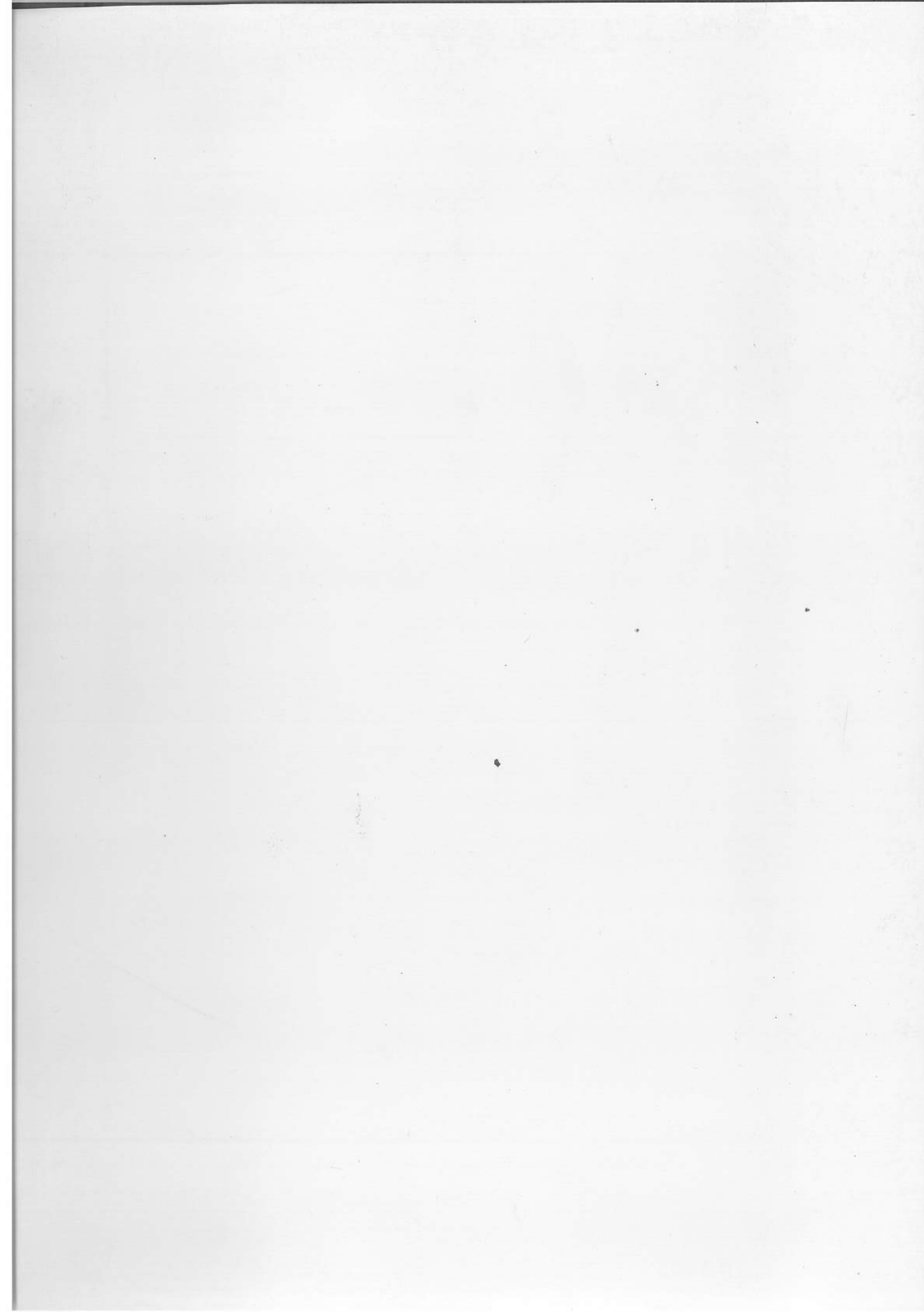
LOOSE THREADS

Journal of the Loose Area History Society

SHOPS ON LOOSE GREEN, 1909

Number 7



LOOSE AREA HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society was formed in 1989 with the following aim enshrined in its Constitution: 'to research and record the history of Loose and its neighbourhood and pursue these ends by means of a research group, lectures, exhibitions, publications and other events of a supportive nature'. The Constitution also states that 'the society shall continue to collect evidence of Loose and its neighbourhood's history, and work towards acquiring a central repository at some future date'. The repository is still some way off, but the archive collection is growing steadily and is available for members of the Society and others to examine on application to the Archivist.

General meetings are held monthly, usually in the Loose Infants' School. The Research Group meets less frequently to discuss members' work, publications, the planning of exhibitions etc. For details of membership of the Society and its activities, please contact the Treasurer, whose address and telephone number is opposite.

The name 'Loose' is usually taken as being derived from the Old English 'Hlose', meaning 'place of pigs', and the above logo showing a medieval pig has therefore been adopted by the Society.

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Front Cover: Loose Green in 1909, showing Creed's the butcher's shop (mentioned in Bessie Gilbert's reminiscences on page 18). Next to it is Funnell's, the grocer's, and beyond is the Working Men's Club, soon to become a shop too, and in due course Loose Post Office. (Photo from 1909 tram timetable).

Back Cover: The O>S> six-inch to the mile map of 1909, showing sites featured in the articles in this edition of *Loose Threads*, prepared by Roger Thornburgh.

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EDITORIAL

When *Loose Threads, No 1* was published in 1988 the Editorial Committee wrote, "This publication is something of a celebration". I believe that each of the subsequent *Loose Threads* was a celebration, as is this one, *No 7*. It is a celebration of the enthusiasm and skill of the researchers/writers of the articles; it is a celebration of the continuing success of the Loose Area History Society; and it is a celebration of the interest shown by the local population who learn of the history and development of their area by buying *Loose Threads*.

As usual the articles represent a wide range of subjects that have attracted the authors to study them. Among others are the varied adventures of an extraordinary explorer who lived locally, and in whose name a medal is still awarded annually by The Royal Geographic Society; details of life in the village in the late nineteenth/twentieth century, described by the villager herself in 1975, which paint a very different picture from that lived today; the history of a row of cottages, and of the near derelict *Vicar's Hall*.

Once again, warm thanks are given to our advertisers and to those who help with our publicity.

Almost every Editorial has mentioned delays in production and that has been true of this edition, mostly of an unavoidable nature. The tremendous contribution given by Roger Thornburgh is gratefully acknowledged. The printing process and the paper used are more sophisticated resulting in a more professional finish. We hope that this will add to the enjoyment of the reader.

Contributors are always pleased to receive comments, corrections, additions and even congratulations. They may be sent to the individuals or to the Editor. In the meantime, read on and continue the celebration!

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CHERRY KEARTON, 1871-1940
ONE OF THE EARLIEST WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO LIVED AT *GREAT IVY MILL*, LOOSE, 1924-1929

Richard Corben

Some of the very senior members of our village may just remember seeing a chimpanzee rowing a boat on the pond at *Great Ivy Mill*! Ahead of the jokes about today's rowers at *Great Ivy Mill*, it is true that the world famous wildlife photographer Cherry Kearton, who lived here with his wife, Ada, for some five years, really did teach his pet chimpanzee Mary to do just that!

It is accepted that Cherry was the first person to take still and moving pictures of wildlife, to publish them in many books, and show his films. Until about 1895 wildlife books were illustrated with woodcuts or line drawings; photographing the living wonders of the world had not been attempted. For him, in his mid-twenties, the thought of such a possibility was the most exciting prospect imaginable.

Cherry Kearton, born on the 8th July 1871, was a sheep farmer's son from Thwaite in the North Riding of Yorkshire, and engraved over the doorway of the family cottage are the initials of Cherry and his brother, Richard. There is also a plaque on the old school wall in Muker in Swaledale, Yorkshire:

IN MEMORY OF
CHERRY KEARTON
NATURALIST, AUTHOR AND EXPLORER,
PIONEER OF WILD LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY
JULY 1871 – SEPT 1940
EDUCATED AT THIS SCHOOL

He joined, as a junior, the London publishing firm of Cassell, Petter and Galpin. He had the right experiences and qualities for his passion for studying and recording wildlife. His father's family had lived and farmed in Thwaite for generations and Cherry had inherited his father's

Above: the Kearton's cottage in Thwaite
Below: the carved stone lintel

love of the countryside and wildlife. At the age of 10 he remembered being sent to bring the sheep in from the hills and being caught in the mist with visibility down to a few yards. He remembered the advice given, 'stay with the sheep, they will graze facing home and they will lead you there'. He developed from an early age a fascination for wildlife, but it was his brother Richard, already with Cassells, who suggested one day that he should take some photos of British birds. Cherry was later to join his brother at Cassells, and eventually every species of British bird had been photographed and his first book published three years later. His enthusiasm for wildlife photography brought into focus the prospect of photographing the big game of Africa. In the early part of the last century big game was for sport and shooting. Cherry was to bring the wonders of Africa to the screen with a cinematograph, and in the years between 1910 and 1914, before the First World War, he made several rewarding safaris to the African continent. On one of these safaris he journeyed right across Africa with a friend, John Boyce, from the east in Mozambique to German West Africa, filming with a Pathe Professional camera; the film made was called *Across Africa from East to West* and was an immediate success.

Great Ivy Mill in the 1920s

The move to Loose and *Great Ivy Mill* was later, after he had married Ada Forrest, whose maternal grandparents had settled in Durban, South Africa, having emigrated from Manchester in the 1850s. Ada was a fine singer and they had met on the cruise liner, *Llanstephan Castle*, where Ada was the cruise liner singer, and Cherry the lecturer on big game photography. They had shared several safaris together and it was time to buy a country cottage. Cherry had seen an advert in *The Times* announcing the forthcoming sale of an old paper mill in the Loose Valley. On the first visit, on a bleak winter's day, they decided to buy it and make it their home and the home for their many pets. The price paid was £495. It was here in Loose that Cherry Kearton wrote many books, including the best seller *My Friend Toto*, the story of an earlier pet chimpanzee; the book sold as a text book in schools and was translated into nine languages.

Mary

Toto had died on safari some years earlier and missing him made Cherry and Ada take into their family Mary, a one year old chimpanzee. Mary quickly settled in at *Great Ivy Mill*. Her day started at 7.30 am with a cup of tea and two lumps of sugar. She would then brush her teeth, comb her hair and have lessons. She could write the simplest of the letters of the alphabet and colour accurately a child's painting book. Following afternoon tea, she would pick up her cigarette holder, fit a cigarette

and light it nonchalantly. Undoubtedly though, rowing a boat on the pond was her greatest joy.

Cherry Kearton wrote many books about his adventures and wildlife. (We have 37 of them here at *Great Ivy Mill.*) *My Happy Chimpanzee*, published in 1927, caught the imagination of many people, prompting Cherry and Mary to travel throughout the country on lecture tours. The sight of Cherry and Mary having tea on the platform gave rise to the famous Chimpanzee tea party at London zoo. Sadly, all the travelling necessary for their tours eventually took its toll and both Cherry and Mary became ill. Mary, aged only 7, died after several long days of nursing, kept alive only on brandy and oxygen.

Cherry Kearton on Safari

In 1926 Cherry had a royal command to attend the King and Queen to show his film *With Cherry in the Jungle*. Soon, however, despite increasing fame, the thoughts of Africa and another tour, this time with Ada, were too much, and they set off for Kenya, landing at Mombassa with 5,000 feet of film. The mission planned was to film big game as Cherry Kearton Films Ltd. Using the previously tried and tested method of bringing the selected game to the camera, Cherry enlisted Masai villagers to act as beaters. This time, however, Cherry became involved in a lion hunt and thus became the first man to film a lion being speared. A man-eater had caused great trouble and Cherry was invited to join the hunt, but to leave his rifle behind and only bring his camera. Eventually, the lion was cornered in a thorn thicket, the Masai formed up in a half-moon shape with Cherry on the left and two Somali horsemen covering the back of the thicket to prevent the lion bolting. The scene must have been amazing, with Cherry positioned as instructed, camera on tripod and filming within yards of extreme danger! The lion then bolted passing close to Cherry and making for another thicket. This time success - a spear thrown accurately through the heart finished the lion, and all this on film!

Cherry with his lion-bitten legging

There are many stories in the various books published by Cassells, Arrowsmith, and Hodder & Stoughton. All are stories of extreme danger to capture the best film shots. Perhaps the most amazing of these is the story of 'The Lassoing Safari'. In 1910 Cherry secured the sole rights to 'bioscope' the Duke of Connaught's sporting tour of East Africa. He travelled to Africa with David Gobbett as his assistant and subsequently obtained the only authentic film footage of the ex-president, Theodore Roosevelt, big game

hunting. Cherry followed this tour with his book *Wildlife Across the World*, published by Hodder & Stoughton, with a forward by Theodore Roosevelt, and Chapter 9 telling the story of lassoing big game.

Cherry had calculated that some 300 Masai beaters were required; the total party consisted of the Masai and some spearmen, 11 Europeans and Americans, 15 horses and 7 dogs, together with 4 bullock wagons with 14 oxen per wagon, and then, of course, cooks, tents, etc, etc. The lassoing expert was an American cowboy, Mr Jones, and two assistants. The beater line stretched some four miles and, having located a suitable subject, the animal was gradually driven towards the camera and audience with Cherry and his assistant at the ready. The skill of the cowboy was to lasso the animal so it fell right in front of the camera and audience. This extraordinary feat was achieved with wart hog, eland, hartebeest, serval cat, leopard, giraffe and, finally, a lion and rhino.

The rhino first had to be encouraged to charge repeatedly until exhaustion made it possible to pass several lassos around the legs. Similarly, the lion, eventually cornered, sprung at the cowboy, but with one lasso round his head and another round his leg and passed over a tree, Mr Jones made sure that the lion finished hanging head down dangling from the tree! Truly, this was an amazing act of skill and daring.

In 1915, Cherry joined the 25th Battalion Royal Fusiliers as a lieutenant and spent three years filming enemy positions in German East Africa. He also worked as a photographer in France on the western front. His book, *With our Expeditionary Force in British East Africa*, was followed by *Our Grip on the Huns*. He continued to write and publish until his death in 1940.

The Royal Geographical Society in London have eight of his books in their library and a Cherry Kearton Medal and Award is presented to a winning exhibitor each year who ".... is concerned with the study or practice of natural history with a preference for nature photography".

Cherry Kearton died aged 69 in 1940 after a colourful and fascinating life. He took the most extraordinary risks to get the very best photographs and will be remembered as a pioneer in his field of wildlife photography.

SELECTED SOURCE

Cherry Kearton, *Wild Life Across the World*, Hodder & Stoughton, no date.

FAREWELL TO THE VICAR'S HALL
(THE CHURCH HALL)

Julia Page

On the Linton Road at the shared entrance of both the *Loose Valley Nursing Home*, formerly the Vicarage, and also, less obviously, the drive to the new Vicarage, stands a forlorn, red-coloured, boarded up hall, universally condemned as being too old to repair and modernise by both the church authorities in whose care it lies and the village as a whole; an opinion echoed by every club/society seeking a venue. Rejected, unloved and not even called by its original, proud name of the *Vicar's Hall*, the Church Hall will one day soon disappear, maybe even before this article is printed, and with it a large slice of Loose's twentieth century history. Happily, a chance reading of the *Parish Magazines* covering 1926-1955, (with only a few absent years), has revealed to me most of its story, which is more than worthy of recording for posterity.

The Vicar's Hall, Linton Road, in 2004

Back in 1899 Loose welcomed a new vicar, the Reverend W Gardner-Waterman, MA, and with 26 years of the priesthood already behind him, a man of considerable experience in running a parish and to whom it did not take long to identify the urgent need of a good community room. Wishing to begin some religious instruction classes for the young people, he could find nothing available in which to hold them. For both religious and secular activities the village was currently 'making do' with four venues: a dilapidated parish room – believed to be part of today's *Hope Cottage*;

occasionally the village school which, together with the *Iron Room*, was situated on Malthouse Hill; and, lastly, an upper room in *The Chequers* wherein for centuries had met the Village Overseers. All were either too old or unsuitable for the purpose and it seems likely that the Church Council kept the subject on its agenda over the next three years.

In the summer of 1902 a need arose to liquidate a debt on the Church Funds and coupled with this was the united agreement that they should also endeavour to open a Fund for the erection of a room. The owners of *Hayle Place* kindly offered their grounds for a Bazaar in order to raise some money and it proved a most successful afternoon; the debt was cleared and sufficient left over to start the Fund. Private subscriptions and a Sale of Work brought in more cash and this was vested in two Trustees of impeccable reputation, Mr George Marsham, the Vicar's Warden, and Mr Kenneth McAlpine. As the months and years passed the fund grew, but sadly all too slowly and by 1906 they realised it was never likely to be sufficient both to erect and, equally importantly, maintain a hall, as the building was now envisaged. At this point, Mr Gardner-Waterman, anxious not only for the younger members of his flock but the parish as a whole, which was seriously suffering from the lack, decided to pay for the building himself but ask for the maintenance thereafter to be the responsibility of the parish through its fund, the income from the capital being paid to him **and his successors** for this purpose.

And so it must have come about and the story is now taken up from the cache of parish magazine photocopies held in the History Society archives.

In 1926, twenty years on, two monarchs later and after the trauma of the 1914-18 war, Mr. Gardner-Waterman was still the vicar and central to the life of the village was his hall. The activities within its walls were legion and everyone must have rejoiced at the change it had wrought in their lives. The Mothers' Union met there regularly, Sales of Work, Rummage and Jumble sales took place, Whist Drive evenings featured frequently and even the Church of England Temperance Society enjoyed one. The oral examination for the Band of Hope was held there and in February 1927 the Vicar livened up the long winter evenings with a Lantern Lecture on some of the churches in the Sutton Deanery. The previous month had seen the Annual Winter Treat of the Sunday Schools. They boasted no less than nine voluntary teachers, led by Mrs Gardner-Waterman, and at least 50 children were present, their names recorded. Tea was at half-past five and afterwards the Vicar gave a 'magic lantern entertainment' – which in the pre-television age was probably quite a treat.

In 1930 the village mourned the Vicar's death. He was possibly in his early eighties, having faithfully served them for 31 years, and since the Hall was looked on as being 'his', no use was made of it until the arrival of the new incumbent, the Reverend A Maxwell Bury, by which time it was known that Mr Gardner-Waterman had bequeathed it to his successor. However, until the completion of the legal work it was not used and the new vicar had been in situ for nearly a year before the doors appear to have re-opened.

Mr Bury was in his mid-fifties and still full of energy and in some ways he blew like the wind of change through Loose. On 23 July 1931 he wrote in the magazine, "*Talking of the Mothers' Union, I am glad the first use to which we were able to put the Vicar's Hall – a legacy to me from the widow of your late vicar – was to welcome the members to tea there. It is a capital building and will look quite attractive before very long, and I am looking forward to us all having great times there during the winter months.*" September saw the Harvest Home Supper – coming after an appallingly wet August - and by October the Vicar announced, "*This is the month for starting our winter activities*". He wanted to revive the Sewing Meetings, which "*many of our mothers will gladly welcome. Then we ought to have a Troop of Girl Guides*"; currently there was no one to run it but determination paid off, and eventually a leader was found. "*In addition to this, I am considering the advisability of starting a Girls' Social Club*".

January 1932 saw the first anxiety creeping in with regard to the Hall's maintenance and one must bear in mind the building by now was probably a good twenty-five years old. "*My Vicar's Hall is an invaluable asset to the Parish – though would it were twice its size! It is also expensive to keep up. I shall shortly put up in the Church Porch a Balance Sheet showing what my expenses and receipts have been up to the end of the year. This will not include heavy expenditure on external painting and repairs*". Meanwhile, another of the Vicar's hopes got off the ground that same month when the 1st Loose Brownie Pack, numbering eight, assembled.

By April that year the Vicar thanked the Church Council for a recent grant of £25 "*towards the improvements and repairs that have been and are being effected in the Hall. The following are some recent improvements: the flooring underneath the stage has been completely renewed; the stage has been fitted with proper curtains* [and very good they were, in my youth. I pulled them many a time]; *the stage lighting has been reorganised to make it more effective; a strong light has been fixed outside the entrance; the changing rooms have now been equipped with tables, mirrors and a gas stove.*" These latter made all the difference to performances as the Vicar's Letter of May reveals, "*I was delighted that our Women's Institute in my Hall on April 6th was such a big success, and I am glad the new stage curtains and alterations in the lighting met with the approval of the experts*".

These expenses were heavy but the Vicar and his wife persevered in trying to raise money and in his June letter wrote, "*I am inserting elsewhere the accounts of my Vicar's Hall during the past year. If there is anyone who may have wondered why we held our American and Jumble Sales, perhaps these figures will supply a sufficient answer. But please do not think that I grudge the money spent on improving the place. Goodness knows it needed improving badly enough. And if the Hall achieves the object which it is meant to do and is a real benefit to the village, well, I am quite satisfied*".

March 1934 saw the start of the *Vicar's Hall Piano Fund* and he gratefully acknowledged contributions, while in April he was thanking the Church Council for a grant of £14.10s.0d to pay for the oilcloth on the floor and the draught excluders. And so the improvements/repairs went on. In March 1935 Mr Bury was paying out again, "*For the first time you will be able to see the effect of the new electric lighting which I have installed in my Hall. I hope you will consider it to be an improvement on the old lighting and that you Whist Players will be able to study your hands better, and some of us short-sighted ones may, perhaps, dispense with the help of glasses*".

Amongst many, the Vicar thoroughly enjoyed these Whist evenings. A very sincere, loving and kindly man, Loose seems to have taken him to their hearts and certainly his letters in the parish magazine every month are a joy to read; he knitted the community together beautifully. The sick and bereaved were shown sweet compassion and the lively and fit encouraged in every way. Therefore in 1936 it was a shock to Loose when he was taken very ill at the end of the Christmas day service and rushed to hospital, dying a few days later. He was only 62.

His successor, the Reverend A Neville Hare was a very different personality although likewise a sincere, hard-working experienced priest. He came fresh from, I believe, something like 22 years as an army chaplain with our troops in India and, until he mellowed, his first letters to the parish magazine remind one of Garrison Orders, while his activity in Loose might be said to bear the hallmarks of military brusqueness. But in his own way he did as much for the parish as his predecessors, and was totally dedicated to it, for a start immediately identifying himself with the forward aims of Mr Bury, particularly with regard to the young people. Although the latter's idea of a Girls' Social Club had not yet come about, in 1938 Mr Hare, in a sense, went one better and launched the Young People's Fellowship with, thanks to Mr Gardner-Waterman, a Hall for them to

meet in. Confirmation classes were held once a year – within its walls – and, attending them myself in 1941, I see from my notes that Mr Hare did a very thorough job in preparing us.

But there continued to be the dark side of keeping the Hall in repair. The month Mr Hare enthused about the YPF he also wrote, "*All these activities suggest to me as I write, the building in which they take place. I do not know what it is about that rather ugly tin shanty at the bottom of my garden. In spite of its appearance, there is, I am thankful to say such a happy atmosphere in all that takes place in the Vicar's Hall – but, are we not as a parish, worthy of a more spacious and better building? The matter has come before the Church Council and some are really keen on a new Hall. With a big effort, this could be done*".

And a very big effort was made indeed between January and September 1939. Fund raising understandably played a large part while discussions regarding a suitable site resulted in the decision to use the lower part of the Vicarage garden, but, of course, this involved the church authorities as well as a considerable amount of legal work in terms of conveyance etc. In June Mr Hare became concerned on one or two points and believed that although the Diocesan Board had passed the proposal, the Diocesan Surveyor ought to be consulted as to this site. As he presciently wrote, "*We must remember that at some future time, it is quite possible the Vicarage and garden may have to come into the market and a smaller house and garden be provided for the Vicar, and even if this, happily, may not be found necessary, it is only right that the amenities of the garden and the surrounds of the house generally, shall be of such a nature as not to 'put off' any prospective beneficiary who may come to 'view'*".

September of that year saw the outbreak of World War II and the Hall was immediately requisitioned for the ARP Post (Air Raid Precautions), the exterior walls being sandbagged to absorb blast. But when, late in 1940, the ARP went elsewhere and the Church Council recovered it, they found the floor to be completely and dangerously rotten to the extent that repairs were needed before it could again be used. The balance sheets for each of the years 1937-1942 show all too clearly what an expense the Hall was but, as Mr Hare always declared, it was the greatest asset to community life that the village possessed. The fund to build a new one seems to have been sufficient only for maintenance.

The war ended but over the next decades no new Hall materialised; instead, whenever there was enough money it was spent on redecoration. In 1952 a working party led by Roy Hood, today still a doughty warrior for the village's amenities, cleared and levelled an area of the vicarage garden near the Vicar's Hall, making a parking place for perambulators when babies were taken to the Infant Welfare Centre; evidence of yet another group finding a home within its walls.

The next fifty years saw many changes, Vicars came and went, the Vicarage was indeed sold and the new one constructed apparently on the very site originally suggested by Mr Hare for the Hall! Working parties from time to time did a grand job of painting and putting up new curtains while the stage, which I remember so well, must have gone long ago and the dressing rooms altered into a kitchen. But still the Hall soldiered on, yet with a slow change of attitude towards it. Impatient with its shortcomings, understandable irritation began to take over from pride and even its name was changed, this last, certainly to me, almost a slap in the face to the Rev Gardener-Waterman's gift. Instead of putting up a small plaque somewhere in the Hall to tell its history and reveal his kindness and consideration, and thus explain its unusual name, it was seemingly thrust into the ordinary. Church Halls abound in this land but one would be hard put to find a Vicar's Hall, paid for by an incumbent out of the kindness of his heart and the passion for his ministry. We should have been proud of him and not swept him under the carpet and out of sight for ever.

Today the Hall is a sad sight. A similar building has been saved in Coalbrookdale's Open Air Museum of the Iron Bridge Gorge industry in Shropshire. Such halls were rightly considered part of the area's history and worthy of conservation. In contrast ours in Loose, holding fast the memory of the happiness it gave to so many for nearly a hundred years, quietly moulders away.

Sic transit gloria mundi - thus passes the glory of the world.

SOURCES

Photo copies of the Parish Magazine 1926-1955: LAHS Archives
Typed Hall Document c1942: LAHS Archives

Thanks are owed to Pat Jenner for drawing my attention to these archives in the first place, when I was actually looking for something else within them.

FAMILIES OF WARTIME LOOSE

Margaret Chapman

Of the 65 names listed on our War Memorial, several family connections have been loosely established through marriages between the Bray, Golden, Noakes, Kitchenham, Styance & Coulter families – the Kitchenhams being the main link between the families, together with marriages between the Styance and Coulter families. Seven of those named on the memorial can thus be linked into one 'greater' family – albeit tenuously at present.

Arthur and Rose Styance

Of these seven men, **Arthur Styance** has the dubious distinction of being the first man of the village to be lost to war. He died at sea on 22 September 1914 (aged 26) when three sister ships of the Royal Navy were sunk on that day at 7.30 am whilst on patrol against German mine layers and torpedo boats in the Broad Fourteens, off the Netherlands. Arthur was the son of William Thomas and Ann Styance of Randall's Row in Loose.[1]

After being hit by a torpedo fired by the German U-9, *Aboukir* signalled her consorts to stand by and pick up survivors. The possibility of a submarine torpedo having been the cause of *Aboukir's* damage was not fully assessed at the time, and *Cressy* (the ship on which Arthur served as a stoker) and *Hogue* stopped their engines and put down their boats to rescue survivors. However, the U-9 launched two further torpedoes that split *Cressy's* hull and ruptured her boilers; the ship sank at 7.30am with a loss of 560 crew. Only 305 survivors were plucked from the waters of the North Sea by trawlers and Dutch boats and later landed at Ymuiden.[2] The story of this disaster – less than two months into the war – is told in the book *Three before Breakfast,* by Alan Coles.

Arthur's sister Rose (who was married to William Whibley) received the following letter from the Vicar of Farleigh, the Rev MG Littlewood:

'Dear Mrs Whibley – I am so very sorry to say that your brother's name is among the missing. He may possibly have been picked up by some strange vessel but I fear we must not place too much faith in this chance. Indeed I do sympathise with you deeply and I don't know what to say to help you except just this that the most splendid thing in the world is the death of a brave young man doing his duty. This I think you can feel sure he was doing nobly & we all owe him a debt of gratitude for fighting for us & his country. It is of course bitterly hard to say goodbye but do remember this, there is no such thing as goodbye to the real Christian – we know we shall meet those we have loved again. Please accept my very true sympathy. I will come and see you again if I may. Yours Truly – M. G. Littlewood.' [3]

Another young man who lived in Well Street was also serving on one of the three ships which went down that morning, but he had the good fortune to be rescued by one of the passing trawlers. He and Arthur possibly knew each other. What he had to say gives us a taste of the horrors of that morning:

Aboukir Survivor Interviewed

Able Seaman AH Taylor of Well Street, who had been in the employ of Mr Hodge of Loose before joining the navy, was on board the Aboukir. He said 'I was in my hammock about 20 past six in the morning when I heard a great noise. We thought it was a boiler explosion and all rushed on deck. Captain Drummond sang out, "It's only a boiler explosion; no excitement, men!". An order to close all watertight doors was executed, but by that time the ship had begun to settle down. We had two wounded men on board who were injured during the rough weather a few days before, and these were at once placed in a boat which was lowered and got away. By now the vessel was almost level with the water but perfect order prevailed. Then the captain gave the order, "Every man for himself". I dived down over the side and after remaining in the water for about an hour, was picked up by a Lowestoft trawler and brought into Harwich'.[4]

The Golden Family

James, a stoker on *HMS Princess Irene*, died at Sheerness dockyard, also aged 28, when the ship was blown up on May 27 1915.

Frederick was a corporal with the Hertfordshire Regiment and died as a result of becoming entangled in barbed wire on the fields of Flanders on 31 July 1917, aged 28.

Both Frederick and James were sons of Thomas Golden and Caroline Wilkins. There were 12 other children in this family besides Frederick and James, including Mark, who married Bessie Noakes – this marriage being contributory to the aforementioned 'greater' family. Mark and Bessie set sail for Canada the very next day after the wedding. A descendant of this marriage is Georgina Peters (granddaughter of Mark and Bessie) who lives in Canada, and with whom the Society is in touch.

James

Frederick

Thomas Golden, 1851-1936

Thomas was the father of this large family and the first family home was in Well Street. But before long they moved to *Hawthorne Cottage*, Loose Hill (as the area from the Walnut Tree down to the Green was then known). From here Thomas ran a coal business, post office and shop. The family were well known in the area. **George** (born 18 June 1893) was the local

Hawthorne Cottage ***with the tree from which it took its name***

Gas Man, who lived at *Hawthorne Cottage* with his parents (he never married) until he moved in with his brother Bill in Pickering Street.

William 'Bill' Golden (born 26 December 1894), the youngest son of Thomas, also served in the First World War and afterwards returned to Loose to resume his work for the post office. He continued his postal round in Loose until he retired in 1959 and was awarded the Imperial Services Medal for his long service in government employ. His wife, Ethel Wood, also worked for the post office during the war years. They lived firstly at 5 *Kirkdale Cottages* and then moved to 30 Pickering Street in about 1947.

Bill Golden in his post office uniform 1908

***Bill Golden back at work after the war – outside* Hawthorne Cottage**

Esther 'Bant' Golden, the youngest child of Thomas and Caroline was born 9 June 1897. She married Edward Martin who was the father of Peter, who now lives with his wife in Bexhill-on-Sea – another member of the Golden family with whom the Society is in touch.[5]

Esther 'Bant' Golden in 1913

'… our new council schools' – Loose School

Esther wrote on a postcard to her brother Mark in Canada (undated):

> *'Dear Mark & Bess, this [is a] photograph of our new council schools. They are much nicer than the others – fitted with the latest things. The gardens look very nice. I hope you will be able to judge how big it is. I hope Bessie is better and the children are well. I should like to see them. It is beginning to get cold here, but doesn't look like being a snowy Christmas …'*

The Coulter Family

Arthur James Coulter

Arthur James Coulter died in action at Delville Wood on 31 August 1916, aged 24. He was the youngest son of Mercy and Edward James Coulter.

William Edward Coulter, another son of Edward and Mercy, returned from war but died on 16 October 1919 (aged 38) as a result of consumption (TB) – as did so many who had been in the damp and muddy trenches. His family lived in *The Chequers Inn*, but when William married, he and Hilda went to live in *Forge Cottage* (at the end of *Randalls* Row) in the village. They had a large family and all the rooms in the cottage were used as bedrooms, apart from the room at the front which was kept as the parlour for when visitors called – and for use on high days and holidays. All meals were eaten in a tin shed at the top of the garden.[6]

Norman George Coulter served on HM Submarine *Talisman*. He died 18 September 1942, aged 23, when the ship was torpedoed in the Strait of Sicily. Norman was the son of Albert James and Annie Coulter.[1] (Norman's place in this family has not yet been fully established.)

Mercy Coulter was the matriarch of this family and she was one of the most notable characters of Loose in her day. Her life was wholly centred around the church and for 38 years, right up until a year before her death, she was verger of All Saints', Loose. During the Great War she was one of the women of the village who did much to keep the affairs of the community running as smoothly as possible and after the loss of her two sons she threw herself even more vigorously into the church as a palliative to her grief. 'I used to help cover the graves when there were no men to do it', she once said. 'On one occasion I dug the grave for a little child'.[7]

Mercy Coulter

It used to be said that a person couldn't get christened, married or buried in Loose without first going to see Mercy Coulter, probably because it was she who kept the books! Right up until old age she would climb the two flights of stairs to wind the clock on the church. She would also toll the bell – which meant climbing another two flights up to the bell tower to tie a piece of string to the clappers in order to toll the bell, because pulling the rope down below was too much for her. There is a little wooden door on either side of the clock and she would open one of these to look out and watch the funeral procession coming along Church Street.

Mercy would also light the fire in the stokehold and the gas fire in the church, to warm the building. The church was lit by oil lamps, which were housed in baskets on pulleys and raised and lowered by means of a rope. Her daughters Dolly and Beatrice would help with trimming the wicks and cleaning and polishing the glasses. They would lay them outside along the front path, to avoid filling the church with paraffin fumes. Her children and grandchildren often accompanied her on

her church duties and they too, came to love and revere the church as much as she. They would help her to polish the pews and the pulpit, and to scrub the stone floors. Her little grandson Roy, still little more than a toddler, would take delight in creeping up the steps to the pulpit to peep over the top to view an imaginary congregation – just as the vicar did when he was reading his sermons - and would be filled with awe. In later years, Roy lavished his care on the church, just as his grandmother had.

Mercy was loved by all who knew her and was known to all and sundry as 'Granny Coulter'. Her knowledge of the history of the church was great and she had a fund of stories and happenings in the district since her childhood – but sadly, these tales seem never to have been written down.

She was at a Mothers' Union meeting on the afternoon of 5 October 1939 when she had a stroke. She was taken home by the vicar and friends, but died that night – at the age of 81 years. In a paragraph in the Parish Magazine of November that year, the Reverend Hare (who was to lose his own son fifteen months later in a tragic accident on Ben Nevis) wrote:

> *'Mrs Coulter passed to her rest on October 5 after a short illness. She never rallied from a stroke she received after a Mothers' Union meeting that day. So ended a long and useful life, all of which was spent in Loose. For almost 40 years she was caretaker of the church. An accident a year or so ago, resulted in her having to give up this work, and she was a familiar figure on fine days, sitting in her wheeled chair at her gate by the roadside.'* [8]

Church House had been Mercy and Edward's home for many years, after Edward had retired from *The Chequers*. They had rented *Church House* and shop – later taking out a mortgage on it. When their daughter, Ada Dorothy (known as Dolly), married George Hood, the young couple also lived in *Church House*, but as their own family grew they needed more space to accommodate them all, so Mercy agreed to go and live with her widowed daughter Beatrice – Mercy was a widow herself by this time. So George and Dolly took over the mortgage and Mercy went off to live with Beatrice in *Vale Cottage* (the house on the right of the pair next to *Vale House*).

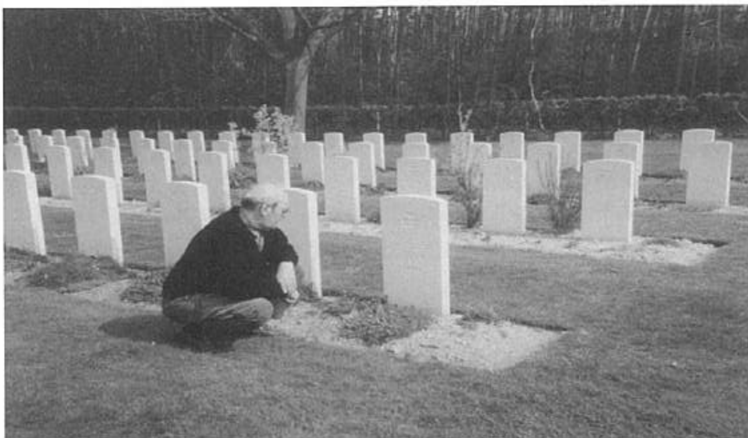
Granny Coulter and grandson Roy taking tea at the old vicarage c.1935, granddaughter Madge looking over Mercy's shoulder and a pair of Revd Bury's corgis in the background

And so it was outside *Vale Cottage* that Mercy used to sit in her wheeled chair. Apparently she and Beatrice didn't always see eye to eye – Beatrice was always a law unto herself, and they had been arguing on the day of the accident, over the lack of butter for their afternoon tea. Mercy had donned her hat and coat and stomped out of the house to go to the shop at *Church House* to get

some, only to slip in the icy gulley (by Brooks Field) – thus falling and breaking her hip, which was a great trauma in those days. Mercy would lie on her bed with sandbags packed around her for many months – no plaster of Paris in those days! Nobody really expected her to recover, but she rallied and even managed to walk on crutches, but she was no longer able to take care of the church.

After Mercy died, Beatrice married Alfred 'Old Punch' Jenner. She had been a widow for many years and had been friendly with Alfred for a long while. No doubt he enjoyed her wonderful cooking as well as her company in his old age. Mercy survived her husband, Edward James Coulter by 18 years. Edward was Sexton for twenty-three years and when business was brisk Mercy would help with the grave digging. They are buried in the churchyard in the shade of the old yew tree. The grave is still lovingly tended by their grand and great grandchildren and provides a glorious blaze of colour in the springtime.

Kenneth Arthur Bray was the youngest son of Phillip and Annie Bray of *Rose Cottage*. Kenneth took part in many air operations over enemy territory before giving his life on 31 March 1944, aged 23. Before joining the Royal Air Force in 1941 he had worked at the Southern Railway West Station in Maidstone. He is buried in Rheinberg War Cemetery.



Gordon Kitchenham at his Uncle Kenneth's grave

These, then, are the seven men of our 'greater' family and a little about their individual families. There is the possibility of a further loose link with the Jenner brothers (Albert & Arthur) through the marriage of Beatrice Coulter with Alfred 'Old Punch' Jenner.[6] Only time, and further research will tell.

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

[1] Commonwealth War Graves Commission website.

[2] Lincoln Paine, *Ships of the World.*

[3] Thanks to Gordon and Hazel Kitchenham, relatives of Kenneth Bray and Arthur Styance for the loan of the letter to Rose Whibley, the photograph of Arthur and Rose Styance, and the photograph of Kenneth's grave.

[4] *Kent Messenger*, September 1914

[5] Thanks to Gina Peters (Canada) and Peter Martin (Bexhill) for photographs and details of the Golden family.

[6] Thanks to Roy and Rita Hood for information on the Coulters.

[7] *Kent Messenger*, 1939

[8] *Loose Parish Magazine*, November 1939

My thanks also go to the Allan Grove Local History Fund for a grant of £100 towards further research, which will be used for checking war diaries and service records.

MRS BESSIE GILBERT: LIFE IN HUNTON AND LOOSE A CENTURY AGO

Prepared for publication by Roger Thornburgh

Bessie Gilbert was born Bessie Taylor on 13 March 1889 and died 1 March 1984. I first met her in 1975, when she was a lively 86 year-old and had not long moved from *Palm Cottage* in Well Street into *George Marsham House* on the Linton Road. She willingly agreed to be interviewed and the tape recording I made of the conversation I had with her on 27 May that year forms the basis of this article. I have cut out some sections and reordered others to make the piece more readable, and words in square brackets are either my questions or additions for the sake of clarity. But mostly this is what she said and the way she said it. I am grateful to Bessie's daughter, Joan Poole, who kindly provided some information and helped sort out bits I couldn't understand.

Bessie Gilbert with her son Jim and daughter Joan in 1982. Jim was visiting England from Australia for the first time in 43 years.

My mother come from Staplehurst in the first place. She lived up *Amsbury Cottages* .. in Coxheath .. well, it was Hunton really. But we had to come up to Coxheath to do our shopping and that. I had seven brothers and one sister. So you could be sure I was a tomboy. [I was] second from the last. I was brought up with boys, you see. As they grew up they went on the farm, and when they got tired of the farm, they go in the Army. I had two in the Navy, and two in the Army .. well I had three in the Army, really, but he only went in because he had to. My sister [Annie] was married.

And then when my father died [1896], my brother [Alf] was working on the farm at the time – see, they were farm houses – and after my brother had a fit one day and he come home and he told mum that he was going in the [Navy], of course my mother had to leave. And then she came down to .. I call it *Balls Farm*, but it is *Forstal Farm*. She lived there a good many years, I couldn't tell you how many; and then my brother he got her a house down in Well Street – [it was later called] *Palm Cottage*. Mrs Gordon [came to live] next door [in 1954] – she bought the cottage, and she named it *Palm Cottage*, so that's how it got its name. It was *Palm Cottage* 1 and 2. She came down on Palm Sunday. And she said 'Oh, Mrs Gilbert', she said, 'I think I'll name it *Palm Cottage*'. She said 'Do you mind?', I said 'No, not at all'. So that's how it got its name. [And when was this move into *Palm Cottage*?] It wasn't *Palm Cottage* then, it was only Well Street. I can't tell you. [About 1910 was it?] Must have been around that area, I couldn't tell you because I was in service. But I know my brother Alf went to Loose School, but not the new one, the old school [up Malthouse Hill].

[I went to school in] Hunton. [Was that a long walk for you?] About three miles' walk there and back. [And what was the school like?] We had a Mistress and Master and the teachers – Lydia Tucker and Mabel Walters, and Mr and Mrs Kett. But we used to have to go round in the Infants' School as we called it, for sewing one afternoon a week. Old 'Daddy' Kett was nice – he used to have the gout; course he used to have his foot done up, he used to come in with a stick, and us girls and boys – we was mixed – we used to laugh and say 'Old Daddy Kett's got the gout'. We knew what he was going to say. First he used to get up on his desk, he'd say, 'You, you brats', he said, 'have I got to talk to you brats? Get on with your lessons'. And with that he'd walk back in again. [So, not much supervision?] Oh no. Poor old Lyddie Tucker had to take it then. [The children came] from Marden, Barn Hill, and some I believe come from Collier Street, but this end of Collier Street – oh yes, it was a big school. And he used to live on the premises, you see, then. We was all in one [classroom] from number one to number six. See, when you come up from the infants, you come up to number one, and then you'd go up like they do, and you had exams. Course I was a good girl .. I know one day I blew in the ink pot ... we used to have desks with so many ink wells .. and one or two of us girls we was in the back row, course we was laughing and talking. I says 'Shall I blow in the ink pot?', and they said 'Yes'. Course, the ink went all over. I had to come out the front. Know what punishment I got? I had to stand with two slates in me hand, with arms outstretched. Course the girls were giggling – I could hear them. I kept going down and down – course it made your arms ache. I let them drop – didn't break though. He sent me in the corner with a fool's cap on me head. [Was the dunce's cap a regular punishment?] Yes. He never caned the girls, never, but the boys had to hold their hand out, and he used to cane 'em. Some boys, when they was going to have the cane, they got a bit of grease or something in their pockets – I don't know what – and they'd grease their hands, so it didn't hurt so much then.

[Did you have rewards or prizes?] Well we never had prizes of any sort. We used to have a sort of a treat – used to be a Sunday School treat as we used to call it, and we used to go down to Yalding to Lady Alexander's. She lived in a great big house in a big field, and then there was a lake. [Lady Alexander was actually Mrs Alexander, who lived at *Cheveney* with the Borton family; to a poor child she probably seemed like a 'Lady'!] They used to take us down in brakes – used to be brakes then – take all us children down, and bring us back home again. And we used to love going down there, cause it was lovely – we used to sit and paddle in the water. Lady Alexander was a very nice person – used to give us a tea every year. That was our summer treat. And then there'd be prizes for what you'd done. [What sort of prizes were given - books?] Yes, books; Sunday school prizes as well as books. Oh, I did have a medal for Sunday School – I had a medal and one bar, for regular attendance. They'd give you a medal for regular attendance, and then each year you'd get a bar. But I don't know what become of it. We went to Sunday School at the school, then we used to have to march from the school down to the church – well I daresay that was about a mile and a half. The school teachers come with you [every Sunday] . Children of today, they're lucky. We had to walk, I did .. well, good many of us children from *Amsbury Cottages* .. we had to walk down between woods – it was only like a cart road – down through woods, hop gardens, and down by the tank – tar tank it used to be – before we got to the school. It was all apple orchards and hops and that.

Course, hop-picking time we used to have seven weeks holiday – always the end of August, the beginning of September. [And you did a lot of hop-picking, did you?] Oh yes, we had to go out hop-picking every year. [Did all your friends and neighbours go hop-picking a lot?] Well, wherever they was, they had to go – they was only poor people like .. like me, like my mother. We had to go and work.

[What did you do in your leisure time – at weekends, for instance?] Oh well, Saturday I had to do so much work and then I was [able to] go out to play. We had woods all round us. I used to say to mother 'Can I go out in the woods and get some flowers?' – when the flowers used to come along. Oh we had flower shows, and a good many of the children – schoolchildren – had to go out and pick all different wildflowers, then bunch them up, and take them for the show – see if you get a

prize. [What show was this?] Flower show. [A local one?] Used to be opposite Hunton Church. My father went in for it. I think all the men that got .. they used to have what they call allotments. My father when he was alive, he used to grow vegetables, like a good many more. Well, they'd pick out the best and put [them] in the show. And we used to have a man just along by us – Mr Jenner, his name was – he was jolly good to me, he used to have always lovely flowers, and I used to say to him day before like 'Mr Jenner, if I go and find some wildflowers, will you bunch them up for me?' 'Yes my girl, I'll bunch them up'. [We used to go to] all the woods and get all the wildflowers, the different wildflowers you can, and he'd bunch them up and put them in water, and I'd give mine to dad to take down. There were prizes for wildflowers as well as garden. But of course the children had got to grow their own flowers if they was garden flowers, they'd got to grow them.

When I was young – about six – my father worked in the oasthouse – I used to love going down there then. Mother used to say 'You can take dad's breakfast and don't be long'. I used to stop down there till about ten o'clock, and dad'd say 'You'd better go home to your mother or she'll grumble'. My father worked on the farm [all his life], then he died at 44. I was seven when my father died. Of course mother had to go out to work. [She] went up [the Union Workhouse] Linton Hospital, I say now, and she worked there 23 years in the washrooms doing washing. When she left there, my brother come home from the Navy, and he says 'Mum, you're not going out to work no more'. But she did, when she came down to *Palm Cottage*. You know those houses on the left as you go down [Well Street], well, that never used to be houses, that used to be a potato field, and then on the other side there used to be pear trees, and up farther there used to be damsons and apples, and my mother went out to work there. [That was] Rouse's; it used to be his farm. He didn't live there .. he lived in Maidstone.

When [Linton Hospital] was the Union, they used to take in what they called 'stragglers'; if anybody went up there for the night, they'd have a bed and they'd give 'em their breakfast but they had to do a bit of work for their keep, as the saying is. And on the other side, where they've got the old people [*Heathside*], that used to be the school, the school house for children. And a little farther on used to be Dr Jones' house, he was a clergyman – see, they had a clergyman up there then. Then when my sister was old enough, she went to service in there. They used to have a treat every year, and they had a maypole out the back of that school house, and when we went – like the women's children went – we was supposed to be Union people. And then they used to take us into Maidstone and give us a treat – they used to take us in brakes then. Then we'd come back and have our tea, then go home with our parents. [The brakes were pulled by horses] and they had seats up both sides, and then some of the smaller ones, they used to put chairs in the middle. It was generally two brakes to take us to Maidstone and give us a treat .. we only had that once a year. And of course when I got older, I belonged to the GFS – that's the Girls' Friendly Society – at Hunton; and Mrs Bradford – that was the clergyman's wife (he was the Vicar of Hunton then) – of course they knew mother couldn't get me to get to see, you know .. she hadn't got the time 'cos she was working .. so Mrs Bradford got me a place. I went to Balham, and the parlourmaid there she came from just along the road. They thought it was very nice for me to go, 'cos being a strange .. you know .. being away from mother at 14, I'd like somebody that I knew – so I knew the parlourmaid. So that's why I went to service in Balham.

The mothers had to come in with their children [to the Union workhouse] because they couldn't afford to keep the house going or something, so they used to put them up there. Then women was one side and the men was the other. See, there was a hospital there, and a maternity ward. Married couples wasn't allowed to sleep together, no – they was only allowed to see [each other] for about two hours on Sundays, and to see their children. [What did they have to do?] Well, work, you see, to help, to do the garden. The Village Hall [was the site of] the burial ground of the [Union] church. And if anybody died and the parents couldn't afford to take them out, they was buried there .. two-wheeled carts, four men. It was hard times.

My mother had to get to work at seven o'clock in the morning .. [the inmates] would be up and all done what could get up, and they had to work, you know to help keep it clean. I suppose they used to have to chop wood and that. But mother was in the washhouse .. I didn't like my mother being up there. [The Union] wasn't a nice place. My mother had to work very hard, you know, standing washing from seven o'clock in the morning till half past five at night – well they wouldn't do it not now, and there wasn't washing machines as they've got today – there was only one washing machine, and that's what they called the dirty washing, and a man had to do that. You know, Tuesday nights, I've seen my mother's hands right from the tips right up to her elbows red raw [from the caustic soda]. There was sort of big sinks, there was a row of them – course there was ever so many women, and they would have two each, one for washing and one for rinsing. Then what women could do it, they had to iron, and put them through .. with rollers – instead of mangles, they had big rollers, and they'd fold the sheets and one had to put it in and the other had to stand and sort of pull it and let the women turn the handle. Well, that used to mangle 'em. They never used to iron the sheets. They used to hang them up in drying rooms. Well, I said I'd never go washing, but I did. But mind you I only done the washing where I went to daily work – used to take some of their washing. The laundries was terrible then – they used to tear the sheets; you'd send a shirt, perhaps half the collar was off or something. And always buttons.

[I came back from service] in 1917. It was different then to what it was when I first came to Loose. There wasn't any difference in alterations or anything, not till after the war when they got this 'ere subsidy for building houses, and then Mr Duncanson [of Pympe's Court] he bought that field [in Well Street] .. well he bought all the fields, right up. [And the ones in Busbridge Road?] That's right. And when [the subsidy] left off, he stopped building.. He was going right up Stockett Lane – 'cos that was his ground, you see, his ground was right up there. [Were they built for his farm workers?] You what! No, they was rented then; those who applied for them, you know, they rented. He was onto a good thing. He was a Scotsman. He got a good bit of land, but the houses along Busbridge Road, several of those were for the farm workers, you see. So that they lived in them, but then they had to work for them.

[When you came home, what did you do?] Well, I had a baby in 1918. [Actually her baby, Jim, was born on 4 October 1917]. Of course, my husband was in the Army, and I stayed at home with mother. And then when my little boy got about three, mum said 'Well, if you like, I'll look after him if you like to go out to work'. Well I went up Piper's, strawberry picking. I used to get up at four o'clock in the morning. After that I says to mother 'I'm not working on the land. I'm going to get daily work'. [How long did you stick that?] Oh, only while the strawberries were on, oh, I couldn't put up with it. The first job I done, I said I'd never go up to Linton Hospital, but anyway I went up there and worked in the laundry. [Was it any different from earlier?] Oh it was all machine work – there was plenty of machines there for doing everything. I looked after all the nurses clothes, and .. we used to stand and iron them and we used to put them in piles for the different names, you see. And I stuck that only about eighteen months. I says to mum 'I can't put up with that – it's too hard a work'. To get up here in the winter time, to get up there at seven o'clock, you know .. it was dark then, we never had no lights. And to go up the lane, I couldn't put up with that. So I got daily work in Maidstone – I used to go two or three times a week. My brother [Albert] got married – well, he come out the Navy, well invalided, because he went down when those three ships went down – the *Albion*, the *Cressy* .. what was the other one? [The ships Bessie referred to were actually HMS *Aboukir*, HMS *Cressy* and HMS *Hogue*; they were all torpedoed by a German U-boat on 22 September 1914 in the North Sea – see Margaret Chapman's article 'Families of Wartime Loose']. He was in the water. He was taken to Chatham Hospital, and he was in there over twelve months. And then he came home. Mother looked after him, and he got better, so he went to work. He worked for a Mr Hodges – at the time he was a builder. And then after Mr Hodges give up, he went up to the Barming Asylum and worked in the laundry there, you know, to help with all the machines. And he picked up his wife there – she was working in the

laundry – and they got married. So there was only mother and the boy and I at home then. Mum used to do all the [house]work – I did as much as I could – but of course as mother got on, she couldn't do it. So I says 'Leave the work' –'cos I only used to go half a day as a rule – I said 'When I come home', I said, 'I'll do the work'. That's what she used to do. Of course, soon as I got home, mum used to say 'There you are, there's your boy, now you must look after him'. She would have nothing to do with .. she wouldn't interfere, I give her her due there, she never interfered with the children when I was there.

[Who was your neighbour in the house when you first came home in 1917?] Mrs Pearson her name was – an elderly lady. Had two sons: one son got killed in a motor accident and the other one was in the army. Well, he came home, and soon after he was home she died. He kept the house on for a good while, but of course a man can't keep .. well, he couldn't. We used to give him his Sunday dinner. Mum'd do any little odd job he wanted done. And then Mr Love come and lived in it, and he was there for about two or three years. And then Mr and Mrs Hoile came [1947], and they had one .. two boys. And I think after that a Mr .. 'um .. he bought it – he'd just come out the Army, and he learned a trade in the building – he had three months – he worked on his own .. I can't think his name now. [It was Mr Charles Poulter; he and his wife Jean bought the house in 1949 and named it *Charjean*.] He bought the two houses, you see, so I paid my rent to him. [Who owned the houses prior to this?] [Major] Thomas; he owned all six of the old houses [*Palm Cottage*, *Spring Cottage*, *Stone Cottage*, and *Tudor Cottages*]. After [Mr Poulter] left, Mrs Gordon bought it [1954] .. and she had all the garden done up – cost her nearly £200, she told me that – had a man from Tonbridge – two men came; laid that garden out lovely.

Mrs Taylor (Bessie Gilbert's mother) holding her granddaughter, Joan, with Mrs Pearson outside* Palm Cottage *in about 1925

[What sort of house was *Palm Cottage* at the back when you lived in it?] Well there was three rooms down, there was [a] pantry and a big long kitchen, with another room on the side and a scullery. There was no bath, no bathroom [and an] outside toilet. [Separate from the one your neighbour had?] No [we] had to share. But of course when Mrs Gordon came [in 1954], she had her house altered, and she had a bathroom and toilet put in. She used to work – she was a matron in a big school, at Repton. See, when they had the holidays, she used to come home. Then while she was away, I used to look after it – I used to go in and open the windows.

[Did you do much gardening – grow your own food?] My husband used to grow it – oh yes, we had a biggish garden, and he kept it done up. Of course, after he went [30 January 1953], I couldn't do it – I can't do digging. Keep the weeds off, I do that, but as for the planting, no. Course, my son-in-law [Joan's husband, Charles Poole] he said he'd do it but he didn't never do it .. he ain't no gardener. He's a Welshman! All the time my husband was at home we grew all our vegetables. We had meat every day, we kept chicken, we kept rabbits. Well, that's all you had to do. We lived well. Of course things were cheaper then to what they are today. You can't get three pennyworth of pieces – that used to make a lovely meat pudding or make a stew, but you can't get that today. I tell you another thing that mother used to .. used to buy those big marrowbones and used to get the butcher to chop them up, and she'd boil that; well then you'd put all vegetables and put some colouring in – you'd made a lovely drop of soup. But would they do it today? [Would <u>you</u> do it today?] Not me, no, not on me own I wouldn't .. if I'd got a family, mind you, I would. Oh yes.

There's lots of things you could do. [Did you live on meat puddings as a lot of people did?] Oh yes, we were brought up on pudding and all vegetables. Yes we used to have meat puddings and jam roly or currant pudding, plain pudding with jam or treacle – butter and sugar we used to like.

[Where did you get your meat from?] Top of Loose Hill – Creed's. He used to do his own slaughtering most of the time, but of course that come in that .. he wasn't allowed to, well – with Reed, he's not allowed to do anything – he has to buy all his. And he worked for Creed. No he didn't, sorry; he worked for Mr French. French had it off Creed, and then when [French] give it up, he had it. [Where did you go for your other groceries?] Well, we had to go into Maidstone for that. [Once a week or more regularly?] No, once a week. Well, you get all your grocery for once a week. Used to be carriers, but the trams we used to have – used to be threepence return then. Then we'd go in and get our grocery and come home. [Was there no grocer's in the village that you could use?] Well, there was always a grocer down the bottom of the street – Tomkin's. When I first come home, he was round Church Street – nearly opposite the church. You know *The Old Vicarage*, he was almost opposite there. Old Mr Tomkin, he had that shop built [in Busbridge Road] – there used to be a forge there – and he had the shop built and they shifted round there. And it was Tomkin's for years. You went into Maidstone to do your big shopping, but my mother'd never do that – my mother always used to say 'Lay your money out once a week, put all down what you want for the week, and get all your groceries'. And of course when I took the housekeeping over, that's what I did. Very, very seldom I went down [Tomkin's] shop. Of course you got all your green stuff and potatoes out from the garden. [What other shops were there in the village that you used?] There was only Tomkin's down the bottom, and opposite The Brooks that used to be a baker's shop – Smith, the name was – Mrs Smith. There used to be the mills, you see, we had mills … there was Gurney's underneath the arch and Wilson's [by Salts Pond] – used to be the waterwheel.

Dr Jones' place [*Great Ivy Mill*] used to be along the valley. He was our doctor – he'd been Dr Jones for years 'cos even when we was up Coxheath, when we was little, he was Dr Jones – and he lived down … just down by *The Bird in Hand*, in the big house there. He used to have a horse and trap. [Did he visit you often?] If we wanted him he'd come. He come and attended my father. I always said he'd come to me. He used to swear and carry on – he was one of them doctors – he was Irish! [And you had to pay then, presumably, if you had the doctor out?] You used to pay once a year after the hop picking. I remember my mother telling me once when I was laying on the sofa, and he was going down to Kennard's to dinner, and she said to my brother Albert 'You must go up and stop Dr Jones and tell him he's got to come at once'. And he was up the corner. Of course, my brother Albert went up, and he said 'Dr Jones', he said, 'my sister's very ill. Can you come?' He says 'Oh bugger your sister', he said. 'Get up on the trap', he says, 'I'll come'. And when he come in the door, mother says, he looked at me and he says 'Poor little soul'. Then after he'd gone, Albert said to mother 'He didn't say that when I asked him'. He told mother what he'd said. But he was like that – he was a jolly good doctor. He had a boy and a girl – and the boy went into doctoring, but he wouldn't stop here with his father, he went away, and the daughter stopped and looked after him. And he come up where Dr Taylor lived – do you know where Dr Taylor lived .. along the Loose Road, just by *The Walnut Tree* – you know there's some houses, then there's some flats where Dr Taylor was – that's where Dr Jones' house was [*Derwent House*, 641 Loose Road]. He was doctor there for years. He was at Coxheath at the time when I was small. He had a mill – I don't know what sort of mill it was; it was always called Dr Jones' mill. But his son used to .. when he was younger – his son used to look after it. Then he [Dr Jones] come up to Loose. He used to attend the Union – he was the only doctor that attended there. He was the only doctor around. He travelled miles, Dr Jones did. He always had his horse and trap, always. He'd always get somebody to hold his horse – I don't know why, 'cos he was a quiet horse. He'd got a stables up there, but of course they turned it into a garage when Dr Taylor had it.

[Where did you get your milk from?] Down the dairy [now *The Dairy House*] – that was Tomsett's. [Did you ever know it as a pub – *The Rose*?] I went there once with mother, and we sat outside .. I remember .. it was before I was married .. I remember that. [There was another pub up Old Loose Hill – *The Rising Sun*.] Yes, Grays had it. That house lays flat .. oh, it's not there now is it? You know where the water comes out the spout – you know there's a bungalow [*Sugar Loaves*] up the top, and the water comes out down the bottom of their garden, there used to be a house lays flat to the road. I never [knew] the name of it .. but I know you could get beer there. [Did people go to particular pubs?] If mother wanted a drink, she'd say 'Come on Bess, let's go down and get a drink', and she'd say to Alec 'You going to look after the children?' – that was my husband, 'cos he didn't drink. And I don't drink a lot. But if mum wanted a drink, and it wasn't very often she had it, but we always went down *The Chequers* a Saturday night, and we used to go in the kitchen then – we never went in the bars or anything – and we'd have our drink and come home. [You'd never go to *The King's Arms*?] No, very, very seldom we went up there. It was too much of a drag to go right to the top of the hill. If we went out for a walk perhaps mother'd say 'Let's go in the garden with the children', – very, very seldom. It was too much of a drag to go up there.

[What happened at Christmas as far as your family was concerned?] Well we always used to .. mother'd get things, and we always had to hang our stockings up in her bedroom .. 'cos we hadn't got a fireplace in our bedroom, so we had to .. My mother always had two little chairs – I always remember them – two little chairs they were. And when the boys was growing up – they was about fourteen – they knew, but they didn't dare tell us. And we used to hang our stockings each side and put a peg on it. We used to say to mum 'Want a peg'. And then of course in the morning, we woke up early. 'Mum, is Daddy Christmas been?' 'Oh yes, come and see'. Of course, we used to sit on her bed and we'd tunger in 'nineteen to the dozen' then. Mother nearly always bought us clothes what we wanted. [Nothing much in the way of toys?] I had a wooden doll. And I used to have a boot box for cradle. And one day my brother said to me 'I say Bess, I can put wheels on them'. 'Can you?' I said. 'Go on, put wheels on it.' And he got some bits of wood, and cut 'em round and made hole, put the wheels on – made four wheels – put 'em on .. you see, then he had to put them on this box, so I says ' You have to put a bit of wire through'. So he put the wire through the top, you see, and wired them on, then he put a bit of string in for me to pull it. Of course I thought that was fine. And one day I was pulling it along and the wheels come off – well of course the box fell to pieces. That was the end of my baby's cradle. I used to sit up in the plum .. we had two plum trees down the bottom of our garden, and in the summer time in the weekends when I wasn't allowed to go out sometimes – I'd misbehaved myself or something – I used to take my dollies, sit up in the plum tree and do the sewing – make baby's clothes – always knew where to find me. [And what about the rest of Christmas Day? How did you entertain yourselves?] Well, I suppose we played about. [Did you have any carol singing?] Oh no, there was no carol singing or anything – that was always done at church. On Christmas morning we had to go to church, then there was no church Christmas night. Mother wouldn't go, she'd got a lot to do; 'cos she'd got the .. there was washing and mending and one thing and another and the housework. [Even on Christmas Day?] Yes. Well there was cooking and everything. [What did you have for Christmas dinner?] We had Christmas pudding, I remember that. We always had Christmas pudding with a drop of milk on it, we had ours. There was never custard, not when I was young; it was only when I grew older that we had custard. [What was the first course? Not turkey?] No. No, we used to have a joint of beef. [And that was special, was it, for you?] Oh yes. It was nearly always meat puddings Sundays dinner, and we'd have a plain pudding and you could have butter and sugar on it – after, if you wanted it, but you didn't want much after you'd had meat pudding and vegetables.

THE GODLANDS, TOVIL

Clive Bradburn

The Godlands ***in the early 1900s***

I first went to work at *The Godlands* in Tovil in 1965 as a young fireman on secondment to the fire prevention department of the Kent Fire Brigade. The building had been acquired for the National Fire Service during the war and after that with the formation of local authority fire brigades it became the HQ of the newly formed Kent Fire Brigade. It remains as their HQ to this day.

The premises nowadays comprises the 'old building' plus a modern extension which houses the Brigade's command control facility. A 1950s annexe building is home to the Brigades museum, which is worth a visit. It is not permanently attended so it is necessary to make an appointment beforehand.

Having worked in various roles at *The Godlands* throughout my 26 year career in the Kent FB I got to know the building reasonably well. However, it wasn't until the late 1970s that a chance remark from my grandmother enlightened me to the fact that she was once employed as a kitchen maid at *The Godlands* when it was in private ownership. She also told me that an old aunt of mine, Florence, (not a blood relative but she had been very close to my family for all of my life) was the lady-in-waiting to the owners of the house for some twenty-four years. This personal link with the house sparked off an interest in the history of the house and in particular the Green family who occupied it for forty-five years.

My research into the history of the house resulted in me arranging a visit in 1979 for both my Aunt Florence and John (Jack) Barcham Green who was the eldest child of Herbert and Gertrude Green who owned and built the house in 1895. Jack Barcham Green will not be a name unknown to local people as it was he who started the Loose Swiss Scout Troop and took over ownership of nearby *Hayle Mill* from his father.

The information given to me first hand from Florence, Mr Barcham Green and my grandmother about life both 'Upstairs' and 'Downstairs' at *The Godlands* was an enlightening and a rewarding experience. As a result I wrote a short article for the magazine of the Kent FB based on the stories they told. The article was included in the Spring 1980 issue.

Mr Jack Barcham Green at the age of 90+ being shown around the grounds of The Godlands by the author in 1979, here accompanied by the Chief Fire Officer Sir Reginald Doyle and Deputy Chief Gary Whitworth.

None of these lovely people were ever to visit *The Godlands* again and within a few years all had passed away after all reaching their mid-nineties. I have since conducted tours of the house for local interest groups and this latest article is a re-visit to the stories I was told all those years ago. I have filled some gaps from later knowledge gained as a result of the contact I had with members of the Green family and some other interested people. I am grateful to them all for providing the information and photographs.

Visitors to the house are instantly reminded of who the original owners were by the beautiful carving 'HERBERT AND GERTRUDE GREEN 1895' in the beam above the fireplace in the reception area. Until the 1970s this beam and the fireplace were partitioned up – presumably during the occupation by the NFS in the war. When the partitions were removed the carved beam, the open fireplace and a large plaque above it were revealed in their original splendour. They remain in place today as a perfect feature when one enters by the front door.

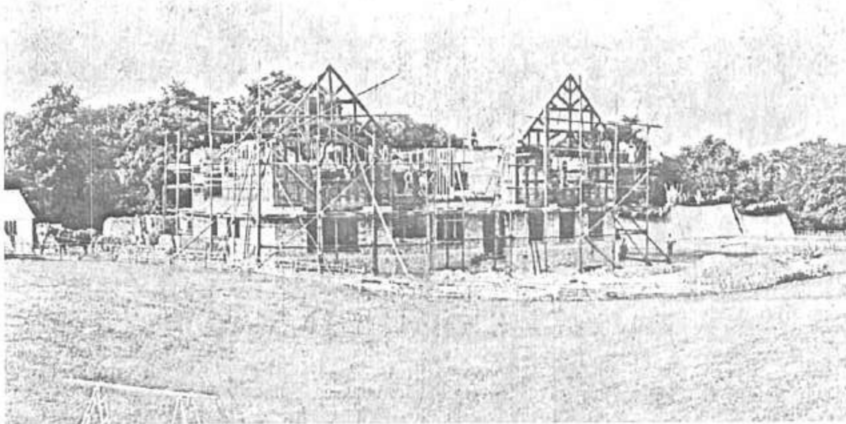
When I showed JB Green the area he was thrilled that it was as he remembered it as a child. The plaque is a Della Robbia and was made in a factory in Liverpool by a man named Rathbone who became a friend of Mr and Mrs Green and he used to visit *The Godlands* from time to time. Apparently, he is well known to students of that kind of art. The Greens bought a lot more of his work when the company went broke but I haven't been able to track down any further items. I am informed that *Country Life* featured it a good many years ago.

It was clear to me from the conversations I had with JB Green and Florence twenty odd years ago that the household in the early part of the 20th century was a happy one both for the family and the staff.

An architect, Mr Benstead from Bearsted, designed the house itself but the design incorporated many of Mrs Green's own ideas. This situation apparently caused some embarrassment for the architect as he found it impossible, on several occasions, to include some of the designs and still produce a structurally sound residence. A compromise must have been made, however, as many of Mrs Green's ideas can still be seen. One example is the balustrade on the main staircase. Mrs Green drew the plans and the architect was on strict instructions to work exactly to them. The original staircase still stands over 100 years later so they must have got it right! The staircase enclosure has been enhanced over recent years by the addition of a number of paintings of the house and gardens all by Mrs Green herself. I understand that members of the family have provided the paintings.

The land was bought from Lord Romney and the digging of the foundations began on 24th March 1895; the Greens moved in on 1st June 1896. The manual building work was mostly carried out by

employees of *Hayle Mill* which Mr Green owned. Some stonework came from the quarry at the bottom of the garden and he also arranged for the roof to have second-hand peg tiles to make it appear old. The Tudor beamed effect with the gables overlooking the gardens is picturesque but from the view of an early picture taken during construction it does question the building's very long term structural stability. Over a hundred years on it still looks good.
The Greens shared a love of gardening and as a result the garden was planned and planted two to three years before the house was built. An extract from Mrs Green's diary of 1896 gives an indication of the conditions that year: 'The heat is intense and until August we had exceptional heat and drought. Luckily we have a good supply of spring and pond water from the mill so we are able to water the newly made garden'.



The house under construction.

The couple would often travel abroad bringing home alpine and other plants for the garden. Ron Payne, the gardener in the 1970s was, with the support of the Chief Officer, instrumental in restoring the garden towards what it would have looked like originally. This was a mammoth task considering that in the days of private ownership there were two to three gardeners often accompanied by Mr and Mrs Green. Mr Green was known to weed the lawns by hand and Mrs Green was often seen carefully weeding the alpine beds.

One of Ron Payne's major tasks during the garden restoration was to clear the undergrowth covering the ragstone bridge in the rock garden. Until that time the bridge was barely visible because of the undergrowth taking over, but Ron cleared it back and it was good to see that when I visited in 2003 it was not dissimilar from the picture taken in the heyday of private ownership. A story I was privileged to be told by JB Green and later confirmed by his brother Nicholas (Dick) was that when Herbert Green had the bridge built he constructed a casket and placed it under the keystone of the bridge. It contains several items such as a coin, a newspaper of the day and other information which, when eventually exposed, should tell much about the house and the era. Herbert Green's foresight in placing the casket behind the keystone has hopefully ensured its safekeeping for years to come.

The bridge in the rock garden circa early 1900s. The casket is behind the keystone.

The drought of 1896 was not a major problem for the Greens as they also had the foresight to build in an irrigation system for the garden. A water tank (which I can vaguely remember as still being in existence in the 1960s) fed an underground pipework system by gravity through the garden. From this, taps were positioned at relevant points for watering purposes. The pipes ran between a series of ponds which were rediscovered and cleared by Ron Payne in the 1970s. He

also unearthed much of the old lead pipework. Sadly, on my last visit I could not find any. The gardens are now tended by contract gardeners working for the Kent FB; whilst the garden is generally maintained well, there is not evidence of devotion to and understanding of the detail and the original plan to which Ron worked before he left several years ago. One of the ponds still remains and is kept in a reasonable state.

The original ponds were banked by rare water plants, and water-lily leaves covered the surface of the water. In fact they grew so thickly that one of the Greens' children, Barry, was quite convinced that it was possible to walk on them. This thought became an obsession until one Sunday he feigned a cold and stayed alone at the house whilst the family went to church. On their return they found a clothes line full of wet clothes and Barry already beginning to develop a real cold. He needed no more convincing that he had been wrong.

Another use of the pipework system was to provide water for the ice-rink. During very cold winters, of which there appeared to be many, the children, and in later days the grandchildren, would spray the surface of the tarmac tennis court with water thus creating an icy surface for skating. The tennis court eventually formed the base for what is now the museum. An occasional visitor to the garden was the curator of Kew Gardens, which illustrates the importance of the garden in those days.

Mr and Mrs Green had six children, three of whom were still alive in 1979 when I first carried out the research into the family. These were John (known as Jack Barcham Green) who was the eldest and I was fortunate to be able to interview him; Nicholas, who was only a couple of years younger and corresponded with me from his home in Scotland; and Marjorie who lived in Melbourne, Australia. JB Green, like his parents, loved the visits abroad and particularly to Switzerland. It was as a result of these visits that he came to name his Scout Troop 'Loose Swiss', which was also one of the earliest troops to be formed in this country and is still going strong. JB Green's son Remy, to whom I was grateful for providing some of the early photographs, kept *Hayle Mill* as a family concern, and his son Simon became a director of the firm representing the seventh generation to be associated with the mill.

In my early years in the fire service I can recall visiting and being involved with the fire inspection of the mill. How I wish I had taken photos or kept records of the way the paper was being made by hand. I can still remember the sifting of the pulp and its pungent smell. The running water and the noise of the machinery are now unhappily long gone. The old building, of course, still remains but is derelict awaiting some form of development into housing or whatever. Its future as I write is unclear but if the old mill cannot be tastefully converted with some form of connection to its industrial past then for me I would rather see it removed completely and the valley returned to its natural state. The side of the Loose Valley between the lowest part of *The Godlands* garden taking in the old quarry leading away behind the mill must be one of the most untouched and least spoiled anywhere in the Maidstone area.

I return now to the severe winters around the start of the 20th century. These were well remembered by JB Green who could recall many a tale about them. For instance, as a child he was not content with skating on the frozen tennis court, but recalled skating on the frozen River Medway between Tovil and East Farleigh. Indeed it was necessary for his mother, during the bad snows, to use a pony and sleigh to get to Maidstone. She could leave the sleigh outside any shop and not be bothered by traffic wardens!

It would appear that Jack and his cousin Tom who lived nearby, were quite adventurous as teenagers. One year they built what must have been the original land yacht. The description of the yacht was very much like that of the modern land yachts often seen on large beaches. The

difference being that Jack and Tom's yacht had four wheels and two seats as opposed to today's single-seater often only with three wheels. The test route for the yacht was also somewhat ambitious. Apparently, the milkman with his horse and cart had a fright one day along Heath Road, Coxheath, when a yacht overtook him travelling at some considerable speed and in full sail. Jack and cousin Tom must have been the only people to have sailed from Tovil, through East Farleigh via Coxheath and home. The mind boggles at what reaction would greet such a venture with today's traffic!

Mr and Mrs Green kept a reasonably-sized staff to manage the house throughout the years. The staff loyalty to the Greens was constantly repaid by acts of kindness. According to my grandmother and Aunt Florence it was not uncommon for three or four members of staff to be given days off so they could have a trip to the seaside together. From the conversations I had and the stories told, it was clear that there was a great deal of friendliness and happy times during those years. It was probably because of the goodwill and respect in households such as this that the 'in-service' or 'Upstairs, Downstairs' era lasted well into relatively modern times.

Herbert and Gertrude Green in party hats with the staff joining them in the photo. Aunt Florence is on the extreme left.

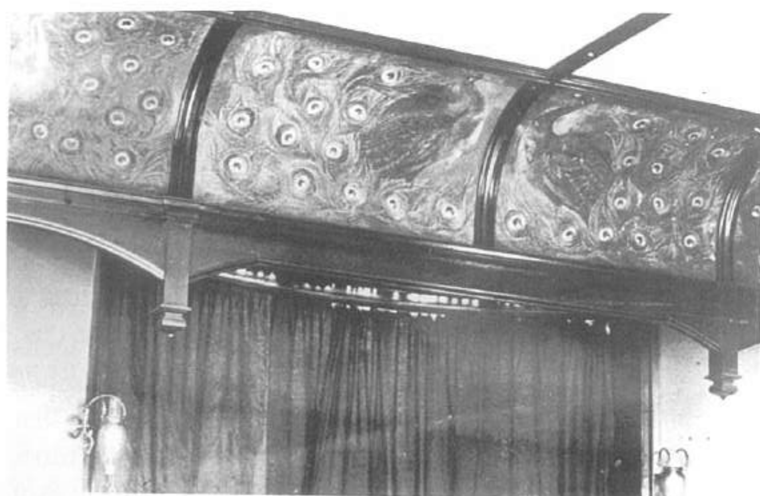
One observation I made but chose not to report in my first article, was that when I talked to JB Green about my Aunt Florence, his eyes lit up and he told me that he remembered her very well even after more than 60 years. Of course, I must read nothing into that but when one considers that there was a household of six children growing up well into their late teens living alongside a team of staff, many of whom would have been the same age, I think I may be forgiven for guessing that there might have been a little flirtation from time to time. When I spoke to Florence about Jack, she said that he was a wonderful man, but then she was the type of person who could not say a bad word about anybody. Although I managed to get them both to visit *The Godlands* in 1979 when they were both in their mid nineties, I could not for practical reasons get them to visit together. I would like to have done so.

The Greens' children loved play-acting and would often perform to family, friends and staff on a winter's evening. These plays would be well rehearsed with frequent 'ad-libs' that children manage so well. A small stage was built into a billiards room which was an extension to the main building and completed sometime after the original.

The room is used now as conference room and the stage has once again been opened up after spending many years as a bar forming part of a recreation room for the Fire HQ. However, many of the original features of the original billiards room remain. The Green's deliberately designed the built-in recessed curved bench so that it is raised above floor level. This afforded an excellent viewing position of the billiards table, which sat centrally in the room. The arm-ends of the seat were carved 'G' for Green but a casual observer could be forgiven for assuming that they are just decorative ends to the arms – the whole thing blends in so well.

All the woodwork in this room was stained with red ink and when waxed gave a very effective finish. The ink stain remains today and although at my last visit the room was maintained extremely well and tastefully decorated, I would be very surprised if it is waxed regularly – it certainly wasn't when I worked there. Ink stain was also used throughout the hall, dining room and upstairs passage panelling, but there it was in green.

My conversations with JB Green and Florence revealed much about this room. I remember taking Florence into the room during her visit. 'Where have the blue birds gone?' she enquired. Neither I, nor any of my KFB colleagues, were able to give her an answer or indeed had any idea what she was talking about. However, she soon enlightened us. She told us the story that the large sweeping coving around the room was once adorned with paintings of blue birds, probably peacocks, joined beak to tail and extended for almost the perimeter of the room. She said that these birds were painted by hand by a local disabled artist. To enable him to reach his work, a cradle was constructed and hoisted up mechanically by the staff. It would be their task to ensure that he was placed in position and taken down at the correct time. Florence could recall him being up there for long periods of time and very infrequently did he ask to be lowered down!


The peacock coving

Unfortunately the work was never finished because the artist died before completion. Although the paintings were probably covered over during the war, it may be possible that they were papered over and if so the peacocks could merely be hidden away awaiting possible restoration.

In the 24 years that have passed since Florence's visit no such restoration has taken place. However, shortly after my article was published, I received a letter from Nicholas Barcham Green, Jack's brother, who was able to confirm the story but added that the birds were indeed peacocks but were not beak to tail but were in pairs, beak to beak and pair by pair. He also said that the paintings were cleverly carried out on a very rough background, most likely roughcast. Knowing this base was made to last, the removal of several generations of coverings may well reveal the hidden peacocks. I hope that may be possible one day. However, we do now know what the paintings looked like because Remy Barcham Green, JB Green's son, was kind enough to send me a black and white photo soon after my correspondence with Nicholas.

The old billiards room has revealed one other secret thanks initially to Florence during her visit. As well as missing her peacocks she looked at the old fireplace in the corner and told us that behind all the modern panelling there was once a large decorated wall plate similar to the one in the entrance hall. She could also recall that it was possibly in-laid with sea shells brought back from New Zealand. This time she was almost right. Nicholas after reading the article was able to confirm that a plaque existed, but instead of the plate it was the shells that Florence remembered, set in a kidney shaped wooden frame on a bed of concrete. He was even able to recall that a mill bricklayer called Harry Latham laid the concrete and Gertrude Green placed the shells into it before it set. He very much hoped that when it was eventually exposed it would be intact. Years went by and I had long since left the Kent FB. In 1993 I was showing a local group around the house and telling the story of the shells and to my surprise as I walked into the billiard room there were the shells, unfortunately missing the frame, but set in rough concrete just as had been described to me. Obviously, during re-decoration and with knowledge of the story, the Chief Officer of the time had seen fit to expose the shells to see if they existed and here they now were in their original splendour. No one knew what happened to the frame but, like the papering over of the peacocks, this probably happened before the Kent FB took over the premises following the wartime occupation by the National Fire Service.

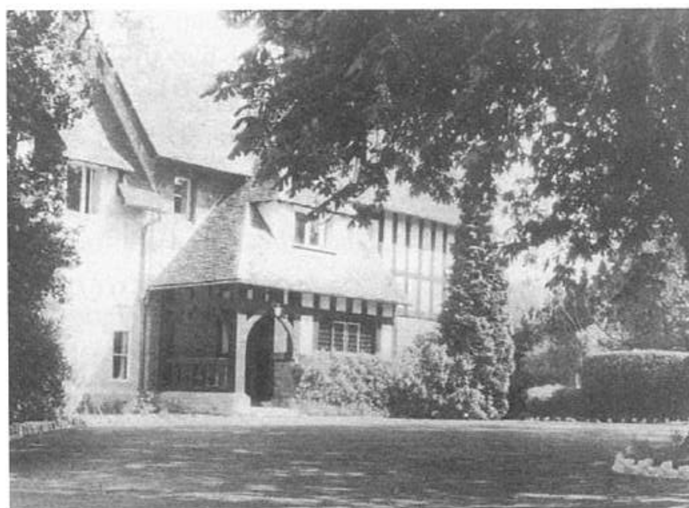
The letter from Nicholas confirmed that as children they had 'a wonderful time' growing up at *The Godlands*, and this view was most certainly shared by his brother Jack when I was privileged to be able to interview him and escort him around the house in 1979. Both he and Nicholas very much appreciated the way the Fire Brigade have preserved the house over the years. Nicholas recalled visiting *The Godlands* early in the war just prior to the house being acquired by the National Fire Service. He said that he and the other children frequently visited their parents and joined them to sleep in the cellars during the bombing raids. He remembered one day at lunchtime a string of bombs was dropped and the house just happened to be between them and was left unscathed!

When Gertrude Green died a few years after Herbert, her obituary in the local paper confirmed to me why life at *The Godlands* in those days were so good for both family and staff. It read '…she became one of the town's best loved and most well-known residents' and 'during the many years she lived at *The Godlands*, Mrs Green spent a great deal of her time visiting the sick and elderly in the Tovil district of the town where many remember her kindnesses. She was an artist of exceptional talent and executed many fine paintings in watercolours and oils. She also did some remarkable embroidery, unique because she used thin ribbon instead of cottons'.

In a similar kind tribute to Herbert, his obituary records that '…the funeral cortege passed between two lines of the male staff of *Hayle Mill* and all the staff and work people were present ..' Mourners who attended included representatives of mills now synonymous with the papermaking industry both locally and wider afield, such as Hollingworth, Balston and Albert E Reed.

So what about Florence, and indeed both my grandmother and her sister who were both scullery maids for a short time at *The Godlands*? Florence worked at *The Godlands* for 24 years then did various jobs living locally as a spinster for the rest of her 97 years. My great aunt only died a few years ago at the age of 91, and my grandmother died at a Loose nursing home in 1993 at the age of 93. *The Godlands* environment must have been healthy if all this longevity is anything to go by!

My grandmother's memories, like those of everyone else I spoke to, were of happy days at *The Godlands*. I suppose it came as no surprise that when we went through my Gran's personal effects, I came across the newspaper cuttings of the obituaries of Herbert and Gertrude which my Gran had fondly kept in her possession for all of those years.



The house in 1980 and it still looks the same in 2005.

As for Jack Barcham Green, his life story particularly with the mill and the scouting movement is well known locally. In his later life he lived not far from me in Lancet Lane, Loose. It was there that I interviewed him in 1979 when he was 94. He had a distrust of journalists, but when I explained that I was simply writing a short article for a local fire brigade magazine he was a little more relaxed about it. It also helped that my young son had just joined Loose Swiss Scouts! I was not allowed to use a tape recorder – his attitude towards journalists had clearly hardened slightly since the time Roger Thornburgh managed to interview and record him some four years previously for the Journal of the Loose Area History Society which was published in 1993.

I, along with many hundreds of others, attended Loose Swiss Scouts' memorial service to JB Green in Boughton Monchelsea church on 27th March 1983. He lived to the ripe old age of 97 and the quote on the front of the service order sheet reads: 'Any of us who knew him must feel we have been in the company of one of the great pioneers of Scouting, totally dedicated to the principles of Scouting for Boys'.

I am grateful, as I believe all of the Green family are, that *The Godlands* has been well cared for by the Kent FB and has retained much of its original character. To those in the fire brigade that only look at *The Godlands* as an HQ and command control centre, the fact that it was once a private house with the hustle and bustle of an Edwardian family must not be forgotten. It was a perfect example of the class system that actually worked for the benefit of all.

As Aunt Florence said to me when I offered to show her old room in the staff quarters in the attic, 'No thank you, the emotion is great enough at seeing most of this beautiful house after 50 years. The wonderful memories of my time here and the family and friends I had, I will cherish for my remaining days. To see my old room would be just too much'. She passed away within months of JB Green, three years later.

PROSPECT ROW: TWELVE GEORGIAN COTTAGES?

Paul and Emma Newton Taylor

Prospect Row *in 2004*

The name "*Prospect Row*" has faded from memory, much as it has faded from the front of the cottages that made up *Prospect Row*. Today only some of the letters are faintly discernable on the brickwork of 625 Loose Road; this row of twelve cottages is now known simply as 613-635 Loose Road. We can't be sure that they are Georgian but they were built before 1840 as they appear on the Loose Tithe Map of that date when they were owned by Joseph Amies, who was connected with local paper making. Premises for his company were in Chancery Lane, Maidstone, where products for watermarking of paper, etc were produced. Unfortunately the Tithe Map does not give any details of the tenants, although this can be obtained from the ten-yearly Censuses starting in 1841.

The cottages each had two bedrooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs. It was not uncommon for three generations to live in one house but there were also families that consisted simply of parents and young children, and occasionally single folk. Taking the 1881 Census as an example, most had between three and five inhabitants:

2 *Prospect Row* there was Mary Cook, a 70-year old widow, living on her own.
6 *Prospect Row* was 70-year old Thomas Shrimpton who was a letter carrier for the Post Office.
9 *Prospect Row* (now 619 Loose Road) there were Jesse and Louisa Mannering (aged 61 and 57) with John and Lucy Watson, son-in-law and daughter, and an 8-month old baby.

11 ***Prospect Row*** (now 615 Loose Road), there was George Mills, aged 56, an agricultural labourer with two of his adult children (Ellen Mills, aged 27, a domestic servant and George Mills, aged 22, an agricultural labourer) and a grandson Frederick Mills, aged 6.[1]

There was, therefore, a real mix of families in the twelve cottages at this time. All the male heads of household were labourers of one description or another apart from No 6.

The next evidence that we have for *Prospect Row* is the Valuation Office survey of 1910-1915. The 1910 Finance Act, promoted by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, provided for tax to be levied on the increase in value of all property since 30 April 1909. Whilst the tax was never implemented, the Board of the Inland Revenue's Valuation Office surveyed every property in Britain to ascertain the value as at 1909 and most of these surveys survive.

The *Prospect Row* survey was carried out on 25 November 1911. Whilst it does not state that it relates to *Prospect Row*, it refers to the row consisting of twelve cottages and there were no other rows of twelve cottages in the survey. The survey comments that these are brick and slated terrace cottages in very bad repair. Decorating and painting is required. Even in 1911 they were considered old. There was one well for the whole terrace and no sinks. There was one shared WC for every two cottages. The survey comments that each cottage had four rooms with a cellar but the valuation shows that only 1-4 *Prospect Row*, valued at £70 (after allowing £5 for repairs) had cellars whilst 5-12 *Prospect Row* were valued at £65 (after allowing £5 for repairs) as they had no cellars. In fact this was incorrect as 5 *Prospect Row* also had a cellar. Then as now, there was a passageway along the back of the terrace which gave shared access from the rear of the properties to Pickering Street.[2]

The surveys also tell us that the cottages were let on weekly tenancies for an annual rent of £8. 9s [£8.45p] (or 3s3d a week [16p]) for the cottages without cellars and an annual rent of £9.2s [£9.10p] (or 3s6d a week [17½p]) for the cottages with cellars. The cottages were owned by three sisters: Kate, Bertha and Edith Goodman of *Hillside*, Roseacre, Bearsted. However, according to the surveys, they did not own them jointly. Kate owned 1-4 *Prospect Row*; Bertha owned 5-7 and 11 and Edith owned 8-10 and 12. From the 1881 Census we can discover that Edith, Bertha and Kate were the daughters of Charles and Sarah Goodwin. Charles was a butcher in Yalding but his daughters (then aged 12, 11 and 9) had been born in Tunbridge Wells. The three sisters had two elder brothers and a younger brother. By the 1901 Census, Charles is still a butcher in Yalding and his unmarried daughters are still living in Yalding. One brother is now a butcher in Gillingham and another is a publican in Yalding. It is not clear how the Goodwin sisters came to own the cottages in *Prospect Row* or why their brothers did not own any of the cottages. By 1911 the sisters would have been in their late 30s or early 40s.

It was about this time, in the early part of the twentieth century, that houses were built in Loose Road, opposite the cottages. The name *Prospect Row* therefore became obsolete. An idea of what the view from the cottages may have looked like prior to this can be obtained from standing at the top of Lancet Lane and looking down towards the valley.

The title deeds to 615 Loose Road, and presumably the other cottages, only date from 22 August 1949 when Eric Spillett of Buckland Road sold them to Clifford and Marie Towler of Lancet Lane for £1,900. However, the deeds do detail the owners since 1930 when it had been bought by Benjamin Small and Charles Norley before passing to Eva Ethel Walker and Percy Dalton in 1942 and Eric Spillett in 1944. We do not know when the Goodwin sisters disposed of the properties but it must have been between 1911 and 1930.

The Towlers gradually sold off the cottages from 1952 (although by then they had moved to Otham). It would appear that the sales were usually made when there was vacant possession, following the departure of a tenant, although at least one sale was made to a sitting tenant. The Towlers sold 615 Loose Road in April 1983 and this left only two cottages in the Towlers' ownership.

Originally there was no footpath in front of the gardens so that they extended right up to the main road. In June 1972 the Maidstone Council, referred to in the legal documentation as the "Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Maidstone", purchased around half the front gardens of each property in order to put in a footpath along the main road.

Today the cottages have changed from the way that they were over 160 years ago when they were built. Not only have the front gardens been halved but toilets and bathrooms have been installed. Some have added porches or modernised windows. This gives the cottages their individuality – no two cottages are the same as their owners have modernised them over the years.

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[1] The PRO reference for the 1881 Census for Prospect Row is RG11/926, Folio 66, Pages 11-13

[2] PRO IR58/52655, 1860-1871

THE LAST OF THE LINE – RALPH BUFFKIN
BORN 1627, DIED 1710

Pat Jenner

Arms – Or, a chevron azure between three esquires' helmets proper. Crest – Or coronet, or a falcon rising argent, a beak and bells of the first, straps gules. (Rouge Croix Pursuivant).

Levin Buffkin or Bufkin landed at Dover in the year 1500 from the southern provinces of the Netherlands, now Belgium, and is registered in the 1507 Census of Foreigners as of Huguenot origin. He bought land near Dover, married and raised a family. His grandson, Ralph, purchased *Gore Court*, Otham, in 1550 and a short while later *Brishing Court*, described as in Langley.

The family used few male Christian names, Ralph, Levin and Henry being repeated throughout the generations. Ralph of *Gore Court's* grandson, also Ralph, purchased *Salts* of Loose in 1579. In 1592 one of his sons, Levin, together with his brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Fludd, were members of parliament for Maidstone. At his death in December 1638, his eldest son, also Ralph, inherited *Salts* – later known as *Salts Place*.

All the male members of the Buffkin family were educated at the Inns of Court and, by the time of Ralph the Younger's possession of the house in Loose, they were connected by marriage to the Ropers of Linsted; the Fludds of Nether Milgate, Bearsted; the Barties of Bearsted and Lincolnshire; the Polhills of Shoreham, Kent; and the Weldons of Swanscombe, all holders of Court appointments.

The family bought additional land at Barcombe near Lewes in West Sussex which became the home of Ralph's nephew, Henry who married Elizabeth Polhill. This was to cause a family crisis as Henry was a wastrel and a gambler; he was also a Royalist and the Polhill family was for Parliament and related by marriage to Cromwell's General Ireton. Henry and his cousin, Sir Thomas Lunsford, joined Prince Rupert and in order to clear her son's considerable gambling and drinking debts his mother, Sarah, née Fludd, now a widow, sold *Gore Court* to her own family. Henry's wife died without issue in January 1661, Henry having left for America with the Lunsford family in 1660. There is a record of his safe arrival but no further trace of him.

Ralph of *Salts* was a confirmed Parliamentarian. At the time of the Battle of Maidstone (1 June 1648) he was 21 years of age and there is no record of his taking part in it. In 1667 when the Dutch came up the Medway, the Trained Bands were mustered and at that time Ralph was Captain in the Company of Foot of the Trained Band in Sir John Tufton's Regiment, commissioned by the Earl of Southampton. Sir John Tufton lived at *Mote Park*, Maidstone, and interestingly he had been a Royalist whilst his father, Sir Humphrey Tufton, also of the *Mote,* had been for Parliament. Samuel Pepys wrote in his diary of the '... honourable behaviour of the Dutch, neither killing civilians nor plundering'.

Ralph, later promoted to Major, continued to live in Loose, farming his own land and dealing in crops from others. He never married although there is family correspondence dated 1676 from a

Pepys wrote in his diary of the '… honourable behaviour of the Dutch, neither killing civilians nor plundering'.

Ralph, later promoted to Major, continued to live in Loose, farming his own land and dealing in crops from others. He never married although there is family correspondence dated 1676 from a Robert Barnham, claiming kinship with the family, concerning a lady to whom Ralph had made advances. It seems she refused him. This left him without an heir – Henry was deemed dead and two other nephews, Levin and Ralph, who had gone to Barbados, were not heard of again and deemed to be dead also. In fact, they had travelled from the West Indies to Virginia, obtained a land grant, married Quaker sisters and prospered – their family existing to this day. Accordingly, Ralph named John Martin as his heir. John, a lawyer, married and living in Westminster, was the grandson of Ralph's sister Joan, who had married the Rev Richard Martin with parishes on the Romney Marsh.

1912 **Salts Place** *1992*

On 1 October 1702, eight years before his death, Ralph was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Kent. He died at *Salts* on 10 February 1710, at the age of 83 years. His personal goods and wearing apparel were valued at £55 and the total estate amounted to £147.14s.8d. The sum of £100 each was bequeathed to his nephews Levin and Ralph, if living.

Ralph Buffkin lies in the family vault in the crypt below the east window of Loose Parish Church, the last male Buffkin in England, all known male relatives having predeceased him. No portrait has been traced.

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SOME ASPECTS OF PAPERMAKING AND PAPER CONVERSION IN TOVIL DURING THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

Noel Gibbons

Samuel Hook moved with his family to Kent from Chalford in Gloucestershire in 1852. At Chalford he had been a prosperous silk manufacturer at a silk mill, known as *Warehouse Mill*, and the family lived in a house called *Millswood*. It is thought that because of the influence of his wife, he had built a chapel in the grounds of his home. The leader of this chapel died in 1849 and was succeeded by Samuel's eighteen-year-old, son Charles Townsend Hook.

At Tovil the family, including Charles, lived at *Tovil House*, which used to stand at the bottom of Burial Ground Lane. When Samuel arrived in Kent, he took over a paper mill at Tovil (*Upper Tovil Mill*) in partnership with William Simpson. The partners installed a paper machine to use straw as the raw material, and the mill became known as *Straw Mill*.

By 1861 the family were living at Snodland and interests were now in *Snodland Paper Mill*. Charles was instrumental in this venture. Samuel Hook had moved all his interest away from the Tovil mill by 1862.

Simpson continued to run *Straw Mill* for some time with a new partner named Hargreaves. During 1896, it was acquired by Albert E Reed. It had been damaged by a recent fire. Reed had been involved in the running of other paper enterprises at Northfleet and Dartford. This was the start of a business which later grew into Reed International. Another mill acquired by Reed was *Bridge Mill*, also at Tovil. Other mills and paper-based enterprises in Tovil were *Allnutt's Mill* and the Diamond Fibre Co. These two were not part of A E Reed.

Corrugating Factory at Tovil

During 1928 a factory was opened opposite Tovil Mill. It was built by A E Reed for The Powell Lane Company, who already had a paper conversion factory in Gloucester. Powell Lane had been in the business of corrugating paper for a number of years using Dutch strawpaper. Just before the end of 1928, the British Government placed a tariff on imported paper, which greatly increased the price.

Powell Lane contacted A E Reed asking them to make strawpaper from wastepaper. A E Reed agreed to do this providing a corrugating plant was built at Tovil. As a result of this agreement the Tovil factory was built. It was 90ft x 90ft initially and was later increased in size as the factory acquired more machines.

The factory started producing corrugated paper in October 1928, with one Lotz Abbott corrugating machine. The next year it was decided to add a machine for cutting corrugated paper into rectangular pieces. A Müller cut piece machine was sent from Gloucester and put into production. This was the start of another department of the factory.

During 1929-30, another Lotz Abbott corrugating machine and a fine-flute corrugating machine were added. In the same period a small double-backed board machine was installed for the production of small 'pull-through' boxes. This installation was complemented with six wire-stitching machines. This would have meant that at this time the production staff consisted of about fifty people. The year 1930 was a turning point in its history as the Powell Lane Company was unwilling to expand any further. The result of all this was that the Tovil factory only was sold to A E Reed.

It now changed its name to The Medway Corrugated Paper Company and an entirely new type of business was introduced at Tovil. The factory installed a 95-inch Jagenburg straight-wound paper-tube machine. This machine only made tubes for Tovil Mills at first, but within a few months, tubes were being made for other mills in the vicinity.

It now became apparent that the Tovil factory was not large enough to house both corrugating and double-backing machines, so a new factory built on the Aylesford site for box making and Tovil's double-backing machine was moved there. One of the reasons for siting the Medway Corrugated Box factory at Aylesford was that liners (the surfaces separated by corrugated layers) were of kraft material, and Aylesford at this time had just started making English kraft paper. Until this time all kraft had been imported from Canada or Scandinavian countries. The factory started producing boxes and cases in January 1931.

At this point I feel it appropriate to make a mention of the basic product and some of its history as without the need for the product, a lot of what went on in Tovil, which employed so many people, would have not been necessary.

Corrugated Paper

Single-faced corrugated paper which was the main product at Tovil is a corrugated piece of paper glued to a backing sheet. There were two main flute formations: coarse flute, usually known a "A" and fine flute known as "B". The corrugating machines, being made on the continent of Europe, were two metres wide, the nearest practical imperial measurement being six feet six inches or 78 inches. Consequently to optimise the width (deckle) of the machine the most popular size from the manufacturing point of view was 26 inches. However all sizes from 2 inches up to 78 inches were made and for the most part were priced pro rata to the 26 inch price. Rolls were 250 feet long and weighed about 30 lb. The pricing structure was based on volume rather than individual size and all manufacture was to customer order, although a small stock of the more commonly used sizes was maintained and used to enhance the speed of delivery.

Delivery of corrugated rolls within the major metropolis where stocks were held was the same day and in earlier days would have been made by horse-drawn carriers, later superseded by Scammel 'Motor Horses' (three-wheeled motor units drawing a trailer). In later years when road had taken over from rail despatch, delivery was occasionally the same day, often the next day, but commonly completed within two or three days from order.

The production of strawpaper produced a yellow-coloured coarse paper product of good strength, ideal for a cushioning material such as corrugated paper. This yellow colour became a brand image, most other manufactures having to use a paper made from reconstituted wastepaper, with slightly inferior rigidity qualities. Even after Tovil Mill stopped production of strawpaper it retained the name of Strawpaper by the introduction of a yellow dye! Customers of the corrugated strawpaper maintained it was a superior product and were prepared to pay slightly more for the dyed quality, although to be able to compete with other manufacturers a grey, dye-less quality was also produced. I believe this change may have originally taken place either prior or during the 1939-45 war years when production and sale of corrugated paper was strictly controlled by the Ministry of Supply by

the issue of licences. (Some of these old licence forms are in the Loose Area History Society's archives).

In February 1971 UK Sterling became a decimal currency and later the same year the British paper industry introduced decimal sizing (A4 replaced Quarto and Foolscap, etc). Along with this, corrugated paper rolls needed a new standard. Remember that the corrugating machines were 2 metres wide but had only ever been used to a width of 1981mm, consequently the corrugated rollers were worn in the middle section and so could no longer be used full width. Replacement rollers were very expensive and the manufacturers in the trade could not contemplate total replacement. A direct equivalent of 26 inches would have been 660 mm but this too was cumbersome as the inch steps previously available would be 25.4 mm. Instead, a new standard of 650mm was agreed between manufacturers with interval sizes based on 25mm. This was totally practical but meant once again a reduction in the optimum use of the machine as it was now only producing 97.5% of its envisaged capacity! Weights of papers changed too during this metrication process, and instead of lb per double crown, ream weights became instead sheet weights expressed as grammes per square metre, abbreviated to g/m^2. Roll length became 75 metres. All these changes were introduced when paper was increasing in price dramatically because of a shortfall of waste paper. This change in itself produced some rationalisation within paper mills. Coupled with the desire and need ever to remain competitive, weight became reduced by as much as 25% and some prices were lower than they would have been had not the metric change been made, but there was no exploitation of the market price, competition was too fierce.

Because of the immediate nature of deliveries it was not uncommon for the work load for the factory on a Monday morning to be clear for the next two days. Had no orders been taken that day, work would have run out by Thursday if not sooner! It never happened.

1973 however, produced a change; the shortfall of waste paper became critical within the country and then news of it created a panic situation which in turn led to an artificial shortage. Such was the panic, that orders which normally tracked production as I have shown above, suddenly surged ahead, and in one afternoon, in which the telephone rang incessantly on six lines, orders equivalent to full production for six months were taken. After another similar day, a rationing system was introduced and all regular customers were advised that each month they would receive deliveries based on their purchases the previous year to a percentage equivalent to the percentage that the mills could supply raw material. Within three months the situation was back to normal. If you, dear reader, were around at that time, you may possibly remember this time as a shortage of toilet rolls!

Tovil 1930 - 1978

From 1930-1939, Medway Corrugated Paper Company at Tovil continued to expand and at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, there were two 'A' flute and one 'B' flute corrugating machines working two shifts and three Müller cutters working a day shift. Tube production had increased and now four machines were working two shifts. The average production tonnage was now 150 tons per week.

Tovil factory continued to manufacture throughout the war, but nearly all the male workers were in the Armed Forces and all machines were manned by females. Some engineering work was introduced to help in the war effort.

At the end of 1945, it was again found that the Tovil factory was still not large enough, so a tube factory was started on the Aylesford site, housed in a building previously known as the "C" stock room.

Tovil Factory c1950

Site of Tovil Factory in 2005

The factory now housed there became the "C" Tube Factory. During the war years it had been used for making paper tubes for packing shells and mortar bombs. All production of straight-wound tubes was transferred to the new factory in February 1946 and the weekly production amounted to 23 tons

Some development of other products was tried at Tovil at various times and a colleague told me that the first pitch-fibre pipes used extensively for drains in new housing developments in the 1960s, were produced at Tovil prior to a full-scale production plant being set up at Aylesford under the name of Key Terrain.

The Aylesford tube factory was still under the Tovil management and continued to grow. A further transfer of tube-making machines was made to Aylesford in 1968. By 1978, production at Aylesford was some 170 tons per week, and serious consideration was being given to building another factory in the North of England to reduce delivery costs. (Many customers and potential customers were based in the North and Scotland).

Meanwhile, at the Tovil factory, after the initial move of some tube production to Aylesford, more cutting machines were added. Two other cutting machines were adapted for the making of scored tape sealed sleeves and three new Werner Peters corrugating machines replaced the old Lotz Abbott machines.

September 1948 brought another new machine to Tovil with the installation of a spiral-winding tube machine. At first the factory only produced small tubes for the textile trade but later more machines were added and could produce tubes for all types of paper and film reeling.

In the mid 1950s Tovil became part of Reed International as a branch of Reed Corrugated Cases with other factories throughout the UK. Unscored sleeves, which had previously been made in a factory in Manchester, were moved to the factory, and now the old 'Diamond Fibre' factory in Church Road, Tovil was being used for the manufacture of spiral tubes. The total output from the Tovil factories reached 350-400 tons per week, and the number of people employed was in the region of 300-400. From this point in time, for various reasons, the total number of people employed declined.

By 1967 it was decided to close the London sales office and concentrate all sales from Tovil. Warehouse stocks of corrugated paper rolls were kept in Glasgow, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Cardiff and London to give speedy service, delivery often being within hours. Over 50% of deliveries were made by rail, direct from the Tovil freight station. With the closure of the Tovil railway station in the 1970s, delivery had to change to road, and the stocks, in all areas except the West Midlands, were discontinued. This warehouse stock with local order and delivery facilities was maintained until 1984. 1978 saw the celebration of 50 years' production at Tovil and special events were organised for customers. Mainly these were invitations to lunch at the *Oast House* at Cobtree, Larkfield, an attractive venue owned by Reed. In addition small pieces of cut crystal glassware were presented.

Tovil 1979 - 1984

Sales of corrugated paper were now being affected more seriously by a number of competing products, and competition between manufacturers became ferocious.

In the early 1980s almost 10% of Tovil's sales of corrugated rolls was to a customer in Holland, (a special corrugated roll with a printed backing sheet), but with the loss of this business to a Dutch supplier, Tovil's viability came into the spotlight as company's were forced to concentrate on 'core' business because of the economic situation of the country.

In the early 1980s Reed International decided to withdraw slowly from its paper-based production and its building products side to concentrate on its more recently acquired publishing side. *Tovil* and *Bridge Mills* were closed. Within about two years of closure work began on building houses on most of the land formerly owned by Reed. The Reed Corrugating factory at Tovil was sold in the same week of 1984 as the Daily Mirror newspaper. Six months later the order book of the Tube production side at Aylesford was sold to a competitor.

Tovil 1984 - 1995

In April 1984 the Tovil factory business was sold to a competitor, The Rigid Containers Group, a private, family owned company. Trading continued in much the same way as before for some seven years, under the name of Rigid Paper (Kent) Ltd. Sales were boosted with the acquisition of the United Corrugated's Southall factory order book and some of their equipment from their factory which closed at the end of 1990.

The following year it was decided to centralise sales of corrugated paper products at Desborough in Northamptonshire, the home of the Rigid Containers Group, and in 1993 the accounts department was closed at Tovil and managed from Desborough. During 1994 production of corrugated paper and its conversion to other forms was gradually transferred to Desborough and by the autumn only paper tube production remained. In January of 1995 the sale of Tovil's tube business was completed and the production and remaining staff became part of BPB (British Plasterboard) who already owned four paper mills and three tube manufacturing plants throughout the UK.

Tovil after 1995

For just over a year Tovil continued to trade under the name of Rigid Paper Tubes until the tube making division was reorganised and all amalgamated under the name of BPB Centacor. Production for about three months was transferred to Strood in the Spring of 1996, but due to problems with the lease of the new premises and the need for more space, it was again moved after three months, this time to Parkwood, Maidstone. Meanwhile the factory at Tovil, no longer producing anything and still owned by the Rigid Containers Group, was now cleared of all machines and rented for other purposes on very short leases until it could be finalised for property development.

The total number of people remaining employed from the days at Tovil, management, sales, accounts, and production was now 16! Production continued for another four years until BPB decided to sell its interest in tube production to another maker. A short time after this last transfer the remaining staff were made redundant and all work transferred to other factories throughout the U.K.

The Tovil site was cleared in the late 1990s and the present houses built on the site.

I am indebted to the writer, KJ Funnell, and his work *Snodland Paper Mill*, for the facts contained in the first four paragraphs of this history and to those employees of the former Reed Corrugated Cases who produced a potted history of the Company mainly for their Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1978. I had the good fortune to be in their company from 1968 until 1998.

BROOKS FIELD: RESULTS OF A SURVEY

Nick Moon

In the summer of 2002, at the invitation of Loose Parish Council, two members of the Maidstone Area Archaeological Group conducted a metal detector survey of Brooks Field. This article is a summary of the report that Mr Nick Moon, one of the surveyors, produced after completing the survey.

Introduction

The aim of the search was to discover what historical data lay within the field system, and to gather evidence and any dating medium that would show the type of occupation or use the field underwent during past years. Two metal detectors were used to conduct the survey, both operated by experienced machine operatives, Messrs Nick Moon and Keith Smallwood. The survey was conducted 4 May and 1 June 2002. A grid system was used so that an exact location of any historical find could be obtained and recorded. However, as no such findings were made, no grid reference has been used in this report, and instead the following terms of reference have been used to give a location of the items found: Eastern Section; Middle Section; Western Section.

Description of Survey Area

Brooks Field is currently a grassed area. It has a south facing aspect. The grass is thick and matted and sometimes long. However, both surveys were conducted after the grass was cut, and this helped the detectorists to receive some good signals during the searches. The southern lower edge of the field borders the stream and the garden of a private dwelling (*Tylers*), while along the higher northern edge are trees and scrub. Old Loose Hill runs along its eastern side, and the western edge is separated from Kirkdale by a hedge and trees. At the top of the slope to the north-west there is the concrete base of a demolished greenhouse (C20th). A grass-covered trackway leads from this down through the field towards the gate on Old Loose Hill.

Objects found in Brooks Field during the Survey

The nature of the grass and the terrain was not ideal for metal detecting, but the survey proved that items dating from 15th to 19th centuries could be found. It is probable that quality artefacts are present within the area of Brooks Field due to its important location, but it is feared that the items are either deep and beyond detector range, or they are being 'masked' by the high degree of contamination present. The items found, however, show that the field has had a wide variety of use ranging from those who used firearms to cloth making and trade etc. The table below lists the articles found, roughly according to their age.

Article Description and Location of Find

Bag LPC#1	*Description*
Fragment of Spectacle Buckle (Eastern Section)	A small spectacle buckle dating to C15th/C16th. The size of the buckle suggests that this was an item of personal clothing and may have been attached to a small thin leather belt. The iron pin has rotted away and half the buckle is missing.

Bag LPC#2	*Description*
Jetton (Eastern Section)	A worn C17th Jetton (markings still visible). The exact use of Jettons is still a mystery, though experts believe that they may have served as a form of money or token. The face value of a Jetton is unknown, but they mainly originate from Germany. It has been suggested that they could have also been used during gambling or gaming.
2 x Musket Rifle Shot (Middle Section)	This type of shot was fired from long barrelled muskets ('Brown Bess') that were in use from the Civil War (C17th) until the early part of the C18th. A common metal detector find, they highlight the force and damage the projectile would have caused.

Bag LPC#3	*Description*
Coin Token (Eastern Section)	An interesting find? The coin token has writing on it that suggests that it may be Dutch in origin, and its date seems to show 1771. Tokens were minted by wealthy landlords. A landlord would use them as a form of payment to his workers, and they were only acceptable at his shop or stall, thus making him a very handsome profit on the goods. Loose was involved in the supply of wool and England was an important trading customer with the Dutch in the C17th/C18th. Did a trader visiting the area lose this token perhaps?
2 x Loom Weights (Eastern Section)	Although these lead weights are believed to be loom weights, some experts have suggested that these items were used for the weighing down of nets or traps. Their true use is not certain, but they are a common find and the fact that woven wool was widely used makes it likely that they were loom weights. Their size and shape indicate an C18th/early C19th date, but similar weights have been found on Roman/Medieval sites.
Lead Weight	Use unknown, but likely to have been used for the weighing of goods etc. Date C18th but not confirmed, and it could be earlier. Possible scratched markings on one side.
Thimble (Middle Section)	This thimble in poor condition is likely to have been lost by field workers who sewed their clothes when working. The man-made indentations that were used to push the end of the needle help date it to the C19th. A common find by detectorists.

Bag LPC#4	*Description*
2 x Buckles (Eastern Section)	Small C19th Garter Buckle is of the type worn by males on their calves to hold up the garter. The pin has rusted and there is other corrosion. Larger 2-pin buckle was a common item of clothing during the C19th and early C20th.
3 x Pistol Shot (Eastern Section)	C19th pistol shot. Note the smaller size of the shot compared to that of the 'Brown Bess' musket, but pistol shot was still made in lead in the late C18th/early C19th.
3 x Buttons (Middle Section)	Common losses, but included in the finds is a military 'Ball Button', with a cannon embossed. Regiment unknown. The gilding on one of the buttons (C19th?) is in very good condition despite the age of the item.
4 x Victorian Farthings (Eastern Section)	
Skirt Weight (Middle Section)	A lead weight sewed into the hems of long dresses worn by Victorian or Edwardian females, preventing the dresses blowing around in windy weather.

Bag LPC#5	*Description*
Various items of C20th origin (Middle/Western Section)	4 x Foreign Coins. 1 x Georgian Penny Horse Buckle. Advertising Token. Wolf Cub Woggle.

Conclusion

During the search, a high degree of corrosive material such as iron was found. The contamination of this material over a wide area of Brooks Field meant that smaller items or artefacts were lost or were difficult to locate. The area surrounding the remains of the greenhouses was heavily strewn with nails, wire and large pieces of iron, and the find rate here was very poor. The main area of interest was near the middle section of the field and towards its eastern edge. This was anticipated, as this area was likely to have been used more, due to its proximity to the village centre.

The Loose Parish Council and the Loose Area History Society would like to thank the Maidstone Area Archaeological Society, and especially Nick Moon and Keith Smallwood, for undertaking this survey and for producing their valuable report.

The LAHS Archivist now holds the report together with the items found, which are stored in the five bags listed in the above table.

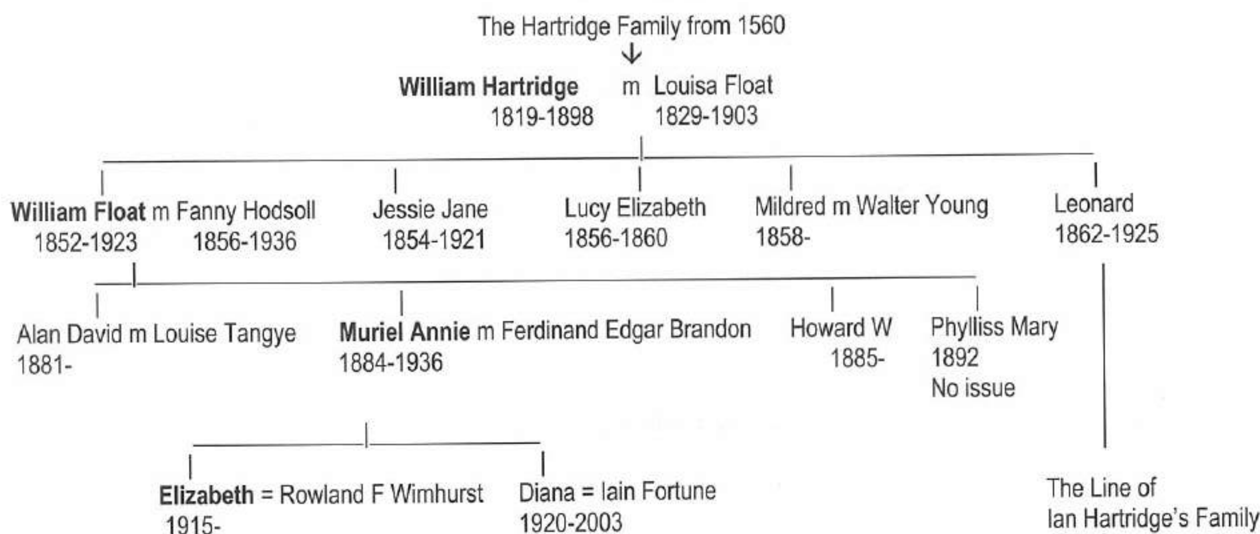
REFLECTIONS

This section features items connected with articles published in previous editions of Loose Threads.

MORE ABOUT THE HARTRIDGE FAMILY

Elizabeth Wimhurst (née Hartridge)

Elizabeth Wimhurst was encouraged to write this short piece after reading the article in *Loose Threads 6* (page 43) by her relative Ian Hartridge: it is more meaningful, perhaps, if read in conjunction with the article. It adds a further dimension to this local family's history.



I was most interested to read in *Loose Threads 6*, the article on the Hartridge family. My mother, Muriel Annie, was a Miss Hartridge. She was born in 1884 in Shorne, Kent, but moved, with her parents, to *East Farleigh House* in 1897.

In 1913 my mother went out to Ceylon to join her brother, Alan David, who had lived there for several years. Whilst there she met and married my father, Ferdinand (Fer) Edgar Brandon, who had been in Ceylon for a while with the Ceylon Government Railway. In 1915, when their first child was expected, Muriel returned to the family home, *East Farleigh House*, as they wanted the child to be born in England: there I was born in June 1915. After the war my mother returned with me to Ceylon where my sister, Diana, was born in March 1920.

To return to the Hartridges -
William Float and Fanny Hartridge were my grandparents. Fanny's maiden name was Hodsoll and she was born in Shepherds Bush. They had three children in addition to my mother:

Alan David, was a tea planter in Ceylon for sometime and later moved to Kenya and Nairobi where he was coffee planting. Alan met and married Louise Tangye and they retired to South Africa where Alan died and is buried in Somerset West, near Cape Town. Louise retired to the Channel Islands where she died in Guernsey.

Howard was born in 1885 in Shorne. He was a professor in Electrical Engineering in London. He owned quite a lot of property in Brighton. Howard died (date unknown) in Brighton – his ashes are in Brighton Crematorium.

Phyllis Mary Hartridge was also born in Shorne, in 1893. After *East Farleigh House* was sold in 1921 she and her mother had moved to Brighton. There she looked after her mother until she died in 1936 aged 80. Phyllis married late in life so there were no children. I was led to believe that my grandmother was the last Hartridge to be buried in the Hartridge family vault in East Farleigh churchyard.

My sister, Diana, and I are the only two children from both sides of the family – six on my father's side and four on my mother's, so we have no cousins. Diana and I were both married and have children of our own.

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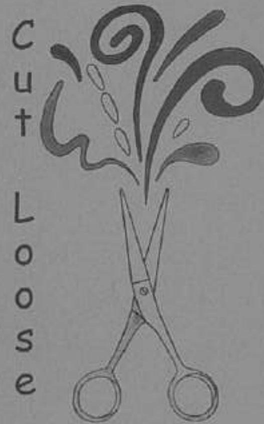

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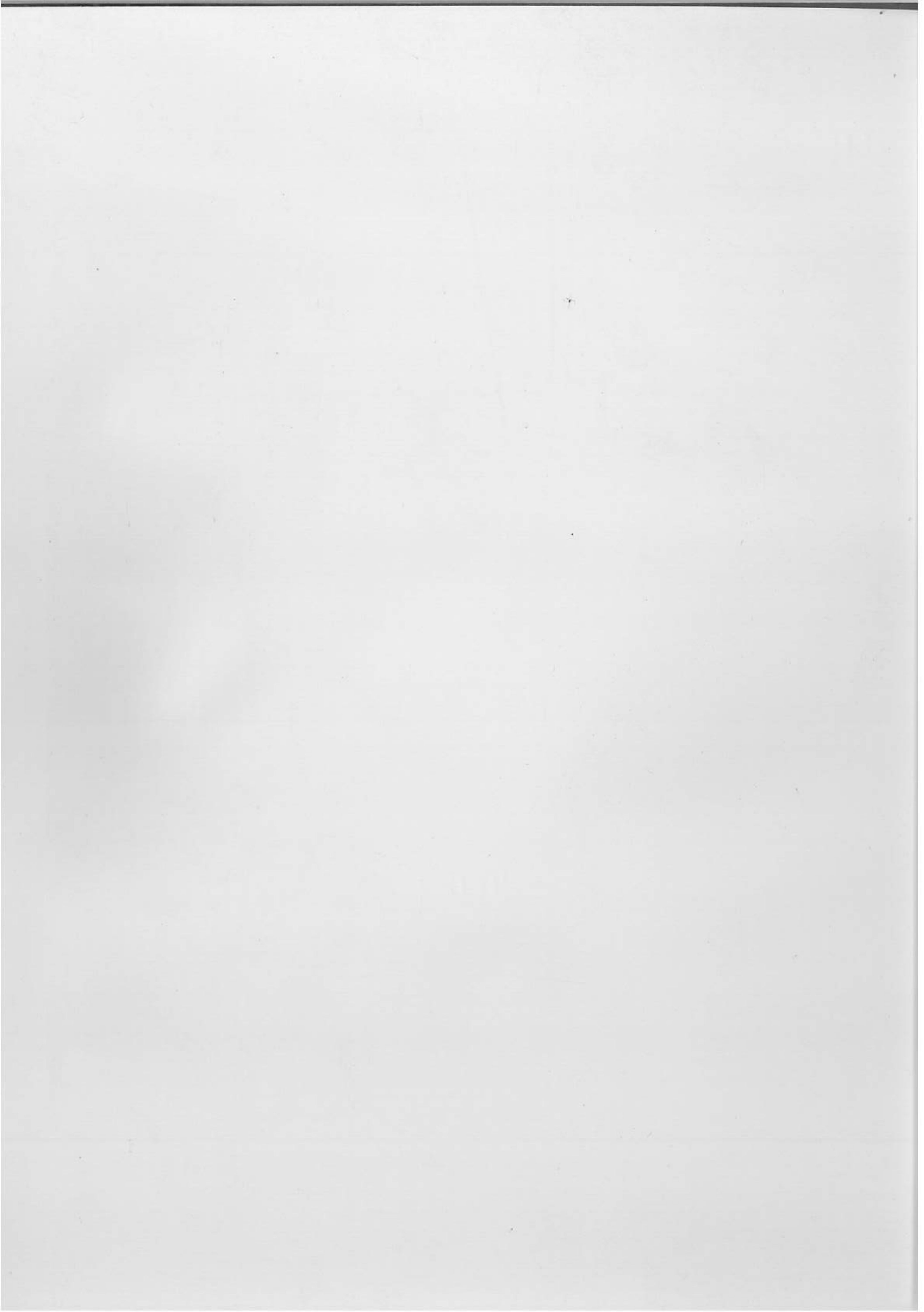

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