentration was fixed on the hospital wards.

All the old scrubbed wooden lockers, with no doors to hide the patients' belongings, were done away with and replaced by stained wood and tiled tops, with doors to close the lockers.

A chair was provided for each bedside and eventually



a bed table. The Sister's charge table replaced the old wooden one which used to be scrubbed. The beds were replaced by hair mattresses - a little softer than straw.

The few water beds in use were condemned and replaced by air beds for the completely helpless cases. The old red blankets which served as counterpanes were replaced by white quilts for the main block, and coloured Alhambra ones for the side wards, which were used chiefly for convalescent patients.

An issue of new blankets was made for hospital use and the old ones were fumigated, laundered and, once passed by the Committee, were used as an extra blanket for the body of the house for winter use. The oldest of them were kept for use in the Casual ward for late night admissions, sometimes brought in by the Police in such a condition hardly fit for hands to touch through vermin and filth.

These were the tramps and they usually only stayed at the most for 48 hours. They were fed, cleaned and left to sleep until the morning when they were cleaned again, attended to by the Barber and then passed by the Doctor as fit for discharge. They were given either bread and dripping or cheese and a one shilling wayfarer's ticket. The shilling was to pay for a bed in a lodging house if they could not reach the next Casual ward. Hence all the bedding and also the straw bed was burnt in the big furnace and a new supply awaited the next arrival. It was not easy work for the officers on duty.

In late February or early March, weather permitting, the men were allowed out one day a week to find work for the summer months. Some of them were given a guarantee of work from their previous employers so had no difficulty in getting back as soon as the farmers were allowed to open their huts.

Others were less fortunate, so remained longer, but usually after April 1st nearly all these people had left the House and would remain away until October 18th when huts closed again. Then a steady trek back was made for the winter months. On the morning of their discharge the fathers were given five shillings and the mothers were given a large bag of provisions to last three or four days for their first work. If there was a young baby the mothers were given tins of food and milk to last until she got some money.

Quite a few of these people were employed locally, so could shop easily. They were all fitted up with suitable clothing and boots and shoes, for which they had to sign. And so they made their way. Although these were hard times for these people, there was much happiness in the building, and the older people missed their company. There is a brighter side to this story.

Christmas was a time of real joy to one and all, although a time of real hard work. Everybody who was able joined in to make it a pleasure. The nursing staff devoted many of their off-duty hours to making flowers and all kinds of decorations for their wards.

Prizes were given for the best decorated ward in the Hospital. The old people made their own flowers and the men were allowed to collect greenery for decorating. Most of the local farmers sent holly and some mistletoe from their own farms. They also supplied apples and pears for the Festival. Sweets, nuts, oranges and toys were sent by the Committee for the children. There was a good Christmas dinner and tea and a concert in the evening. The children had a large Christmas tree which was decorated by the Matron, and each child had a suitable present. Usually there was a full house - 36 boys and girls of all ages, and the Master and Matron served tea – a great joy for the children. Each child had sixpence extra pocket money – their usual amount was a penny to threepence per week good conduct money.

The Christmas season over, there were quite a few concerts from different Societies in the Maidstone area, to which the outside staff were invited, and which made an enjoyable evening, and the old folk enjoyed them.

Then, as years went on everything was reorganized and modernized and structural alterations were made which has taken away further memories of the real old days, which remain happily in my mind, and I would like to have them over again.

In 1947 I resigned. Since then I cannot give you any details of administration, but I hope this will be of some interest in the good old days.

■ Coxheath Workhouse - or to give it its official name, Maidstone Union Workhouse - opened in March 1838, replacing an earlier institution. After 1929 it evolved into a hospital for the elderly, the Maidstone and District Public Assistance Institution. It was renamed Linton Hospital in 1948 and closed in 1993.

Top of page: A typical Christmas scene in children's wards during Emily Cramp's lifetime.

Three 'Gentlemen of Fortune' of Boughton Mount

I: John Braddick

What appears at first sight to be a church tower protrudes above the trees near the north end of Boughton Lane; closer examination reveals that it is a water tower with a battlemented parapet, reached via an iron ladder.

This, some disused outbuildings, and dense undergrowth where once there was an extensive ornamental garden, are all that remain of Boughton Mount, a mansion within a 182-acre estate that was once the home of three distinguished residents of Boughton Monchelsea.

The estate surrounding the mansion was previously called Wychden and from the late 16th century until about 190 years ago its principal residence was a house with a clock tower, appropriately named Clock House, on Bottlescrew Hill, close to where Rock House stands today. Among its owners were John Alchorne and John Savage in the 17th century and, later, John's grandson Richard Savage. When he died the estate passed to his niece, who sold it to John Braddick in 1824.

The Braddicks were a family of merchants, farmers and fruit growers. Among them was one Captain John Braddick, a mariner of English descent who lived on Long Island, on the north-east coast of America, and operated vessels between various New England ports as well as far distant ones. He was, among other things, a slave trader and in 1721 was found guilty of conspiring with pirates. Ten years later he and his son Peter were murdered during a mutiny on their brigantine.

No link has yet been found between these Braddicks and John Braddick of Boughton Mount but he too was involved in the slave trade, as a shareholder in the British East India Company, which transported slaves from Africa. He visited the West Indies, and fruit plantations in Maryland, Virginia and other states, at a time when slaves were still employed there, and is said to have kept slaves in his cellar - though we have found no evidence to prove this.

John's principal business was cultivating fruit trees and in 1815 he wrote a report for the Horticultural Society, saying that in America, 'I saw the way their peach trees were cultivated. They were invariably grown from stones, the plant never being budded but always remaining in a state of nature. In the middle and southern



From top of page: Memorial in Boughton Monchelsea parish church to the Braddick family, first owners of Boughton Mount; George Foster Clark, the last owner; Rock House, from an unsigned and undated sketch.

provinces a planter often has enough trees to make (after fermenting and distilling) from 50 to 100 hundred gallons of peach brandy; the manufacturing of it, and the feeding of pigs, being the main use to which the fruit is put'.

For many years Braddick cultivated fruit trees at Thames Ditton, Surrey, but in 1824 he 'upped sticks' and moved his business to Boughton Monchelsea, 50 miles away. He put his plantations up for sale, advertising them as being 'stocked with the choicest and most rare fruit trees, being upwards of 500 sorts, collected regardless of expense from all parts of the world', adding that they were 'quite suited to a gentleman horticulturalist.'

John was then 59 years old, with a wife Eliza (46) and a young family - Eliza Whitmore, Maria and John Wilbraham, all aged under 15. We do not know why he moved to Kent. Perhaps he thought there would be better prospects for his business in what was becoming famous as 'the Garden of England'. As one of its most famous residents, Charles Dickens, once declared, 'Everybody knows Kent - apples, cherries, hops and women'.

Two of the varieties of apple that Braddick grew at Boughton Mount are still popular today - the 'Braddick Nonpareil' and the 'Claygate Pearman', the latter cultivated from a sapling he found growing in a hedge in his garden! Today both varieties are marketed by Keepers Nursery of East Farleigh. Braddick also introduced a new variety of Flemish pear, 'Present de Malines', which he first grew successfully at Coxheath before marketing it throughout southern England and Ireland.

In about 1827 Braddick built a new mansion, which he named Boughton Mount, a quarter of a mile from Clock House, on a site overlooking the quarries and woods of the Loose Valley to the south, with level fields and parkland extending north and west. At about this time he built ten ragstone cottages for his labourers - Halfway Cottage (on the east side of his estate); 73 and 75 Boughton Lane; Bridge Row, at the foot of Bottlescrew Hill; and Boughton Mount Cottage, at the foot of Beresfords Hill. All of them survive and are distinguished by their slate-roofed verandas supported on tree trunks, and in some cases stone tablets instructing Braddick's tenants on how to care for his cattle and be happy and respectable!



2: John W Braddick

Braddick and his family lived at Boughton Mount for perhaps less than a year. He died in April 1828, aged 63, and Eliza and her children moved back to The Clock House. In April 1829 an advertisement in *The Times*, addressed to 'horticulturalists and gentlemen of fortune', offered a 14-year lease on Boughton Mount, describing it as a 'stone mansion' with 14 bedrooms, large dining, drawing and music rooms, offices, a double coach house, and stables.

It had 'valuable meadow lands' and newly-planted orchards 'with most choice fruit trees, selected and reared by the late John Braddick', and was 'well supplied with excellent water'. This was drawn from the aforementioned water tower, whose 27,000 gallon tank was replenished by a hydraulic ram installed near Salts Pond.

The lease on Boughton Mount expired in 1843 when John Wilbraham Braddick reached the age of 25 and was able, as provided for in his father's Will, to inherit Boughton Mount. In his Will, John Braddick had left his properties in trust to Eliza and two friends, Abel Smith and Nathaniel Costling, and made provision for his son to receive a university education. The interest from £10,000-worth (equal to about £890,000 today) of stocks and shares was bequeathed to his daughters until they were 21 or married. Both of them married solicitors.

Eliza was paid £500 (about £90,000 in today's money) from John's estate immediately after he died and given an annuity of £500 and 'as much household goods and furniture, linen, china, wine and other spirituous liquors as she may choose, not exceeding £300 in value ... and all her wearing apparel, trinkets, jewels and other paraphernalia of dress'.

Clearly, she didn't even own the clothes she stood up in! And were the 'wine and other spirituous liquors' evidence that the Braddicks, like many Kent farmers and landowners of that period, were involved in smuggling?

In 1840 the Clock House was destroyed by fire. Eliza spent the last years of her life in Southampton and died in 1866, having outlived her husband by 38 years. Also in 1840, four years before he



Top left: An undated picture of the mansion at Boughton Mount. Above: some of the buildings that John Braddick built: the water tower at Boughton Mount; The Lodge at the entrance to Boughton Manor Farm; estate cottage in Boughton Lane; stone tablet at Bridge Cottages, Boughton Quarries. Left: A road in Boughton Monchelsea keeps the family name alive.

inherited Boughton Mount, John Wilbraham Braddick had married Emma Hollingworth at St Mary and All Saints' Church, Boxley. By this time the estate comprised 182 acres, with 'pleasure grounds', a paddock, fernery, kitchen garden and vinery close to the mansion, and a farm with arable land, meadows, hop-gardens and orchards.

JWB became, like his father, a celebrated grower of rare fruit trees, notably pears, winning many prizes at horticultural shows. In 1864 his plantations and water supply became contaminated by toxic waste escaping from a chemical works (formerly a brewery) in Boughton Quarries which produced sulphate of ammonia. Braddick sued the owners and then bought and closed the works.

He was involved in local politics, as the first chairman of Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council, but Paul Hastings, author of *Upon the Quarry Hills - A History of Boughton Monchelsea*, found that he was 'an unpopular employer and hard taskmaster'. In the 1870s he reduced his labourers' wages and in 1881 some of their sons expressed local resentment by throwing mud at the carriages that took guests to the parish church for the wedding of Braddick's daughter Emma Clara to Arthur Ventris, a civil engineer.

JWB's first wife, Emma Hollingworth, died in 1860, leaving two sons and two daughters. He then married Laura, possibly Emma's sister, in 1861, by whom he had three sons. He died in 1895 and the final chapter of the history of Boughton Mount began.

3: George Foster Clark

After Braddick died Boughton Mount had three owners in quick succession - W R Balston of Springfield Mill, Maidstone; E W Nunn and J McCulloch, before being bought in 1902 by George Foster Clark, proprietor of Foster Clark Ltd and head of one of Maidstone's most eminent families.

A catalogue published when the house was put up for sale in 1896 described it as 'a substantial and spacious family residence approached by carriage drive with lodge'.

There were five bedrooms on the first floor and four on the second; the ground floor had a hall, three 'reception rooms', a back lobby, a servants' hall, a kitchen, a scullery, a coal hole and a housemaid's pantry. In the basement were a dairy, a strong room, a billiard room and wine cellars. Located around three sides of a courtyard were an estate office, a bakehouse, a wood and coal store, a wash house, a servants' WC, a brewhouse and a workroom; also stables for eight horses, a harness room, a coach house and dog kennels.

A separate wing contained a large bedroom for servants 'or for use as nursery', two other bedrooms, a bathroom, a WC and a back staircase.

Properties nearby included an entrance lodge; a bailiff's house with stables for three teams of horses; cattle sheds and a barn; an oast with five kilns; and numerous cottages, including a 'superior' one 'in the woods with two bedrooms for keeper'.

Also in the portfolio were Boughton Mount Farm, Filmer's Farm and Shernold Farm; Rock House (occupied by one George Twiss); Cliff Cottages; 'Quarry Beerhouse' and a grocer's shop; and 'Boughton Malshouses, situated at the quarry, entirely surrounded by roads'.

George Foster Clark was 38 when he moved to Boughton Mount. During the previous eight years he had married Henrietta (née Carpenter), started a family, and opened a food manufacturing business in Maidstone. His family was growing, his business was thriving, and he needed - and was able to afford - a larger and more prestigious house than the one at No 83 London Road West, Maidstone, where he and Henrietta had begun their married life.



The census of 1911 for Boughton Monchelsea, in which George was described as a 'manufacturer of grocer's sundries', gives details of the Foster Clarks and their household.

Their children were Mary (9) and Hubert (8), both born in Maidstone, and Joan (4), born at Boughton Mount. When the census was taken George's sister-in-law, Alice Bessie Carpenter, was at the house, as were Mary Henrietta Patterson (housekeeper) and housemaids Beatrice Bertha Watermans and Ethel May Hatcher. Eric, George and Henrietta's eldest son, was a pupil at Mill Hill Public Secondary School, London.

Among the Foster Clark's employees living in properties elsewhere on the estate were, at Lodge Gate, farm manager William Woolley, his wife Ann, their daughters Mabel Carrie and Augusta Annie and a lodger, Andrew George Dubbin, the Foster Clark's chauffeur; also the estate's gardener, William Saunders, his wife Harriet, and their children William (a farm labourer), Frederick (a house servant), Harriet and Charles (school children) and Ena (4).

A widow, Minnie Holway, lived at The Lodge with her sons Thomas, Jack and Fred (all under 6) and worked as lodge keeper; not far away, neighbours, gardener John Henry Reeves and his wife Frances had a 4-bedroom cottage all to themselves.

The estate's blacksmith, Arthur Mason, lived at Forge House, near Bridge Row, with his wife Clara and daughters Mabel and Dorothy.

Top of page: Once owned by the Braddicks and George Foster Clark, this two-kiln oast house in Boughton Lane is now two cottages. Above: Boughton Manor, formerly Merriehills, in 1980 when up for sale for £210,000. Three years earlier it had been on the market for £75,000. It was about this time that the name of the house was changed.



Fred Marsh, who worked at Boughton Mount, as did his father, also named Fred, had clear memories of the Foster Clarks when interviewed by Anne Creasey of the Loose Area History Society's Research Group in 1993.

Fred recalled that George Foster Clark was 'a very gentle person' and that Henrietta was 'very vigorous and upright'. Eric was an officer in The Buffs (East Kent Regiment) and was killed in action in the First World War; Hubert was a musician with Maidstone Amateur Orchestral Society [before becoming conductor of the BBC Northern Orchestra]; Margaret helped to run the house before marrying a Mr Sennett and moving to Sevenoaks; Mary reared chickens; and Joan (who was 'very charming') lived in a cottage on the estate and later at Merrie-hills (now called Boughton Manor).

In 1912 pioneer aviator Robert Bertram Slack landed his Blériot monoplane on one of George Foster Clark's cricket grounds. Slack became a qualified pilot in 1911 and flew to several Kent towns while making a 1,000 mile flying tour of England and a series of exhibition flights commissioned by the Imperial Correspondence School. He fulfilled all his engagements regardless of weather conditions. He was killed in a motoring accident in 1913. (Poster image: Maidstone Camera Club)



'Boughton Mount was a lovely estate', said Fred Jnr. 'It had two cricket grounds, one to the north of the house for the Eiffel Tower Club [Foster Clark Ltd's team], another along the drive to the farm, used by Maidstone Liberal Club. The groundsman was Joe Wilkinson.

'Andrew Dubbin, the chauffeur, wore a peaked cap, a wrapover jacket and leggings. He drove a chocolate Daimler with disc wheels. There was a second chauffeur, Jack Hollands, who also helped in the house. My father was a wonderful handyman, very good with cars. There was quite a fleet of them, including a Buick, Joan Foster Clark's Sunbeam Essex and a De Dion Bouton with a cylindrical bonnet and a lever to open the throttle. Hubert Clark had a black and gold Sunbeam motorcycle.

'The Foster Clarks made their own electricity, generated by a gas engine which drove a dynamo that charged a room of accumulators'.

George Foster Clark made extensive alterations to his mansion and estate at Boughton Mount, which with its own farm and workshops became almost self-sufficient.

He died in 1932, aged 68, leaving £588,433 (nearly £34 million at today's values) in his Will. In 1940 Boughton Mount was requisitioned by the Army: General Montgomery had his headquarters there during preparations for D-Day. In 1948 George's widow, Henrietta, and her youngest daughter, Joan, gave the house to Kent County Council 'for the purpose only of a special residential school for delicate children'.

Soon after the deed was signed the house was demolished (presumably it was in too poor a condition to be saved) and a 'special needs' school was built on its site. What had been the Foster Clark's garden became nurseries for the flower beds in Maidstone public parks.

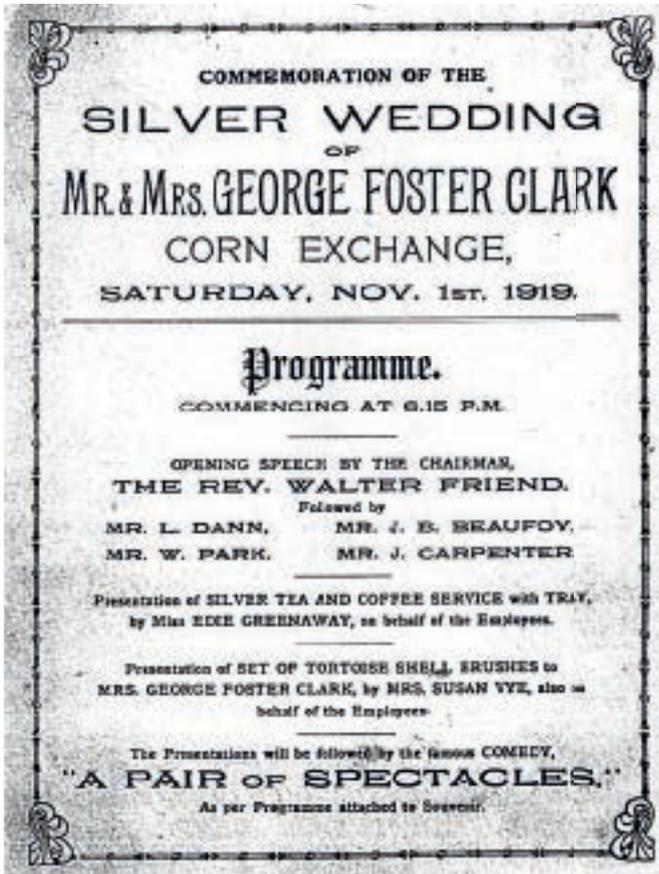
The school closed several years ago and KCC is currently considering options for the future use of the site.

Oldborough Manor School (now New Line Learning Academy) and other establishments (above) were built on the northern part of the estate.

The rise and fall of Foster Clark Ltd



Above: Foster Clark's cricket team, date unknown. Back row, from left: H Jones, H Merricks, A E Bonner, W T D Sheppard, T Horton, J T Hunt (scorer); centre: C P Sims (umpire), G E Green, E H Waite, George Foster Clark, W Grigsby, R Simmonds; front: L H Fowler (left), T Holway. Below: Joan Foster Clark with a later team. K E Loveland is standing on the far left. Can you identify the other players?



Boughton Mount was the home of George Foster Clark and his family throughout the time when he was one of Maidstone's most successful entrepreneurs and, for three successive years in the First World War, the town's mayor.

After serving an apprenticeship with Maidstone grocers Burtonshaw and Plaxton and working as an assistant to another local grocer, Thomas Carpenter, of No 15 Week Street, he started experimenting with recipes for bunflour, cakeflour and lemonade crystals in his mother's kitchen at No. 35 Kingsley Road, Maidstone.

Then, helped by his brothers William and Henry, he started making these products in Mote Road, for Thomas Carpenter - marrying his daughter Henrietta in 1894 and, a year later, forming Foster Clark & Co. in a former jam factory in Hart Street.

The company, later renamed Foster Clark Ltd, made 'Foster Clark' jellies, custard powder, blancmange powder and bunflour and 'Eiffel Tower' lemonade crystals and powder. Eventually, milk pudding, soup squares and Gravet gravy browning were added to the range.

In the 1980s one of Foster Clark's senior managers, K E Loveland, wrote a history of the firm, which can be read on <http://fosterclark.info>. The following is an edited summary.

I joined the company in 1926 as a junior clerk in the Company Secretary's office. The wage offered was 25 shillings a week; furthermore the company had a cricket team with a lovely ground.

The Secretary was H M Beak and in his office accounts were prepared, the pension fund administered, the investment portfolio controlled, salary records maintained and the family trusts handled.

The 50 people in the general office sat on high stools in long rows and were ruled by the Office Manager, J B Beaufoy. The main duties were preparation of invoices and control of sales ledgers, including receipts of cash and credit notes. Small sections dealt with factory wages, petty cash and addressograph plates. There was a cashier's office under A E Tanner, who dealt with banking and bought ledgers. W T Park was in charge of the sales force.

The main department in the factory was the packing room under C E Hughes, where some 100 or so women packed the products into the cartons. The smells varied from strong flavours of soup to those of lemonade.

The other sections of the company were in Barker Road - a printing works under W T Gardiner and W T D Sheppard with a staff of 30; the engineer's shop under T W Francis; and Transport, under Mr Buss.

The Chairman of the company was George Foster Clark, with his brothers William and Henry as directors. There was a tremendous family spirit throughout the company. Whole families worked there: fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. It was a very happy company.

In 1927 a firm of business consultants modernized office procedures. Out went the high stools, the bound ledgers, the pens and ink. In their place came smaller offices with tables and tansad chairs, loose-leaf ledgers, adding machines and Powers-Samas invoicing equipment.

Left: Programme for George and Henrietta's Silver Wedding party, organized by the company's staff.



The company's share capital was increased to £450,000 in 1928. The shares found a ready market and rapidly increased in value, standing at one time at 60 shillings. Many shares were given to employees with more than 10 years' service.

After George Foster Clark died Sir Cyril V Jones CBE (Chairman of Peek Freen & Co. Ltd) was appointed Chairman. In 1935 the company started canning fruit and vegetables.

However, this was labour intensive, so a large casual labour force had to be taken on. Costing was also a problem, as the quality, size and availability of crops depended entirely on the weather.

In 1938 I was appointed Assistant Secretary. The threat of war was looming and the company encouraged its men to join a TA battery of the Royal Artillery. Some six of us joined and in the following August I left the Company, returning in 1945 to find a letter awaiting me.

This informed me that I would be re-employed by the company for six months, after which period the position would be reconsidered.

We resumed where we had left off in 1939 and soon found that trade had changed and tastes had altered. Women had deserted their kitchens to earn money by taking employment and did not intend to give up their jobs.

Youngsters' tastes had changed, too. Their taste for jellies, blancmange and lemonade had seriously declined. American colas were new favourites.

The personnel at Foster Clark's had changed. Gone were all the managers I had known when I joined the Company. In 1950 Joan Foster Clark joined the Board, which gave enormous pleasure to the employees, because they wanted someone from George Foster Clark's family.

In 1960 came a bombshell in the form of a takeover bid from St Martin's Preserving Co. Ltd. Three St Martin's ordinary shares of four shillings each were offered for one ordinary Foster Clark share of 10 shillings.

The Board opposed acceptance but the shareholders voted to accept and St Martin's took us over. Joan Foster Clark resigned. It was a very unhappy experience for all the employees.

In 1965 a Receiver was appointed to liquidate the Company. He tried to sell it as a going concern, without success. In a very short time I was the only executive left, so I had the melancholy job of sacking people I had known and with whom I had worked for years.

I then left the Company, where I had been happy for so many years.

The name lives on

George Foster Clark's name lived on, long after his business closed and his factory and home were demolished. As a beneficiary of Maidstone Hospital, he had a ward named after him. Maidstone Grammar School had a new school built on the land given by him in Barton Road.

There is a Foster Clark housing estate off Hastings Road, Maidstone; and a vicarage and parish hall in Sutton Road, built on land donated by the family in 1932.

The 'Foster Clark' brand name was sold in 1965 and used by Oxo for a range of soup squares and by Brooke Bond and Paul Busuttill when they formed Malta's largest food producer, Foster Clark Products Ltd, in 1967

Top of page: the company's letterhead. Below: advertisement sign found in a garden in Boughton Lane in 2012. Foot of page: Foster Clark office staff at the time K E Loveland joined the firm.



History Society News



Members at Linton Park, June 9

Events during our society's 25th anniversary year included a celebratory cruise on the River Medway for members and friends on the Kentish Lady, sailing upriver from Maidstone through Farleigh Lock to Teston, passing under Farleigh Bridge (with inches to spare!) and Barming and Teston bridges.

During the return trip along Maidstone's waterfront our chairman, David Priestley, thanked Jenny Harrison for organizing the outing and welcomed founder member Julia Page, who was one of the eight enthusiasts who formed our first committee in 1989.

Since then we have enjoyed nearly 250 meetings and outings and published 14 issues of Loose Threads and a pictorial history of Loose and Linton.

Another founder member, Roger Thornburgh, now our president, returned to Loose from his new home in

Gloucestershire to present a talk on the history of Coxheath.

Other highlights of the year included a visit to Linton Park, once the family seat of the Cornwallis family and now the head office of Camellia plc; and the creation by Helen Gallavin, Jenny Harrison and Jill Smith of a splendid entry in the Loose Scarecrow Festival.

This took the form of an effigy of a First World War nurse (pictured below) topical for the anniversary of the outbreak of the 'Great War' and a reminder that Hayle Place was a VAD Hospital in 1914.

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 have outings and visits in June and July. See our website for our current programme.

Our anniversary cruise



Julia Page (right) and fellow passengers enjoy the view.



'Low bridge ahead: will we get under it?'



Simon Proctor entertains.

John and Jane welcome you to The Victory Farleigh Bridge, East Farleigh



Open all day
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Real ales, beers, lagers, wines and spirits
Children's play area with bouncy castle
Sunny garden with panoramic views of the
Medway Valley
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The Wheatsheaf Inn, September 1939, after the kerb and other obstacles had been painted with black and white stripes to help pedestrians and drivers negotiate the junction during the 'black out'. In the picture at the top of the page, taken in Sutton Road, a notice about 'Lighting Restrictions' and a Maidstone & District bus timetable are on the wall beside the entrance to the Gents' lavatory. (Contributed by Andrew Clark)

In this issue ...

- * **Answering the Nation's Call to Arms**
- * **'Mercy mission' to Western Front**
- * **Loose Scouts prepare for war**
- * **'Trouble at Hayle Mill'**
- * **Loose Cottage Hospital**
- * **D-Day, Doodlebugs and VE-Day**
- * **'Basher' Bain's 'Donal Duck' tanks**
- * **A wealthy window & 600 working men**
- * **'Last Knockings' in Boughton Quarries**
- * **Coxheath Workhouse memories**
- * **Three 'Gentlemen of Fortune'**
- * **The rise and fall of Foster Clark**
- * **Historians' 25th anniversary**
- ...And much more!