

LOOSE ENDS

(No.3 October 2008)

Please send contributions for our next issue to Margaret Chapman
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Society Matters

Before our last AGM in January of this year, as you will remember, the future of the Society was in the balance. However, we had a good attendance at the meeting and our problems were resolved, resulting in a re-vamped committee – as follows:

Meeting Chairman	Julia Page
General Secretary	Noel Gibbons
Treasurer	Phil Harrison
Minutes Secretary	Jill Smith
Membership secretary	Helen Gallavin
Programme Secretary	Jenny Harrison
Publicity Officer	Paul Tritton
Committee Member	Roger Thornburgh
Committee Member	Margaret Chapman

The Research Group still meets on a regular basis under the chairmanship of Roger Thornburgh, with Margaret Chapman as archivist, so all in all we can look forward to our 20th year with confidence.

Perambulations in June and July

Many members enjoyed our visits to Tudely Church to view the Chagall windows (below) and to the Police Museum at Chatham Dockyard.



Exhibitions in 2008

Our Society took up stands at both the *Loose Parish Council Community Fete* in the King George V Playing Field on 30 August and at the Kent History Sunday at the *Museum of Kent Life* on 9 September.

Forthcoming Meetings:

November 10 – A Hundred Years of Scouting in Loose. (With the usual Bring-and-Buy book sale).

December 8 – Puppets, Piers and Pantomime. (Followed by punch and mince pies).

January 12, 2009 - Annual General Meeting (followed by 'Show & Tell').

Next year's programme will be produced at the November meeting

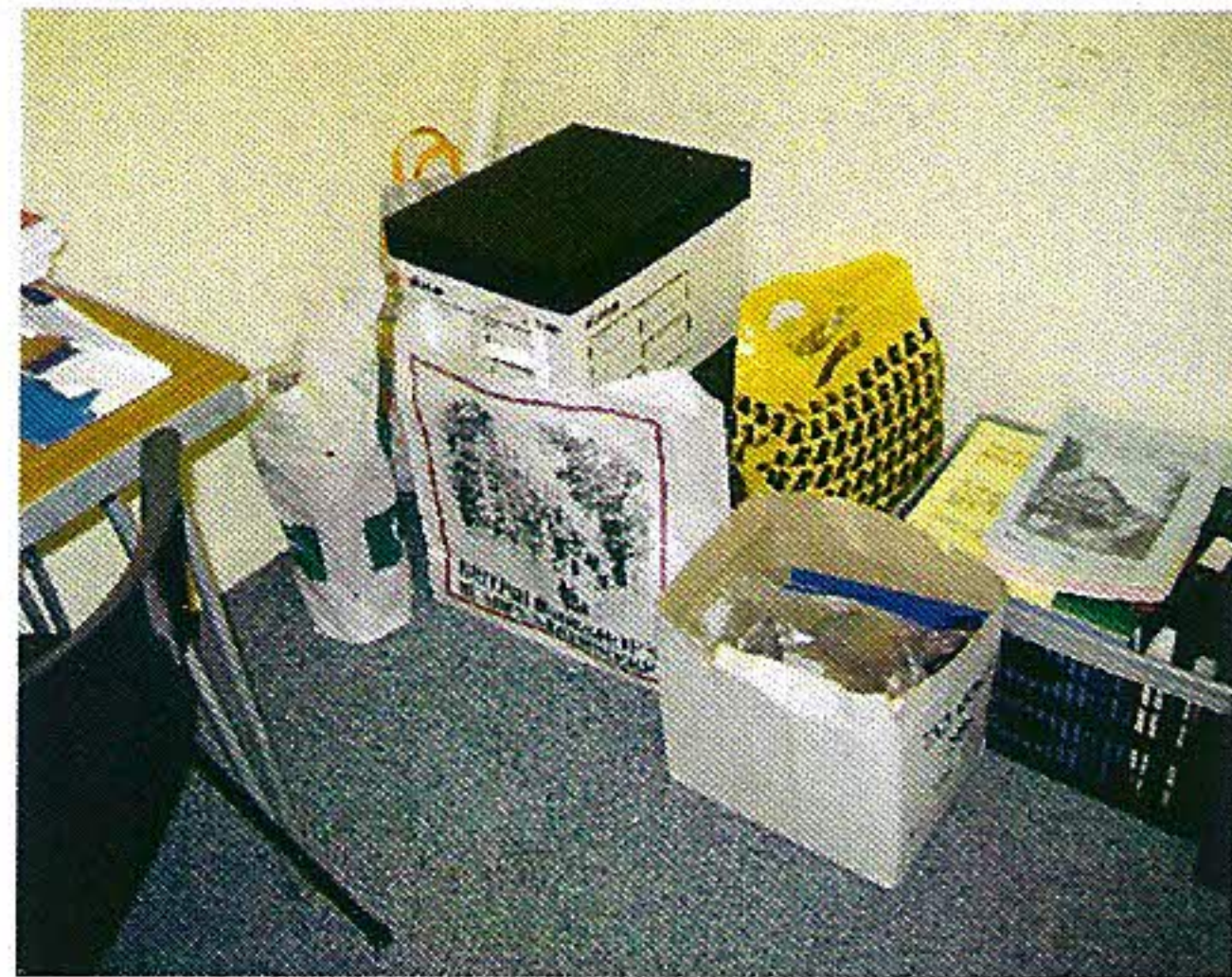
Whats On?

Loose Swiss Scouts & Loose Area History Society will combine to stage an exhibition marking the centenary of scouting in Loose. It will take place at the Pickering Street HQ from 26 October to 1 November 2008, and will be open from 2–8pm on weekdays and from 10–4pm on weekends. Admittance free of charge.

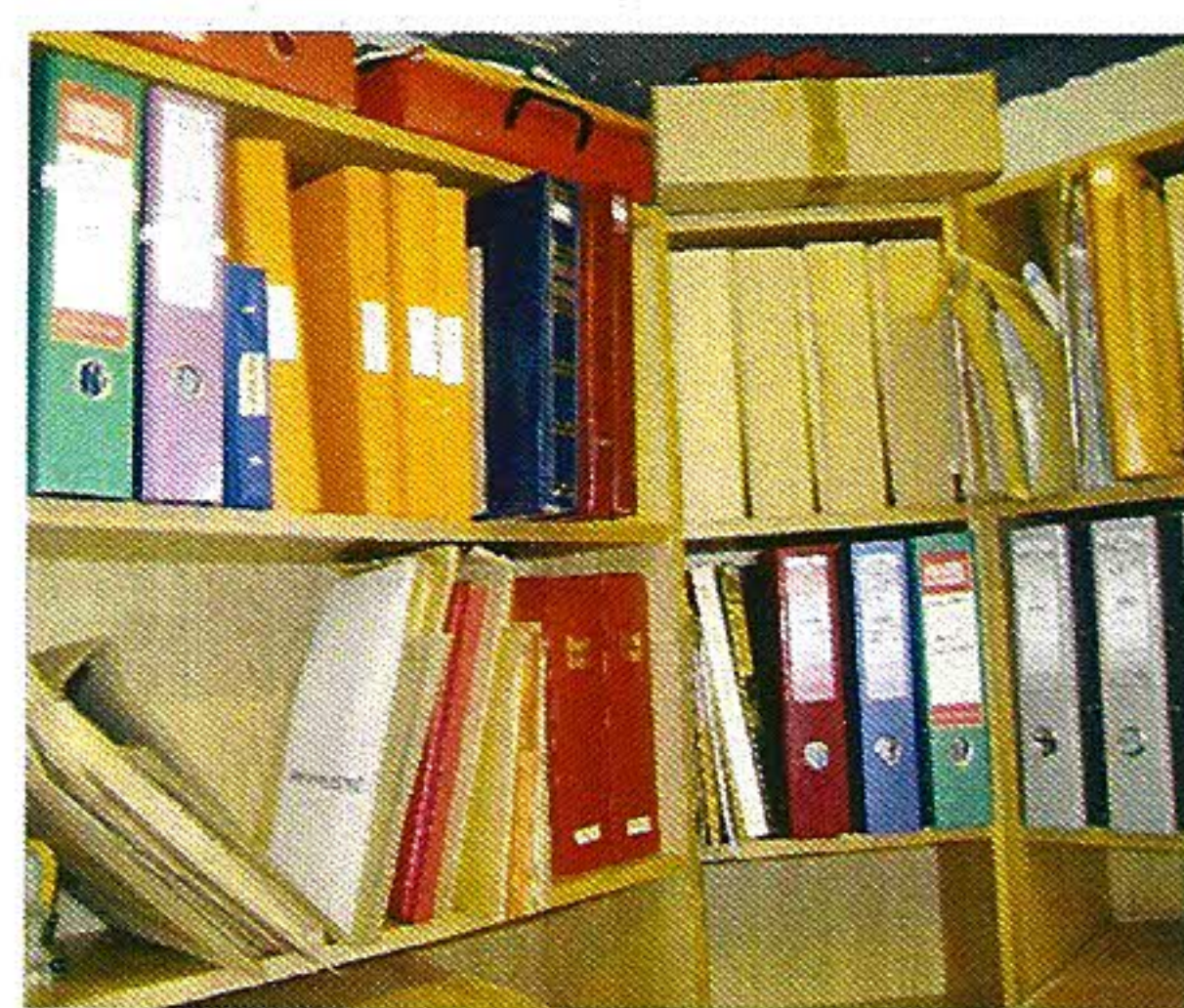
Our Archives - housed in the Loose Swiss Scout headquarters in Pickering Street, are now in working order. The room is furnished and everything is accessible, but reorganisation will be an on-going process for the foreseeable future. It should be said, that it is only a store room, not a show room, and there is not room for too many people to congregate at once.

However, if anyone wishes to come and see what we have, I will be happy to arrange a time and date for you to come. Tel: 746630 or 07963 675124 to arrange a visit. (Margaret Chapman)

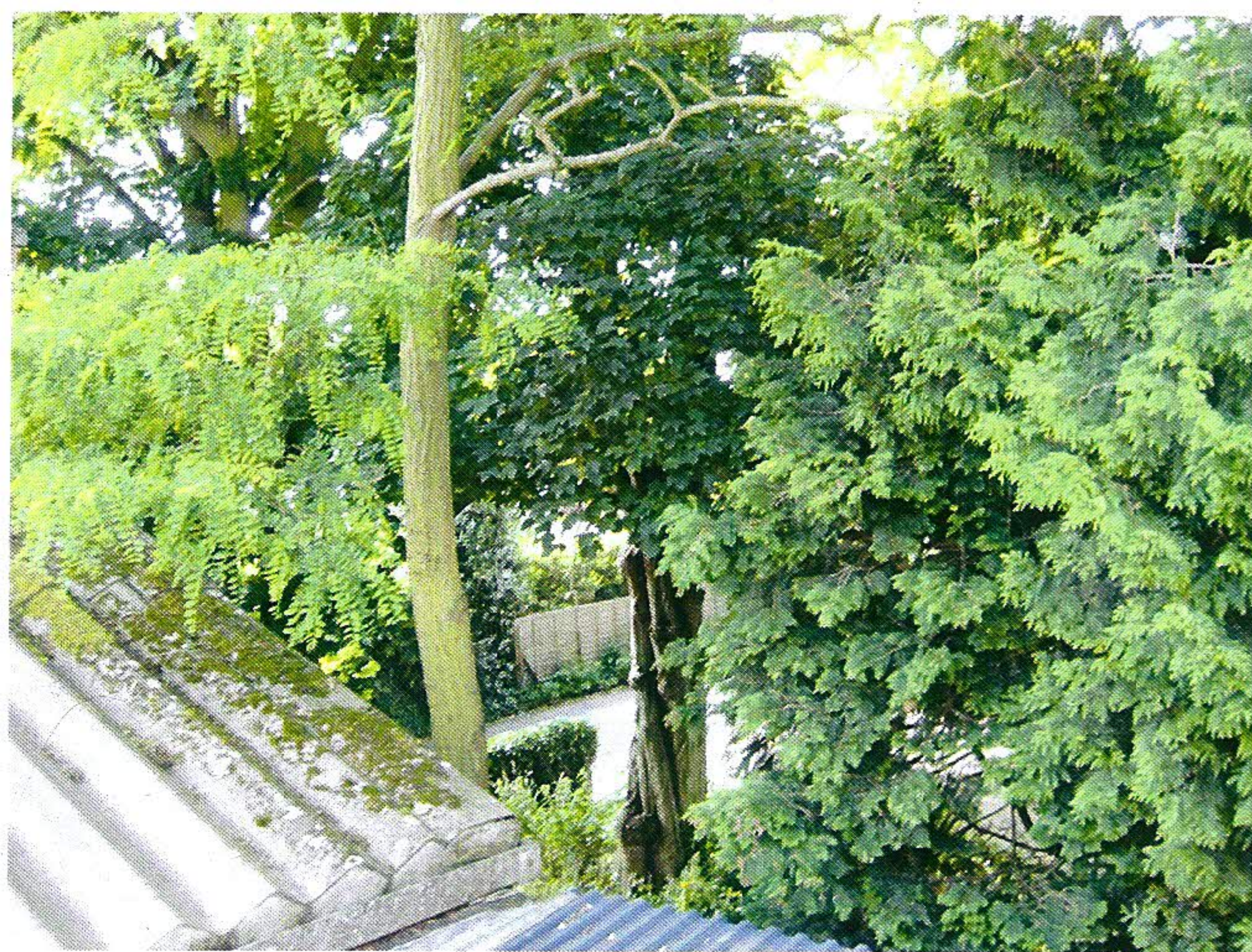
Below, are three photographs of the premises:



Early Days



Present Day



View of Pickering Street through the trees

Publications

Loose Threads 9 is now available at £3.50 and can be obtained from the front desk at monthly meetings; from Loose Post Office; Aquarius at Coxheath; or by post from Helen Gallavin, 647 Loose Road, Maidstone, ME15 9UT

Contents include:

- One Hundred Years of Scouting – Trevor Gallavin
- A Gardener's Boy at Linton Park – Ken Kimber
- Along the Turnpike Road – Paul Tritton
- Cherry Grounds Farm – Michael Tillett
- Loose Valley and its Swallow Holes – F J Bennett & Paul Tritton
- John Queded: Surveyor and Mapmaker – Ann Hughes
- Inside Loose Church: Alterations and Revelations – Peter Lambert & Roger Thornburgh

- Loose Scouts' Memorial at Crisbrook – Margaret Chapman

Loose and Linton – A Pictorial History has been reprinted and is available at £16 from the front desk at monthly meetings; from Loose Post Office or from Margaret Chapman (746630 or 07963 675124) who is also dealing with postal requests. Obviously, extra costs will apply for postal applications which are (inclusive of one book, postage & packing):

- UK £20
- Europe £22
- Rest of World £26

War Memorial Updates

We continue to learn more about our men of Loose who gave their lives in the two World Wars. Dr Joan Thirsk & Professor Ivan D Rootes were both kind enough to contact us with details of one of the men about whom we knew very little:



**Second Lieutenant
Norman William Elliott Manning**

Norman (b1922) was the only child of William & Edith Rose Manning of 16 Pear Tree Lane. His father, William (known as Bill) was the maths teacher at Maidstone Grammar School where Norman was a pupil, and his mother, Edith, worked as a nursing sister at Preston Hall during the war.

In 1940 Norman went up to St John's College, Oxford, to study Modern Languages (French & German), whilst his friend from MGS – Ivan Rootes, went to Balliol College and went on to become head of the History Department at Exeter University.

Loose characters

In 1942 Norman was called up into the Royal Corps of Signals and was sent to India. At about the same time his friend Ivan was also sent to India with the Royal Corps of Signals and the two friends made plans to meet up when on leave to visit places of interest and to generally enjoy time together. But sadly, this was never to be because Norman contracted Sprue – a tropical disease affecting mouth, throat and digestion, and died soon afterwards on 18 December 1942, aged just 20 years.

A fellow student and good friend of Norman, at Oxford, was Dr Joan Thirsk MBE (now of Kent Archaeological Society), who very kindly, together with Professor Ivan Rootes, supplied most of this information together with two photographs of Norman – one of which is reproduced above.

Norman is buried in Delhi War Cemetery.

Gerard Storr



This delightful photograph was given to us by Lorna Evans. He was a friend of her father, Herbert Busbridge. I had wondered who he was and what he did and so was very pleased to find, whilst going through our archives, a tribute to him (which unfortunately is not dated). Gerard was a man of business and was a well known figure at Mark Lane in London, and at the markets of Maidstone, Ashford and Staplehurst. When he and his sister came to Loose they lived firstly at Salts Place and then at Mexican House, where he resided up to the time of his death. He took a keen interest in everything to do with the parish, though perhaps more especially in the Loose Cottage Gardeners' Society. His Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning visits, before going to church, were sadly missed by many members of that Society. Although he never held any office in connection with the parish church, he was, nevertheless, ready to assist the vicar in any way that he could, and during the last year of his life he had regularly read the Lessons. Many of his acts of kindness (said the vicar) will remain unknown *'as he was one of those men who did not let his left hand know what his right hand did'*.

Trooper Leonard Harold Wanstall



Whilst sorting through old newspapers (Roger T. and myself) in our store-room we came across a short article about another young man of Loose who was lost to war.

Leonard Wanstall was a Trooper in the Royal Horse Guards. He was killed in action in Italy in 1944 at the age of 23, and buried in Ancona War Cemetery.

His mother, who lived at No. 3 Well Street, reported the sad news of the loss of her youngest son to the Kent Messenger on 15 September 1944. She said that he had served in the army for 2½ years with the Middle East Forces before proceeding to Italy. Prior to joining up in March 1941, he was employed as a painter at Messrs. Albert Reed & Co.

POOR PROSPECTS AT PROSPECT ROW

Ann Ranshaw, Rugby, Warwickshire



Prospect Row 2004 (613-635 Loose Road)

(Photograph - Paul Newton-Taylor)

Early in March 2007, I was visiting Kent (from my home town of Rugby) looking up locations where my Bennett ancestors used to live. One of these was Prospect Row, Loose. Being unable to find it we stopped at the Newsagents on the main road to ask if they knew where it was. By a fortunate coincidence, and with the help of a gentleman from the Estate Agent's next door, someone remembered that an article had recently appeared in your magazine, *Loose Threads*. The article enabled me to locate the property where my ancestor lived.

My 3 x grandfather Benjamin Bennett (bapt 1797) died at 4 Prospect Row in 1876. According to the death certificate, he died of apoplexy. Benjamin was the father of 7 children by his wife Rachel née Brissenden born c1790) and the family included two older boys, George and James Bridgeland. At the time of his death Benjamin was a widower living with his younger brother Robert Bennett who was the tenant of the property at 4 Prospect Row.

Robert Bennett was born in 1807 in Boughton Monchelsea, the tenth of 13 children. He married Caroline Chapman in 1833 at Boughton Monchelsea, and in the 1841 Census they were living at Boughton Quarries where their son Edwin Lewis Bennett was born in

1839. By the time of the 1851 Census they had moved to 4 Prospect Row, Loose.

Like his elder brother and most of his siblings, Robert was an agricultural labourer all his married life. Robert and Caroline were married for 50 years and for at least 20 of these they lived at 4 Prospect Row. When Caroline died in December 1883, she was living with a nephew William Styance in Well Street. Robert sadly died in the Union Workhouse at Linton two months later in February 1884.

Robert must have been familiar with the Poor Law System all his life. As one of a large family depending on the often irregular work of a farm labourer, father Robert was brought up with the assistance of the Parish. Overseers' Accounts for Chart Sutton at the CKS give some insight into how the family managed.

George Bennett, Robert's father, married Jemima Spencer in March 1792 at Boughton Monchelsea. That year he was assessed to pay a poor rate of 6/3, but whether he ever paid it is not recorded. Their first child of the marriage was baptised in December 1792 and children arrived at roughly 18 month to two-year intervals for the next 18 years. The records which exist show that by 1807, when Robert and his twin brother Henry were born, the family had been in regular receipt of Parish Relief for two years.

The family received mainly items of clothing for the children, particularly shoes, flannel petticoats and breeches. As youngsters, the children were given 'pin clothes', a plain pinafore which covered more basic clothing. As the boys grew, they received 'round smocks', the traditional agricultural labourers' working smock. There are frequent references to 'a change' of clothing for the younger children, which I take to be underclothing.

In 1820 Robert and Henry reach the age of 13 and are old enough to go out to work. In September their father George claims '2 trousers and 2 pairs low shoes' for them. This is the first mention of trousers as opposed to breeches and 'low' shoes in the existing records. Perhaps fashions have changed or maybe they are entering service instead of farm work. If this is the case, Henry does not seem to have made a go of it as their father is back at the Vestry in 1821 applying for a round frock for Henry, and in later records Robert is consistently recorded as a farm labourer.

The surviving Overseers' Accounts are not continuous, but those for 1834 and 1835 survive and these include entries for Robert. In July 1834, a year after his marriage to Caroline, Robert is being paid by the overseers to break stones. In May he produces '9 good stones, 6 days' and is paid 12/- and a further '4 good stone, 3 days' for which he is paid 5/4d. In June he produces '4½ good (sacks) in 3½ days' and is paid 6/- and in July he achieves '7 good (sacks), 6 days' and receives 9/6d and a further 8/- '6 good (sacks), 6 days'. Presumably, like many agricultural labourers at the time, Robert got paid work when he could but had to apply to the Parish to make ends meet.

There are no records to show that George, Robert's father, had to do work for the overseers in order to receive support from the Vestry, but by 1834 Robert is breaking stones to earn his poor relief. Perhaps this reflects the tightening up of the Poor Relief system in the early 1830s.

Robert and Caroline seem to have been at the centre of a large family network who all shared the same poor circumstances. In the 1851 census they had living with them at Prospect Row a Sarah Hendley described as mother in law. She is aged 66 and formerly an agricultural

labourer's wife born in Yalding. It is noted that she is also in receipt of Parish Relief.

In 1871 their household includes an Ann Bennett a niece aged 15, born in Chart Sutton. Ann is the daughter of Robert's nephew, Thomas Bennett (b1830) and his first wife Harriett née Reeves. Robert never learned to write his name but was a witness by 'making his mark' at Thomas Bennett's second marriage to Charlotte née Relf (b1844 +/-) in 1864. Thomas and Charlotte named their first son Robert after his uncle. Robert also 'made his mark' on the death certificate of his elder brother Benjamin in 1876.

In the 1881 census they have a lodger, Thomas Saks, aged 70, born in Linton and described as an agricultural labourer.

So far I have only found one child born to Robert and Caroline, so perhaps they took in lodgers and relatives to fill a gap. I imagine their life was fairly representative of ordinary labourers occupying the Prospect Row cottages in the second half of the 19th century.



The Workhouse at Coxheath was opened in March 1838 to take all the poor from Maidstone and the surrounding parishes. There were special wards for casual paupers who were called upon to do certain tasks in return for a night's board and lodging. This is where Robert Bennett died in 1884. A chapel was built in the Union grounds in 1844 and Maidstone Workhouse Schools were built in East Farleigh in 1857.

When the above postcard was produced in 1916 there were 303 inmates at the Union Workhouse and 127 children in the Workhouse Schools.

Two Reverends

Have you ever wandered around our churchyard and wondered about the lives of some of those people who are buried there? Turn right just inside the gate and you'll see a neglected little grave to the right of the path, which is where the Revd. Mudge's ashes were interred. Carry on along the path towards the wall overlooking Brooks Path and, on the left, is another neglected little grave to the memory of the Revd. Richard Boys.

Revd. Leonard William Mudge (1902-1964)



Mudgie, as we new him, figured largely in our teenage years. When I first came to Loose in 1953 [Ed.] I became a member of the Young People's Fellowship and this was to be my introduction to many people who have become lasting friends. Such was our regard for this kind and interesting man who was our vicar, that Sunday became a very special day and we all attended services morning, noon and night.

We would also spend hours at the vicarage (on Linton Road) helping him sort through his matchbox collection, listening to Chopin (his favourite composer), drinking endless cups of tea and rummaging in his 'jumble' room. In fact, 2 Pear Tree Cottage still employs door chimes which came from the Vicarage. Revd. Mudge enjoyed our company as much as we enjoyed his. He would even scramble, with us, into the back of a coal lorry (our only means of transport) and come with us to locate suitable

sites for our summer camps. He took a great deal of interest in our lives.

The Revd. William Leonard Mudge was born 7 September 1902. Before he entered the church he was an electrician, but after he was ordained in 1929 he became curate of St. Mary's Church in Willesborough until 1932, and then, up until 1940 he was curate of St Jude's, Thornton Heath. Revd. Mudge came to Loose from Birmingham in 1951, where he had been vicar of St. Clement's for 11 years. He was a widower with no children and took an interest in all village activities – not just the youth. He was well liked and respected wherever he went and was particularly noted for his splendid sermons.

The village was stunned at his sudden death on 10 February 1964. He had entered Linton Hospital, after being taken ill at the vicarage ten days before he died at the age of 61. There were hundreds of mourners at his funeral

Revd. Richard Boys (1785-1866)



Sketch from a photograph by Roger Thornburgh

Revd. Richard Boys was incumbent of Loose from 1854 to 1866. He had also been Chaplain to the Honourable East India Company on remote St. Helena in the Atlantic from 1811 to 1829, during the time that the Emperor Napoleon was taken into exile there by the British Navy after his defeat at Waterloo. When the Revd. Boys returned to England, he brought with him Napoleon's chair, which is now on display in Maidstone Museum; he also brought an egg-cup, a toast rack, some plate, a cane,

some of the Emperor's uniform buttons, his autograph and a lock of his hair.

On St. Helena, the Revd. Boys had a reputation for being honest and devout, and having a profound sense of justice; but he was also renowned for being bad-tempered, tactless, narrow-minded, outspoken and intolerant. He would write the names of the fathers of illegitimate children in large capital letters in the register of births, and when the Deputy-Governor Admiral Plampin arrived on the island with a mistress, Boys publicly denounced him from the pulpit and demanded that he should send the woman away and return to the ways of God. In the event, the Governor allowed the couple to continue their extra-marital union. Other stories of the priest's violent sermons and passionate campaigns abound, and it is evident that the Revd. Boys was a colourful, if not wholly likeable, character. One wonders whether he shook up the inhabitants of Loose as he did those on St. Helena, or whether, since he was already 70 years old when he came to the village, age had tempered his vehemence.

(taken from *Exploring Loose village* by Roger Thornburgh – 1978)

From The Times Archives

(Some macabre goings-on in Loose and Boughton Monchelsea!)

Dec 23, 1842

'On Thursday evening last, as Lieutenant Anthony Hunt, R.N. of Maidstone, who had been attending divine worship at the little chapel at Coxheath, was returning towards Maidstone, on arriving at Shernold Pond he suddenly leaned against the friend with whom he was walking, and, falling to the ground, he became instantly a corpse'. – *The Times*

Oct 9, 1823

'On Sunday morning last, a woman named Clifford, about 35 years of age, residing at Boughton Monchelsea, went to the house of Mrs Worger, her sister, who is the wife of a grocer at Ashford, and finding her alone she asked her if there was no one in the house. Mrs Worger replied in the negative, her family being at church. Clifford then began to revive some family bickerings, but Mrs Worger told her to say nothing on the subject, but sit down and take some breakfast, the cups and saucers etc not having yet been removed. Mrs Worger then

went upstairs to her bedroom and left her sister, as she supposed, taking breakfast; but she was soon surprised by hearing her sister creeping upstairs, and her horror can be easier conceived than described when she beheld her rushing on her in the most ferocious manner, with a bill in one hand and a hammer in the other. The wretched woman made a cut with the bill at Mrs Worger which she received on her right hand, and which nearly cut off the thumb. She then made another cut, which inflicted a severe wound in the left hand of her intended victim, and attempted to throw her on the bed, but happily in attempting this, she fell on the bed herself, by which means Mrs Worger was enabled to make her escape into the street. The alarm being given, Mr Dorman, a peace officer, repaired to the house, and on opening the passage door found the deluded woman covered with the blood of her sister, and endeavouring to conceal the instruments of her crime, and he immediately took her into custody. She gave no reason for the actions, and did not appear to be sorry for what she had committed. She is fully committed for trial. – *Maidstone Gazette*.

Loose in the 15th Century

On 6 March 1989 our president, Dr Andrew Butcher, of Kent University, gave us a lecture – which was recorded by Pat Jenner (LAHS Archive ref. 380) that gives some interesting details of the people and places of Loose in the 15th century:

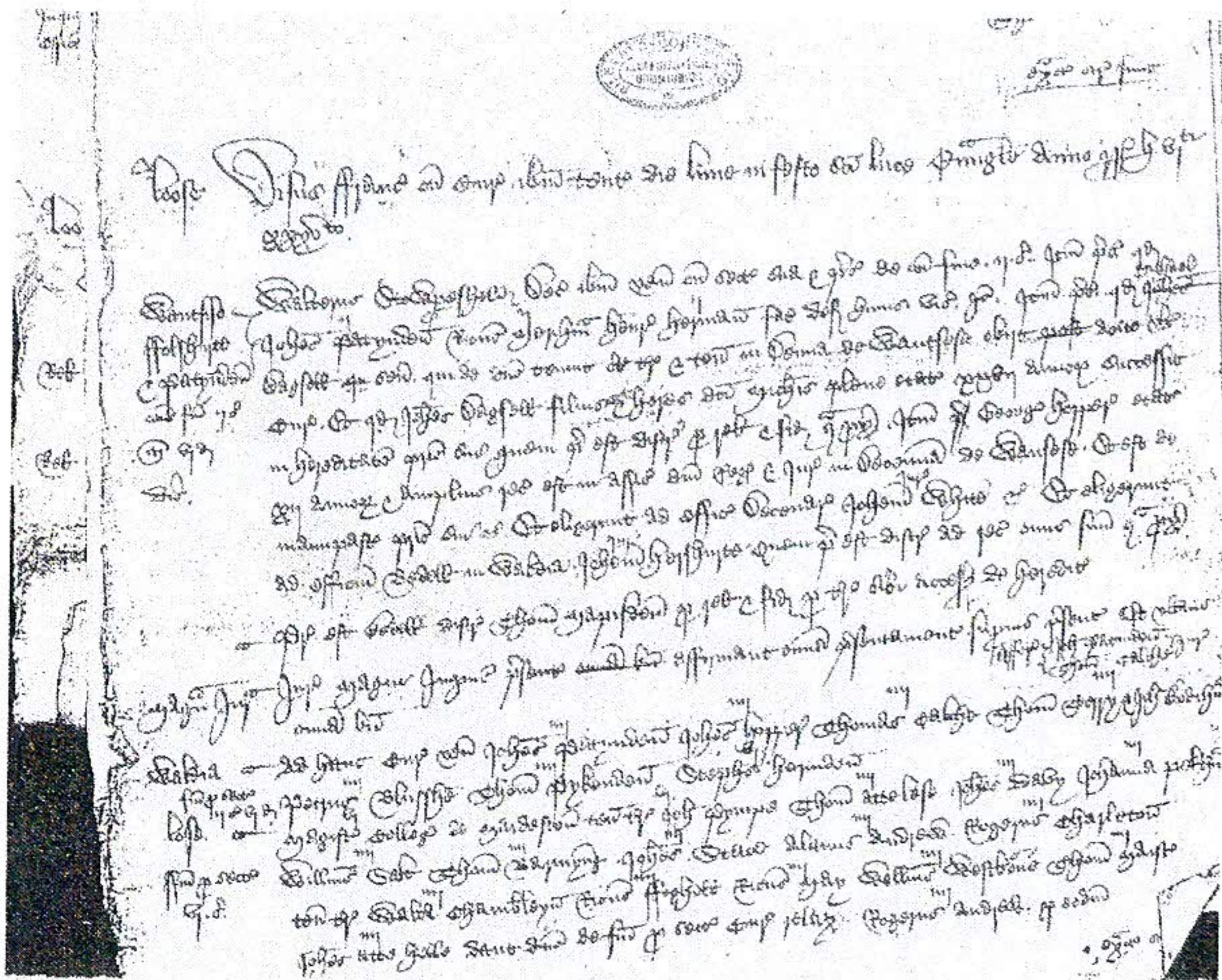
'The records of the Loose Manor which was held by Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, in the 15th century are superlative. The years under review are 1478-1482 for which there is a small cache of documents.

In the early 14th century expansion in Kent came from the East and North of the county, and the Low Weald and Medway Valley were just beginning to grow. The consequences of the Black Death beginning in 1348/9 – there was an epidemic every ten years – altered the shape of villages. The reduced population meant that the supply of food needed to be reduced and marshes and badlands returned.

The change was then to pastoral farming, sheep, cattle, weaving, glass and cloth so that by the time of Agincourt people lived in a different manner. The shift to the west of the county increased the prosperity of Cranbrook and

Smarden which began to make contact with London merchants. Houses in the Low Weald still show signs of this prosperity. However, in 1450 it only took a slump in the cloth trade to cause hardship and revolt, so benefits in the 14th century were fragile. Plague diminished, the birth rate went up and by the 1520s the slump came again.

In the 14th century Christ Church invested heavily in Loose. Later it was decided to get out of farming and lease out property to stabilise the income. Middlemen – farmers, members of local families, gentry and townsmen as well as aristocrats - leased estates under one lord. Butcher-graziers from Maidstone leased land at Loose.



The above extract [part of a set of six documents], shows that John Sharp at Michaelmas in the year 1479/80 failed to pay £6.7.0. of his £20 per annum rent. The fulling mill at Loose was leased (on a sub-tenancy) to John Cushman, clothier, for the sum of £2.13.4 per annum.

In that year on 2nd November and 15th May a representative from the Prior of Christ Church came to see that all was running properly. Thomas Humphrey was paid £10 for the inspection and he was accompanied by the Prior's Chaplain who was paid £2.6.8. Their duty was to survey to see if money was needed for repairs. Specialist craftsmen were called in to travel from estate to estate to do the work. Thomas Waterman, working at Kersbrook [Crisbrook] Mill wanted a new cog wheel for the grain mill at the cost of 16/-d. A foot for the beater was needed at the fulling mill. Boards were supplied for the wall next to the water. Mill parts were brought from Cranbrook. Fencing

was required round the pound field and a gate – coming from Linton. Beams for a new hearth were needed at the hall, and flints for the sheep pen. Smiths to do metal work came from Canterbury, and Robert Smith, mill-wright, worked on spindles for the mill and malt mill. (Loose had a grain mill, fulling mill and malt mill). John Pend, mason, was responsible for the hall repairs. In all that year, the sum of £4.10.0. was spent.

The following year there were expenses for a journey by horseback to London, to repair and obtain a millstone. One person making the journey was John Foster – miller of Loose, who ordered new millstones and hired boats to bring them back. In London he met Lindsey Foster, a relative who was a miller for the Bishop of Lincoln. The stones were shipped from London to Maidstone and East Farleigh. £14 was expended that year.

Again the following year a journey was made to London for materials for the mill. One of the routes taken was Loose, Snodland, Cobham, Gravesend and then to London.

The rentals show changes in the social structure. There are smallholders, industrial workers and peasant farmers as well as prosperous inhabitants, e.g. the Fosters, resulting in fine houses. Loose was itself the centre of the shift from East to West in the county.

By the late 16th century the holdings were breaking up. The population had risen and prosperity diminished. [Pat Jenner 10 March 1989]

In reply to a question, Dr Butcher said that the manor of Loose was widespread including parcels of land at Hunton and Marden. The speaker expressed interest in knowing the number of houses remaining, which dated from this period. Roy Hood mentioned two that had been pulled down in his lifetime.

Listed Buildings documents give the following details of some properties which may have been in existence at the time:

All Saints' Church (C13), Brook House (C15), Church House (C15), Florence Cottage (C15), Pear Tree Cottage (1370), Tylers (C15).