

# Loose Threads

Journal of the Loose Area Research Group



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**CONTENTS**

Editorial		2
Ragstone Quarries	Anne Creasey	3
The Baptist Church	Julia Page and Roger Thornburgh	7
Domesday Loose	Roger Thornburgh	8
The Mills of the Loose Valley	Jonathan Warner	12
The Parish Poor	Margaret Collins	13
The de Pympe Family of Loose	Pat Jenner	15
Butcher's Shop at Loose Green	Brenda Heath	17
The Loose Isolation Hospital	Frank and Kitty Allchurch	19
Old Lakenham	B. Dee Cording	23
Farming	Ken Searle	24
Coxheath Camp 1756-1757	Julia Page	25
Contributors and their interests		32

Front cover: Florence House and Bridge Street from an etching made earlier this century by Frederick H. Swaffer.

Back cover : The Loose Valley as shown on the first edition six-inch O.S. map of 1865-6 (with amendments to the late 1880's).

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## EDITORIAL

This publication is something of a celebration. It celebrates the first year of existence of the Loose Area Research Group which held its inaugural meeting in 'The Chequers' on 10 November 1986, twelve people attending and eager to get started - if they had not already done so - on investigating the history of their environment. It celebrates the fruits of their labours and the labours of those that have joined the group since - a group that now numbers about twenty. It celebrates, too, the fact that, for some of these members, it is their first essay into the field of local history publication. And, last but by no means least, it stands as a celebration of Loose and its surroundings, an area attractive in its landscape and fascinating in the way in which people have lived in it and worked on it.

There is another purpose to this publication, however, and that is to extend the knowledge that the writers have acquired about the area to others who live hereabouts. The fact that local people are interested in their locality has, we think, been amply demonstrated by the large attendances at the monthly Loose History Circle meetings, at which a wide variety of topics have been explored by a selection of able speakers. 'In a restless and changing world,' writes the historian Lionel Mumby, 'learning to understand the local past can help people to strike roots in a new environment or to strengthen their roots in their birthplace.' But the late W.G. Hoskins, who did more than most to further the cause of local history and the understanding of the environment, complained that too many people are 'visually illiterate', although the evidence about the way in which the environment has changed to be what it is, he said, lies all around us, for those who have eyes to see. So the intention is not that we should all just become a collection of 'Mastermind' experts, knowing 'one damn fact after another', but that we should gain a better understanding of how the place where we live has developed and how it might develop in the future. For there is no doubt that villages and countryside like ours are increasingly under threat and the future is at least partially in our hands.

The articles in this collection were solely the choice of their individual authors, so there is no connecting or common thread, save that of the area of Loose - and that is interpreted very loosely (no pun intended), since it is often either undesirable or impossible for a researcher to confine him/herself to parish boundaries. As it happens, the articles cover a wide span of both subject-matter and time, from Ragstone Quarries to Coxheath Camp and from Domesday to the 20th century Isolation Hospital. They have also been researched in widely differing ways, some relying mainly on secondary sources, others on documents from Records Offices or personal reminiscences. None of the writers, however, would claim to have said anything like the last word on the subject, and would welcome any criticisms, comments or contributions from readers.

Pat Jenner, Julia Page, Roger Thornburgh.  
Editorial Committee.

# RAGSTONE QUARRIES

ANNE CREASEY

When I decided to find out about our local ragstone quarries, it seemed easy - I wanted to know just what ragstone is, where the quarries were and who owned them, and who were the men that worked there.

The first part was easy. I soon found from books on geology that ragstone is a hard sandy limestone, a band of which runs from Hythe to Westerham, with the widest part in the Maidstone area' (Fig. 1). The deposits consist of alternate layers of hard grey Kentish rag and sandy hassock, so that nearly half of the excavated material is waste. The different layers of stone were given names by the quarrymen, the layers and names varying from district to district. In 1846 the Maidstone architect John Whichcord jnr. wrote a booklet<sup>2</sup> about ragstone giving the names in current use at Boughton Monchelsea for fifteen layers of stone, and the use to which each layer could best be put.

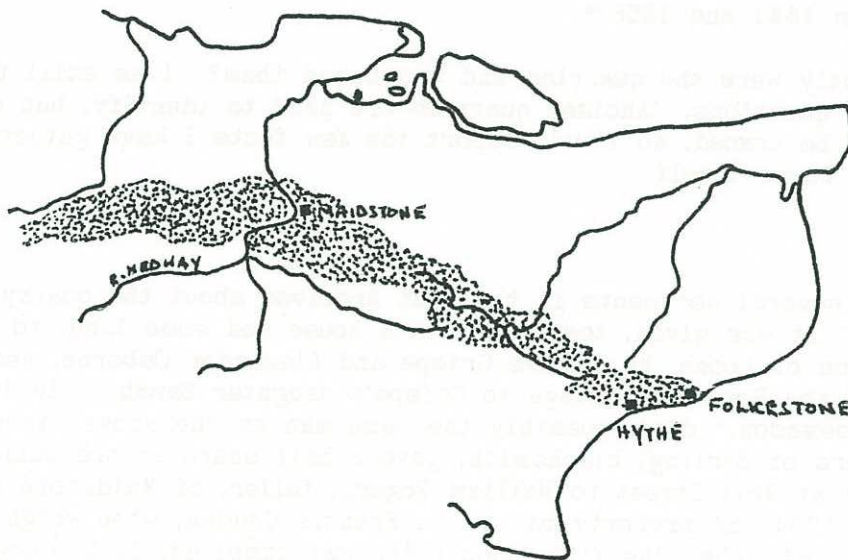


Fig. 1 The Lower Greensand ridge (shaded) where the ragstone is found.

Long ago the stone was excavated by pick and hammer, but when gunpowder became available it was used to break the stone, a hole for the charge being bored with a 'jumper', a long metal rod with a wider part in the middle to give weight, which was 'jumped' repeatedly against the stone until a hole was made for the gunpowder.

Ragstone is a freestone - that is, it shows no tendency to split along any particular plane - but it cannot be sawn and has a rough appearance which makes it unsuitable for fine work. It was usually shaped at the quarry with heavy double-pointed hammers (skiffling or scappling) to roughly the required dimensions, before being transported to the building site, the chippings and smaller stones being used for roadstone or burnt to make lime.

Until the twentieth century, transport was always a problem and accounted for the major part of the cost of any commodity, especially a heavy one such as stone. As rag is the only hard stone to be found in the vicinity of London, the easy transport offered by the River Medway meant that the quarries around Maidstone were used from very early times to provide building stone for London. The Romans built their London Wall of ragstone and a Roman barge was found in the Thames at Blackfriars with a cargo of ragstone. The Normans used it not only for their Kentish castles but also for the White Tower at London, the stone being shipped from Aylesford.<sup>3</sup> In the Middle Ages, Boughton Monchelsea supplied stone for Westminster Abbey and later for paving at Hampton Court, and Maidstone provided stone for the fortification of Calais.<sup>4</sup> Cannon-balls were made of it too, 7000 being ordered by Henry V in 1417, others in 1434, and five tons 'rough-hewn for bombard shot' for Henry VII.<sup>5</sup> Its strength made it very suitable for sea-walls, and throughout the ages it has been used for roadmaking. After the Middle Ages ragstone went out of favour for all but local building, but the Industrial Revolution created a demand for building materials in the early nineteenth century and it was again widely used. In the London area alone, thirty-three churches were built of ragstone between 1841 and 1858.<sup>6</sup>

Where exactly were the quarries and who owned them? I am still trying to answer these questions. Ancient quarries are hard to identify, but more recent ones can be traced, so I will report the few facts I have gathered about the quarries in Loose itself.

#### WELL STREET

There are several documents in the Kent Archives about the quarry in Well Street. In 1670 it was given, together with a house and some land, to John Rogers, freemason of Loose, by Thomas Crispe and Alexander Osborne, yeomen, on the occasion of the Rogers' marriage to Crispe's daughter Sarah.<sup>7</sup> In 1679 a John Rogers, freemason,<sup>8</sup> died, possibly the same man as the above since, in 1701, John Rogers of Birling, blacksmith, gave a half share in the buildings, land and quarry at Well Street to William Rogers, fuller, of Maidstone for five shillings.<sup>9</sup> In 1704 the property passed to Francis Godden, wheelwright of Loose,<sup>10</sup> and by 1840 when the Tithe Award Map was compiled, it belonged to Edward Penfold and was occupied by William Penfold. In 1890 it belonged to Mr Coles, and because it was an exceptionally hard winter, he allowed thirty men who could find no other employment to work in the quarry and so survive the winter.<sup>11</sup> Does anyone know whether the quarry was used after this?

#### ROSEMOUNT

This small quarry was perhaps created to service the building of the viaduct. On a map of the proposed turnpike road and viaduct,<sup>12</sup> there is an orchard belonging to Benjamin Shadgett on this site. In 1835, after the

viaduct was built, his land was auctioned, and a plan produced by the auctioneers,<sup>13</sup> and reproduced by Roger Thornburgh in 'Loose Matters' No. 3 (Fig. 2), shows a quarry and also a lime-kiln which would be used to burn the ragstone for mortar. According to the 1840 Tithe Award, the land, described as 'quarries, house, etc.', was owned by John Sutton, a Maidstone stonemason who also owned a quarry in Boughton Monchelsea at this time but lived in Westborough. Soon after this 'Rosemount' was built.

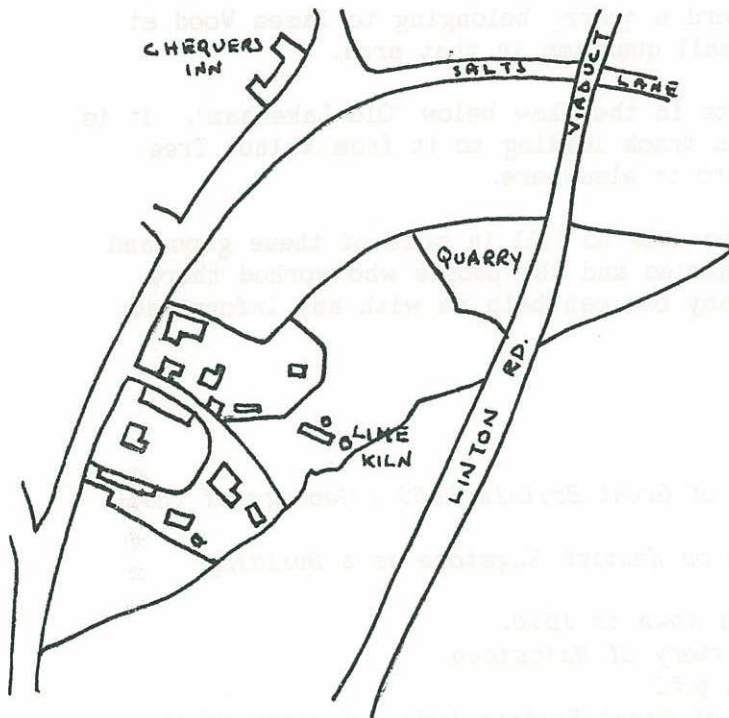


Fig. 2 The site of Rosemount quarry.

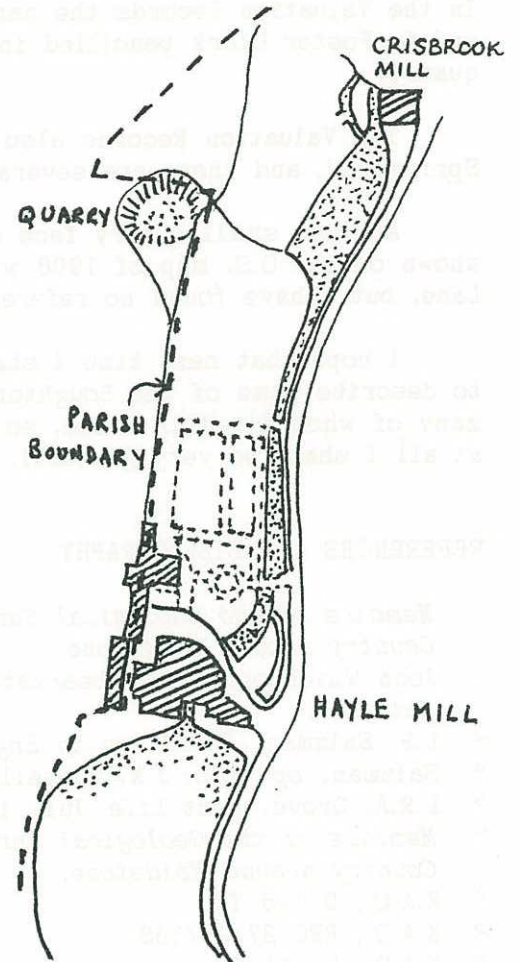


Fig. 3 Hayle Mill and its quarry.

#### HAYLE MILL

Just on the border of Loose parish was another small quarry belonging to the Green family of Hayle Mill (Fig. 3). Mr J. Barcham Green, writing in the Heath House Young Ornithologists' Club magazine for 1978, said that some stone from this quarry was used for building St. Stephen's church at Tovil in 1839-41, and later the same quarry provided stone for his father's house, 'Godlands'.

## FOX'S QUARRY

I have found rather less information about a fourth Loose quarry, the one to the left of the track from Filmer's Farm into Quarry Wood. It is not shown on the O.S. map of 1866 but is on the one of 1897, and I have been told that it closed in the 1920's. It is known as Fox's Quarry, and in the Valuation Records of 1909-10<sup>14</sup> C.M. Fox of Lobster Hall, Loose, owned a quarry, presumably this one. His agent was Raynham of Dairy Farm, Marden, and C.M. Fox Ltd. were prominent Marden farmers, owning several farms in the area.<sup>15</sup> In the Valuation Records the name Raynham has been crossed through in pencil and G. Foster Clark pencilled in. Does anyone know any more about this quarry?

The Valuation Records also record a quarry belonging to James Wood at Springhead, and there are several small quarries in that area.

Another small quarry face exists in the shaw below 'Old Lakenham'. It is shown on the O.S. map of 1908 with a track leading to it from Walnut Tree Lane, but I have found no reference to it elsewhere.

I hope that next time I shall be able to fill in some of these gaps and to describe some of the Boughton Quarries and the people who worked there, many of whom lived in Loose, so if any one can help me with any information at all I shall be very grateful.

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- <sup>7</sup> K.A.O., U 106 T3.
- <sup>8</sup> K.A.O., PRC 27/28/168.
- <sup>9</sup> K.A.O., U 106 T3.
- <sup>10</sup> K.A.O., U 106 T3.
- <sup>11</sup> *Loose Parish Magazine*, December 1870.
- <sup>12</sup> K.A.O., U 24 T65.
- <sup>13</sup> K.A.O., U36 T1749.
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- <sup>15</sup> P. Highwood and P. Skelton, *A Wealden Village - Marden.*



# THE BAPTIST CHURCH

JULIA PAGE AND ROGER THORNBURGH

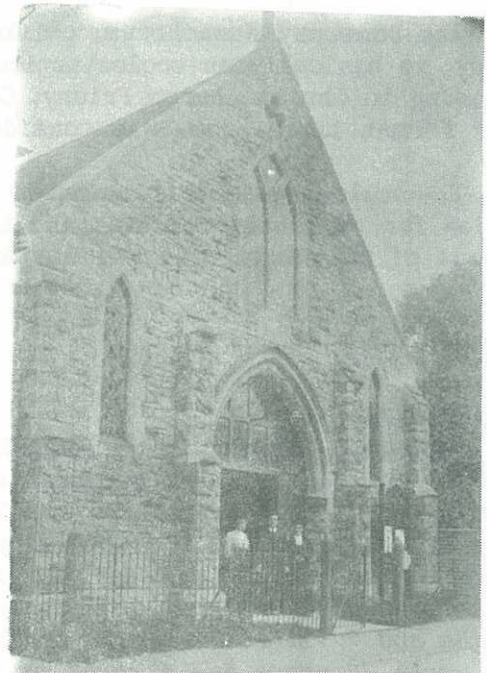
1888

The 25 January last marked the centenary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Loose Baptist Church. The inscription on it records that the ceremony was performed by Mr John Barker, who was not only 'principal of a gigantic business in London' - the Kensington department store - but also a native of Loose. By 1888 the original chapel in the Iron Room in Malthouse Hill, which had only opened ten years before, had become 'inconvenient and out of repair' - basically too small for the growing congregation. So, at a cost of just on £1000, a new building was being erected in Church Street by Messrs Wood & Son of Boughton Monchelsea; it was designed to seat about 250 and had a schoolroom underneath.

The occasion was marked with a half-holiday for the school children and decorations all round the village. At the ceremony itself, attended by the Mayor of Maidstone and 'other influential gentlemen', both Chapel and Churchmen, every speech was carefully worded in order to give no offence. Mr Barker remarked on how 'they now lived in an age of religious toleration if not of religious equality, and he was sure that all gathered there that day, whether they were Churchmen (and he was pleased to see so many there) or whether they were Nonconformists, had all but one ambition in view, the view of furthering the welfare of their fellow men'. Two hymns were sung, and many references made to Mrs McAlley, who had financed the project until such time as sufficient money had come in.

A lunch followed in the National School, after which the Secretary of the Building Fund, Mr G. H. Graham, reported that to date he had collected £288; by the end of the day a further £301 was raised. Finally, the old people of the village were provided with a 'sumptuous free tea' and a 'pleasing entertainment consisting of vocal and instrumental music, recitations, etc.'.

The completed church officially opened a few months later, on 11 July, with a Public Meeting chaired by John Barker and a sermon preached by the Revd. H. Barker of Hastings.



Baptist Chapel c.1910

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## DOMESDAY LOOSE

ROGER THORNBURGH

Although the manor of Loose is not mentioned in William I's *Domesday Book* (1086), there can be no doubt that it did exist then. It was named in a Charter of AD 832 when it was given by Ethelwulf, son of King Egbert of the West Saxons, to a widow named Sute and her daughter, who in turn donated it to Christ Church Priory, Canterbury,<sup>1</sup> and it also appears in the *Domesday Monachorum*, a document, dating from about AD 1100, of the same Christ Church Priory.<sup>2</sup>

The *Domesday Book* is a record of the survey that the king had ordered to take place throughout his newly-won country to find out 'about this country, . . . how many hundreds of hides were in the shire, what land the king himself had, and what livestock upon the land, or what dues he ought to have each year from the shire; . . . how much land his archbishops had, and his diocesan bishops, and his abbots, and his earls; . . . what or how much each man had who was an occupier of land in England, either in land or in livestock, and how much money it was worth.'<sup>3</sup> The information was used not only for tax assessment purposes but also when arbitration was needed in cases of land disputes, so the detail is considerable; 'its decisions,' wrote the treasurer Richard Fitznigel a hundred years later, 'like those of the Last Judgement, are unalterable.'

The *Domesday Monachorum*, unlike the king's secular and administrative survey, is basically an ecclesiastical record of the churches and lands belonging to Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, but it clearly shows that in early Norman times Loose was considered to be part of East Farleigh.

The following is a translation (from the Latin of the originals) of the entries for both East Farleigh and Loose from these two documents, plus notes on some of the terms used and matters covered.

### DOMESDAY BOOK

#### 'In MEDESTAN Hundred

The Archbishop himself holds FERLAGA. It is assessed at 6 sulungs. There is land for 26 ploughs. On the demesne are 4. 35 villeins with 56 bordars have 30 ploughs. A church is there and 3 mills worth 27 shillings and 8 pence. There are 8 slaves and 6 fisheries yielding 1200 eels. There are 12 acres of meadow and woodland to render 115 pigs.

Of the land of this manor Godfrey holds in fee  $\frac{1}{2}$  sulung, and there he has 2 ploughs and 7 villeins with 10 bordars who have 3 ploughs and 4 slaves and 1 mill worth 20 pence and 4 acres of meadow and woodland to render 30 pigs. The whole manor before 1066 was worth 16 pounds and afterwards as much. Now it is worth 22 pounds: what Abel now holds 6 pounds; what Godfrey holds 9 pounds; what Richard has in his territory 4 pounds.'

DOMESDAY MONACHORUM

'Concerning FEARNLEGE: Fernlaege is a manor of the monks and belongs to their food; and before 1066 it was assessed at 6 sulungs and it is valued at 22 pounds; and the part of it which Abel the monk holds by order of the archbishop is valued at 6 pounds, and the part of it which Richard has within his lowey [is valued] at 4 pounds; and of the 6 sulungs Godfrey the steward holds a half sulung which is valued at 9 pounds.'

'Concerning HLOSE: Hlose is a manor of the monks and belongs to their clothing, and is assessed at a sulung, and Abel the monk holds it, and pays a revenue to the monks. The sulung lies in the 6 sulungs of Farleigh.'

NOTES

DOMESDAY BOOK:

MEDESTAN Hundred : the Hundred of Maidstone. Kent was divided up into seven 'lathes' and then into subdivisions called 'hundreds' for administrative purposes.

The Archbishop himself holds FERLAGA : the Archbishop of Canterbury was the Italian Lanfranc who had come over with William, and was granted the manor of East Farleigh.

assessed at 6 sulungs : a sulung was a land measurement for tax purposes peculiar to Kent, and probably about 180-200 acres; 6 sulungs thus gives 1080-1200 acres - about the size of the present East Farleigh parish and somewhat bigger than modern Loose (719 acres). The term 'sulung' is the origin of the word 'soil'.

Ipsē Archieps ten<sup>7</sup> FERLAGA.      IN MEDESTAN HVND.  
p. vi. solins fe defd. Tra. ē. xxvi. car. In dñio sunt. IIII. 7 xxxv.  
uiffi cū. lvi. bord hnt. xxx. car. Ibi æccla. 7 III. mold de  
xxvii. solid 7 viii. den. Ibi. viii. ferui. 7 vi. piscarie. de mille  
cc. anguiff. Ibi. xii. ac pti. Silua. c. xv. porc.  
De tra huj<sup>9</sup> M ten<sup>7</sup> Godefrid in feuo dimid folin. 7 ibi hē. II.  
car. 7 vii. uiffos cū x. bord hntes. III. car. 7 IIII. feruos. 7 I. mold  
de. xx. den. 7 IIII. acs pti. 7 Silua. xxx. porc.  
Totū M T.R.E. ualeb<sup>7</sup> xvi. lib. 7 post tntd. 7 m. xxii. lib.  
Qd abel m ten<sup>7</sup> vi. lib. Qd Godefrid. ix. lib. Qd Ricard<sup>9</sup>  
in sua leuga. IIII. lib.

The Domesday entry for (East) Farleigh

- land for 26 ploughs* : an indication of the amount of arable land, presumably on the whole manor. A plough was generally drawn by a team of eight oxen and could manage about an acre a day. On the basis of a family needing about ten acres to support itself, this gives approximately 260 acres.
- on the demesne* : the 'home farm' of the lord of the manor, worked by the peasants as part of their feudal duties - 'boon-work'.
- 35 villeins and 56 bordars* : these were the free peasant farmers - as opposed to the unfree slaves (see below). They made up a sizeable proportion of the population and would have had to do work for the lord or pay him rent in return for their land; bordars had less land than villeins, perhaps 5 as against 20 or so acres. Some historians say that villeins would have held between 30 and 100 acres, but there does not seem to have been enough room in East Farleigh for such large acreages.
- A church is there* : presumably the church of East Farleigh rather than that of Loose, though both are probably Norman in origin. There may, of course, have been wooden churches prior to either of these two.
- 3 mills* : as windmills appeared about a hundred years later, these would have been watermills for grinding corn, but no clue is given as to where they were; the Loose village mill, which used to stand in Mill Street, may well have been one of them.
- 8 slaves* : the poorest peasants, about one in ten of the population and completely unfree, unable to move home or do much else without permission.
- 6 fisheries yielding 1200 eels* : probably millponds, or fish traps at weirs along the Medway, which would have provided a variety of fish including eels, a favourite of the Normans ; the '1200 eels' were surely a tax rather than the number produced per year, as some books suggest.
- 12 acres of meadow* : presumably beside the Medway, the Beult or Loose stream, and valuable land - worth about three times as much as arable land, for it grew the hay for feeding to the animals which were to be kept alive during the winter; most animals would have been killed and the meat salted down.
- woodland to render 115 pigs* : woodland provided villagers with fuel and building timber, but it also served as pig-pasture; it seems that the sort of rent that was paid for the use of the woodland was one pig in ten, suggesting that there were well over 1000 pigs wandering around the manor of East Farleigh in Norman times.
- Godfrey holds in fee  $\frac{1}{2}$  sulung* : Godfrey may be the person of the same name who is recorded as holding land from the Archbishop in Petham, Lenham and Sheppey. Piecing together the information in both the Domesday Book and Domesday Monachorum, it appears that Godfrey was the Steward of Malling, and as far as the manor of East Farleigh was concerned his land seems to have been in Hunton (also part of the manor).
- before 1066* : in the time of King Edward (the Confessor).
- Now it is worth 22 pounds* : the value of this manor increased but some fell in value, as, for example, in the north of England where William put down a rising with a harshness that resulted in terrible devastation.
- Abel* : the Domesday Monachorum reveals that Abel was a monk and held part of the manor 'by order of the archbishop'; it also shows that Loose formed at least part, if not all, of that holding. If Godfrey's half

sulung was worth £9 and Abel's whole sulung was only worth £6, it would seem that Loose in Norman times was not one of the most prosperous parts of the manor; perhaps the Anglo-Saxon origin of the name Loose, meaning 'pig sty', still held true in 1086.

*Richard* : again reference to the Domesday Monachorum tells us that Richard held land apart from East Farleigh, and together it formed what was termed a 'lowey'. This basically meant a large holding which, in Kent, referred to the estate associated with Tonbridge Castle. The landholder was Richard FitzGilbert (or Richard of Tonbridge), son of Count Gilbert of Brionne, and the Domesday Book records that he had been granted two manors and land in 25 others. After William's death, Richard supported the wrong side and was imprisoned in France where he died.

#### DOMESDAY MONACHORUM

*FEARNLEGE/Fernlaege* : two further spellings of (East) Farleigh.

*a manor of the monks and belongs to their food* : a reference to the manor of East Farleigh being held by the monks of Christ Church Priory, and to the income being used to supply them with food.

*HLOSE* : the 11th century spelling of Loose from the Old English word for pig sty. The 'Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names' compares the name Loose with Loosely Row (Bucks) and Loseley (Surrey) = 'glade with a pig sty', and Loscombe (Dorset) = 'valley with a pig sty'.

*belongs to their clothing* : the income from Loose went towards the monks' clothing.

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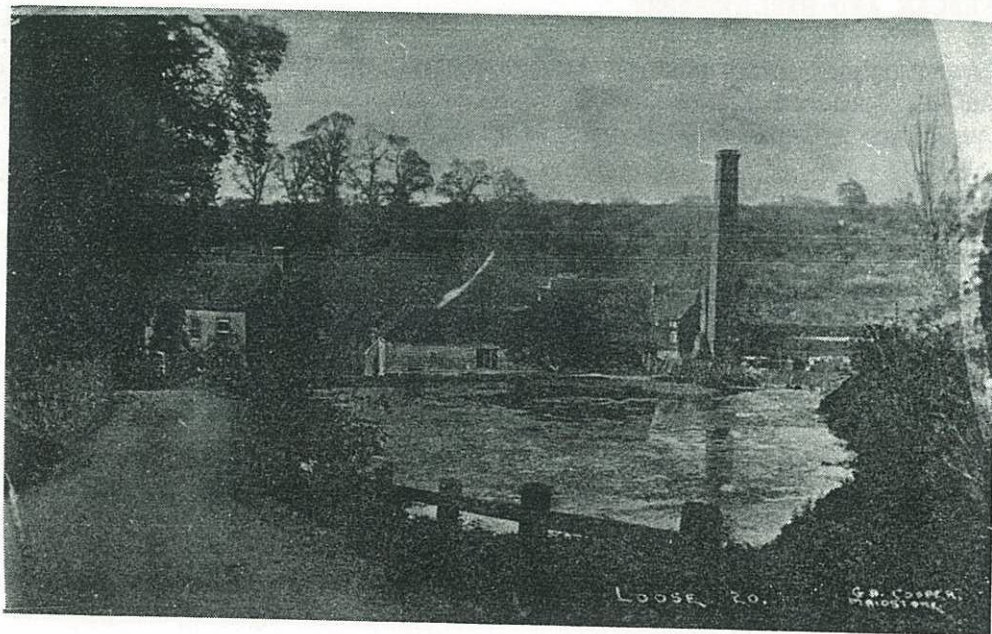
# THE MILLS OF THE LOOSE VALLEY

JONATHAN WARNER

The stream which flows through Loose on its way to the Medway at Tovil once powered thirteen watermills in two-and-a-half miles, (Coles Finch's sixteen is an overestimate'). In 1902, Sir Charles Igglesden reported that nine were still operating. Most were engaged in paper-making for at least part of their working lives; the last one, *Hayle Mill*, ceased production in the summer of 1987.

Whilst the history of the mills is generally well recorded (especially by Bob Spain<sup>2</sup>), information on the three mills farthest upstream is relatively thin. Until the late nineteenth century, this area was included in a detached part of East Farleigh parish. Of the three, *Gurney's Mill* is nearest to Loose village, just to the east of the viaduct. Moving upstream, next came *Upper Mill* and, finally, evidence points strongly to a mill on the Leg o' Mutton pond.

At present, my particular interest is Upper Mill. This used a rare combination of power sources, the nineteen-foot diameter water-wheel being fed both by water from Springhead pond (overshot operation), and by means of a leat from the Leg o' Mutton pond which reached the wheel at a lower level (high breast operation). This is an arrangement which would appear to be unique in Kent. It is not clear if both sources of water-power were usable at once, or were alternatives according to the availability of the water in the two ponds. Later, a steam engine was added to provide an alternative to water power.



Upper Mill, Salts Lane, c.1910.

The history of Upper Mill is recorded from 1706. It was once owned by the famous paper-maker James Whatman (not Gurney's Mill, as Thomas Balston argues<sup>3</sup>). It was sold by auction in 1908<sup>4</sup>, and demolition began soon afterwards. Today, only a small amount of masonry remains and the millyard has become part of the garden of *Upper Mill Cottage*.

I should welcome any further information on Upper Mill, and also, for future research, on any of the other mills of the Loose Valley.

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- <sup>4</sup> Auction Sale Particulars, 1908.

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## THE PARISH POOR

MARGARET COLLINS

Two factors must be kept in mind whilst researching this subject, for they are often reflected 'between the lines' of the ledgers.

On the one hand, whilst the land and property owners of the past might well have been considered extremely wealthy, they did in fact have to face endless taxation on such items as births, marriages, deaths, bachelorhood, bricks, hearths, windows, dogs, servants and even wig-powder; added to which further tax was then levied upon them for revenue toward the repair of roads and bridges, the upkeep of the Church fabric and the Clergy, the cost of maintaining the Militia and the Navy, and last but not least support of the poor of the Parish. (Is it any wonder that they chose to emigrate to the colonies in their hundreds?)

On the other hand, the ordinary folk who rented their hovels were utterly dependent upon being able to work, for whatever meagre pittance their employer might choose to pay them, and this meant that they must keep themselves in good fettle. Of course some were sadly left destitute through no fault of their own, but the workshy - and there were a few in each parish - were not tolerated for long; in the days before the setting up of Workhouses, they were invariably paid by the Overseers to move out of the area for good.

From the existing records of the Overseers of the Poor commencing in 1694, it appears that here in Loose a public meeting was held annually to decide precisely who should be eligible for assistance, and it was only by order of the Sessions or a Justice of the Peace that anyone other than those

who fell victim to the pestilence or smallpox could be added to the list for that year. Basically 'the poor' comprised widows - either aged or those left with very young children, the blind, the crippled and naturals (idiots).

Poor-tax varied from a rate of a shilling in the pound in 1694 to sixpence in 1707, which is as far as my researches have taken me yet; and from those on the list it is possible to deduce that Bufkin, Charlton, Castreat and Boorman were the principle landowners. Also included were several 'forriners' (folk who had land in the parish but lived elsewhere), and it is here that we learn of Mr Denmarle owning a hop-garden in 1694, and Richard Beale a cherry ground in 1706. Note was also kept of those in arrears with their taxes.

The 1694 Assessments of Income amounted to twenty-two pounds and a penny, and this was disbursed by the Overseers on a weekly basis to the poor themselves or to those with whom they were lodged, (obviously there was not yet a purpose-built Poorhouse in Loose), and on a quarterly basis to those supplying medicines, shoes, items of clothing and firewood.

The ledgers themselves make fascinating reading, for as well as being simple account books they contain a wealth of facts relating to the social history of the period and, by putting together separate entries, one can follow the fortunes or misfortunes of many a poor soul, glean details of household items and wearing apparel and their cost, and learn of the outbreak, treatment and outcome of typhoid and smallpox epidemics, for which purging and/or blood-letting (by leeches or the knife) appeared to be the standard treatment.

As my researches into the 'Poor' proceed, I hope to investigate some late 17th century inventories in an attempt to establish precisely how wealthy some of the tax-payers were, and then to search maps and more ledgers for clues about the possible location of a Poorhouse, before finally examining the ledgers and reports relating to the 19th century Workhouse that existed at Coxheath.

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## LOOSE VIADUCT

Built c.1829-30 and credited to Thomas Telford, the civil engineer.

If you have any information about the Loose Viaduct over Salts Lane, please contact Betty Sidebottom, Tel. 43822.



## THE DE PYMPE FAMILY OF LOOSE

PAT JENNER

Visitors to All Saints Church, Loose, take pleasure in looking at the history of the village embroidered on the covers of the pew seats. The covering immediately in front of the lectern shows seven coats of arms, each with a family name, and the third from the left is that of de Pympe, remembered now in the name of *Pimps Court*, recently altered back to its old spelling of *Pympes Court*.

The story starts in 1070 when a knight named de Pympe was granted land in West Barming, Nettlestead and East Farleigh (now Loose).<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Norman French feudal custom he chose Loose to be the principal property and built there a strong house which could be easily defended, a personal chapel and a mill. Fragments of the chapel still exist and the possibility is that the mill was at Great Ivy.

The family flourished and undertook public duties, including that of Sheriff of Kent,<sup>2</sup> which required attendance before the monarch when Parliament was called. This was not a frequent event, some years none was called, but it was no mean undertaking to travel to London with sufficient guards, pack mules with bedding and plate, and all for a one day sitting. For this duty the County paid the Sheriff the sum of four shillings a day.

In the late 14th century, Reginald de Pympe built a new house for his wife and future family at Nettlestead. He had married the daughter of Sir Ralph de Framingham whose land adjoined *Pympes Court*. It was a sorrow to both families when the son and heir, John, died at Agincourt in October 1415, leaving his father, Reginald, as the last in the male line of a 'noble and ancient family'.

A cadet branch of the family inherited the land but not the title. John Pympe<sup>3</sup> who was born in 1417, inherited the Loose and Nettlestead properties upon the death of his brother in 1436. John had married twice and by his second wife, Philippa, had two sons, John and Reynold (or Reginald) and at least one daughter. He died on the 8 November 1454, when his eldest son was only 7 years of age and Reynold 6.

The Pympe family were vassals of Humphrey Stafford, 1st Duke of Buckingham, one of whose properties was Penshurst Place, Kent, and the children and the Pympe lands were placed under his administration. Reynold was, for a time, in the household of Thomas Rotherham, Bishop of Lincoln, and later Archbishop of York. The Duke was killed at the Battle of Northampton (1460),<sup>4</sup> but the boys' affairs continued in the hands of the widowed Duchess.

When he came to age, Reynold took possession of Pympe's Court, Loose, and married Elizabeth Passele (or Passheley), the Lady of Thevegate (Smeeth, Kent).<sup>5</sup> This was an advantageous marriage as the girl was a kinswoman of the Woodvilles of The Mote, Maidstone, who, in turn, were related to Elizabeth Woodville, consort of Edward IV. Since the 2nd Duke of Buckingham - grandson of Reynold's guardian - had been married at the age of 11 years to one of the

many sisters of the Queen, Reynold was coming up in the world - but as yet had no title, other than Esquire.

The two Pympe brothers were welcomed at Court and appeared to serve the king in some military capacity (not yet traced). Edward IV died in 1483 when the fortunes of the Pympe, and many others who had been favoured by the Queen, took a strong downward turn. During that year the uncrowned boy king, Edward V, and his brother, Richard, were lodged in the Tower of London by the Duke of Buckingham and others<sup>e</sup> - ostensibly for safety, but they were never seen alive again. The Queen Dowager remained in sanctuary. Buckingham then changed sides and declared for King Richard III, changing coats yet again to join the party of the Earl of Richmond (Henry Tudor). He was betrayed to the king's officers by a personal servant and Richard ordered his beheading at Salisbury on 2 November that same year. And what of the two Pympe brothers? They were vassals of the Duke. They escaped arrest and disappeared from view. Certainly, they did not return to their homes. In Richard III's Parliament of 1183/4, their names, together with others, were mentioned and a proclamation was issued to the effect that 'the King's true subjects had been abused and blinded by various named men and a reward of 300 marks or land to the value of £10 was offered for the capture of any or each'. (British Museum Harleian MS.433f. 1286).

At the Battle of Bosworth on the 22 August 1485, Richard III was killed (one wonders if his crown really was found on a thorn bush?) and Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, became King Henry VII. It is not surprising that at the first sitting of the new Parliament, Reynold Pympe should appear with his daughter, Anne, petitioning that lands inherited by her from her great-uncle, John Gower, should be restored. This was granted and the attainders against the girl's father and uncle were reversed at the same time. Anne also became Lady of Thevegate upon the death of her mother.

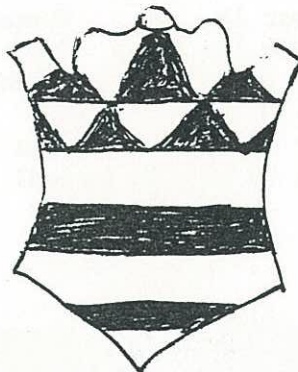
John and Reynold continued service with the new king - there is a reference to 'brave service in Cornwall', and in 1495, Henry VII made Reynold Pympe a Knight Banneret for services to the Crown, the ceremony being held at Blackheath.

Reynold lived to be 81 or 82 years of age - an exceptional life-span for those days. Upon the death of John he had inherited Nettlestead and the de Framingham lands also. There was no male heir and the Lansdown Manuscript in the British Museum contains an entry, 'The Manor of Loose lately called Pympe's Court in Loose and a fulling mill in Loose aforesaid with the appurtenances held by the King'. His Majesty graciously gave the land to Roger Islay - for a consideration - and that is another story.

Footnote: Both John and Reynold Pympe married ladies called Elizabeth, each of whom had a daughter called Anne. An Anne Pympe, daughter or niece of Reynold Pympe, married Sir Richard Guildeford of Hemsted, Benenden. He died in Jerusalem. The Pympe arms,<sup>7</sup> together with those of her husband, can be seen in stained glass in Cranbrook Church: "Argent four barrulets gules, on a chief sable, a bar nebulee of the first".

## REFERENCES

- 1 *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xxviii (1909), p.165.
- 2 'Knights of the Shire', *Arch. Cant.*, xxi (1895), p.219.
- 3 'The Pympe of Nettlestead', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxiv (1960).
- 4 *Penshurst Place*, guide book (1987).
- 5 'The Descent of the Manor of Evegate', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxvii (1962).
- 6 *Blackies' Comprehensive History of England*, (1894).
- 7 'Cranbrook Glass', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxvi (1971).



The arms of Reynold Pympe, sketched from the window  
in Cranbrook Church.

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## BUTCHER'S SHOP AT LOOSE GREEN

BRENDA HEATH

Lacey Creed was a butcher for many years in Loose. He began with a shop in Linton before the First World War. Later he moved to Loose to a shop next to the *Kings Arms* - now an accountant's office. Maurice Reed, now living in retirement in East Farleigh, still remembers well starting to work for Mr Creed as an errand boy in 1933. Wages at that time were 28s per week.

Mr French took over the shop in 1936. He also owned the sweet shop at the end of Brooks Path, now a private dwelling called *Florence House*. Mrs French had a wool shop in Church Street.

Maurice Reed bought the butcher's business in 1953. He moved into the flat over the shop, having previously lived in *Salts Place* since the end of World War II. Delivery was made by shop bike when Maurice Reed began, but Mrs Reed could see the need to learn to drive and deliver to people living further away from their shop in the new houses being built on the Loose Court Estate and the Parkwood and Shepway Estates. Mrs Reed soon built a round

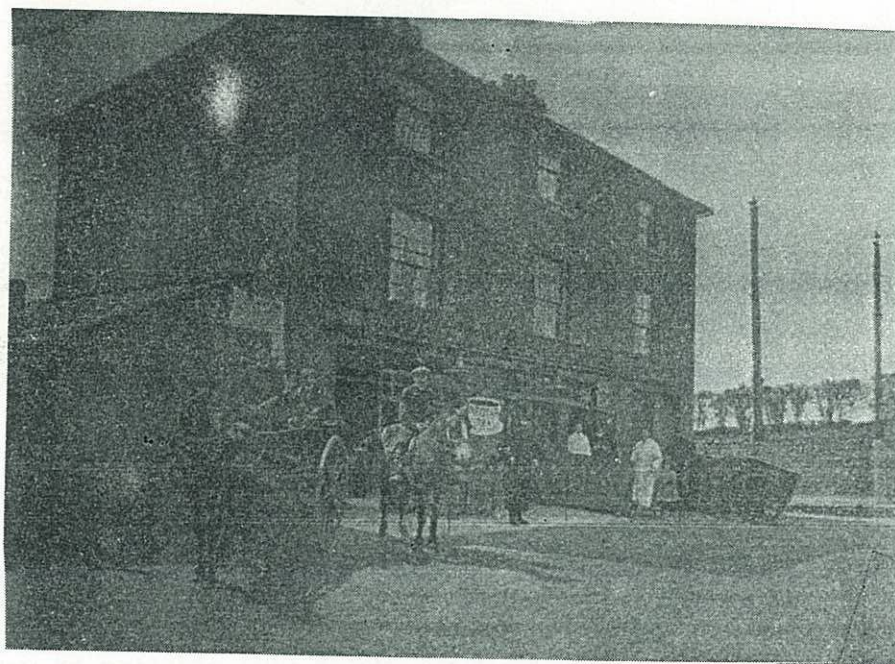
and delivered meat to many households on the Loose side of Maidstone, a service which is rarely heard of today. When Mr Reed first took over the shop he had a water-cooled fridge - one of the first in Kent; then he had a Frigidaire. When Mr Reed retired in 1981 he sold the shop to *Mitchells, Accountants*.

The field opposite the *Chequers*, now known as *Brooks Field*, was used by Lacey Creed for grazing his sheep, which he later slaughtered. Slaughtering was stopped in 1945 in private businesses, and meat remained on ration until 1953-4.

Price List 1933:

Topside	1s 4d per lb.	Rumpsteak	2s 5d per lb.
Legs Lamb	1s 3d per lb.	Pork Chops	1s 10d per lb.
Shoulder Lamb	10d per lb.	Stewing Beef	6d per lb.

[Author's Note: What are your memories of shops past and present in Loose? Please let me know as I hope to be able to tell about other shops and how life was in years gone by.]



The shops at Loose Green.

The butcher's is nearest the camera and Mr Creed may well be the man standing, hands on hips, in front of the shop. Next door is Funnell's, the greengrocer. The photograph probably dates from shortly before 1909 when it appeared in a Maidstone Corporation Tramways timetable.

# THE LOOSE ISOLATION HOSPITAL

FRANK AND KITTY ALLCHURCH

In 1895 an Isolation Hospital was built, on the one part by the Maidstone Rural District Council and on the other by the Guardians of the Poor of Maidstone, under the Public Health Act 1875. It cost £150 and was for the reception and treatment of persons suffering from infectious diseases in the rural parishes within their area, subject to limitations - beds being available - as the hospital could only accommodate 24 patients.' Prior to this a number of huts had been used for this purpose, but they were only opened during the hop-picking season.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1908 shows an area of 8.794 acres (plot no. 52) with a group of buildings on its eastern side and marked 'Hospital (Infectious Diseases)', the area being south of Loose Village; an unmade road leads to the premises from Well Street (Fig. 2). Further research found an O.S. map, dated 1933, and this showed a change in the buildings and their position, indicating a new hospital had been built. The number of buildings had been reduced to nine, and they were shown on the western side in an enclosed area of only 1.861 acres (plot no. 53b) and clearly marked 'Isolation Hospital' (Fig. 3).

Under the 'Isolation Hospitals, 1934, Returns and Agreements', a questionnaire was sent to the hospital from the Rural District Council, and the answers given to specific questions were:

Present building	= 2.20 acres.
Disposal works	= 1.35 acres.
Fenced for playing	= 1.35 acres. (Recreation for patients).
Let off without restraint	= 5.29 acres.

Accommodation for patients is recorded as follows:

Three blocks of wards - one for Scarlet Fever,  
one for Diphtheria,  
one for Observation.

Accommodation for staff comprised nine bedrooms.

There was also a Hand Laundry, a six-roomed house described as a Porter's Lodge, and a Mortuary.

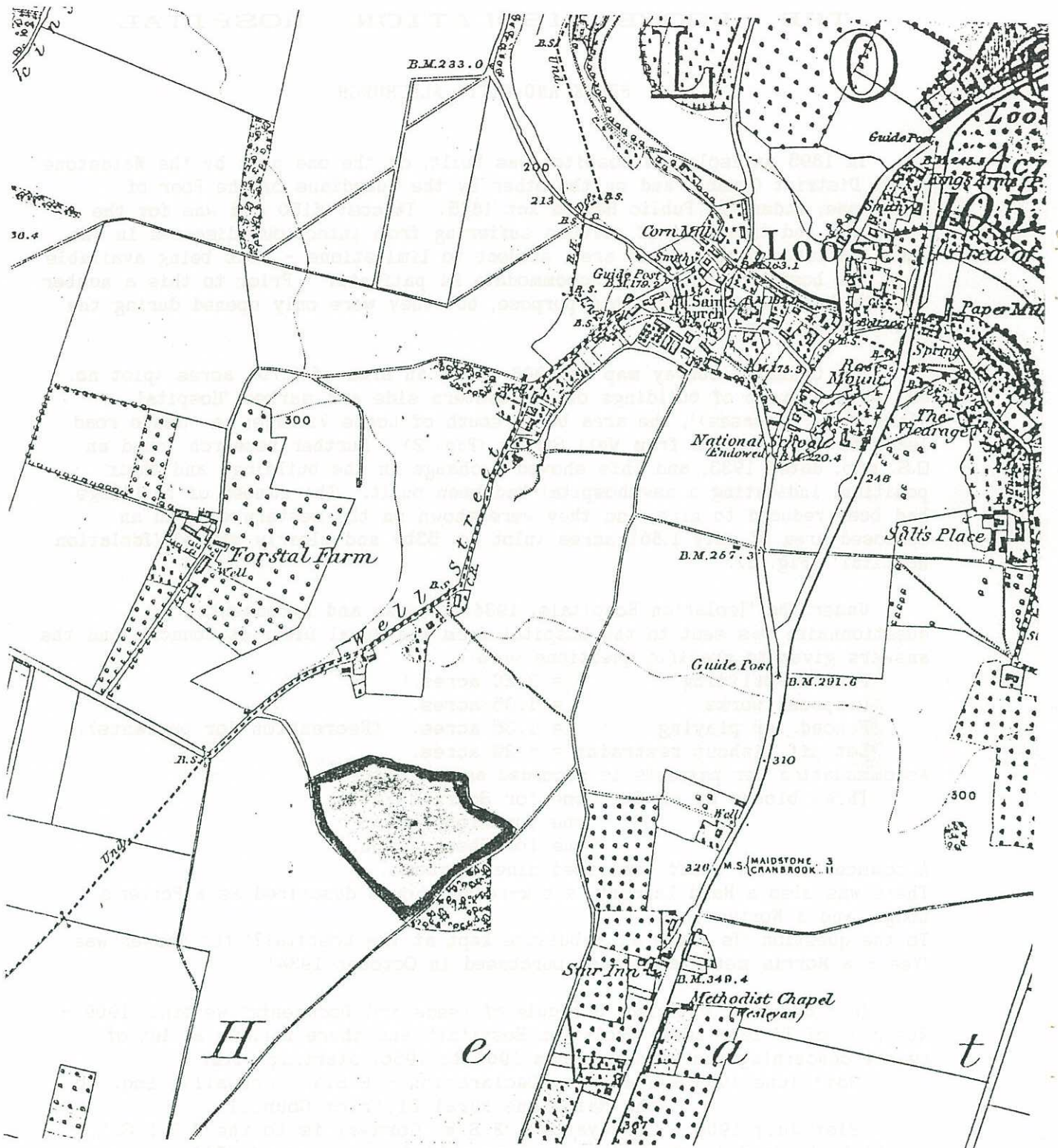
To the question 'Is there an ambulance kept at the hospital?' the answer was 'Yes - a Morris motor ambulance purchased in October 1934'.

In a document entitled 'Schedule of Deeds and Documents' we find '1909 - Abstract of Title - Loose Isolation Hospital', and there follows a list of events concerning the hospital from 1909 to 1956, starting with:

'28th June 1909 - Statutory Declaration - F.S.W. Cornwallis Esq. to the Maidstone Rural District Council.

21st July 1909 - Conveyance - F.S.W. Cornwallis to the M.R.D.C.', in which the land is shown to have been sold for the sum of £300.

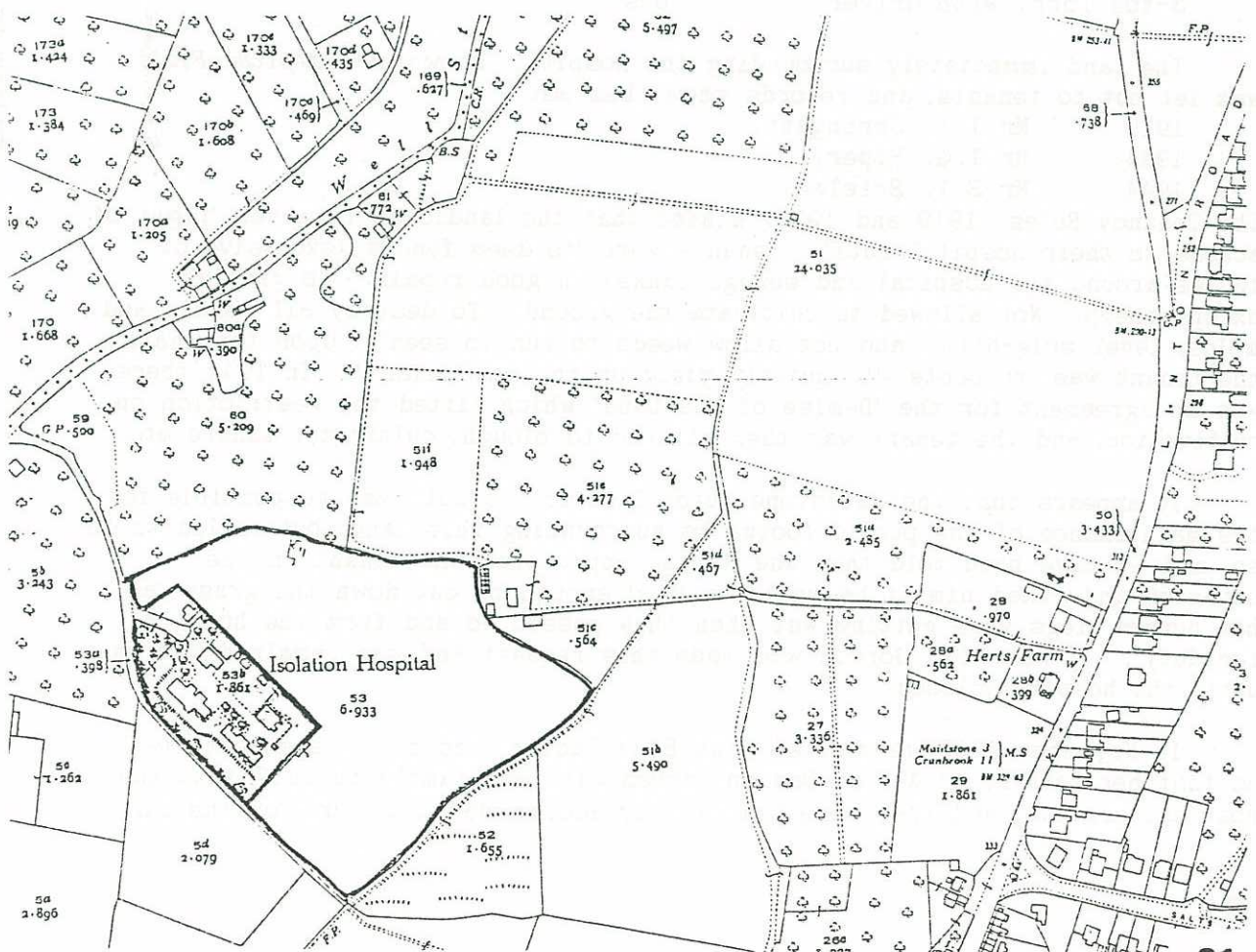
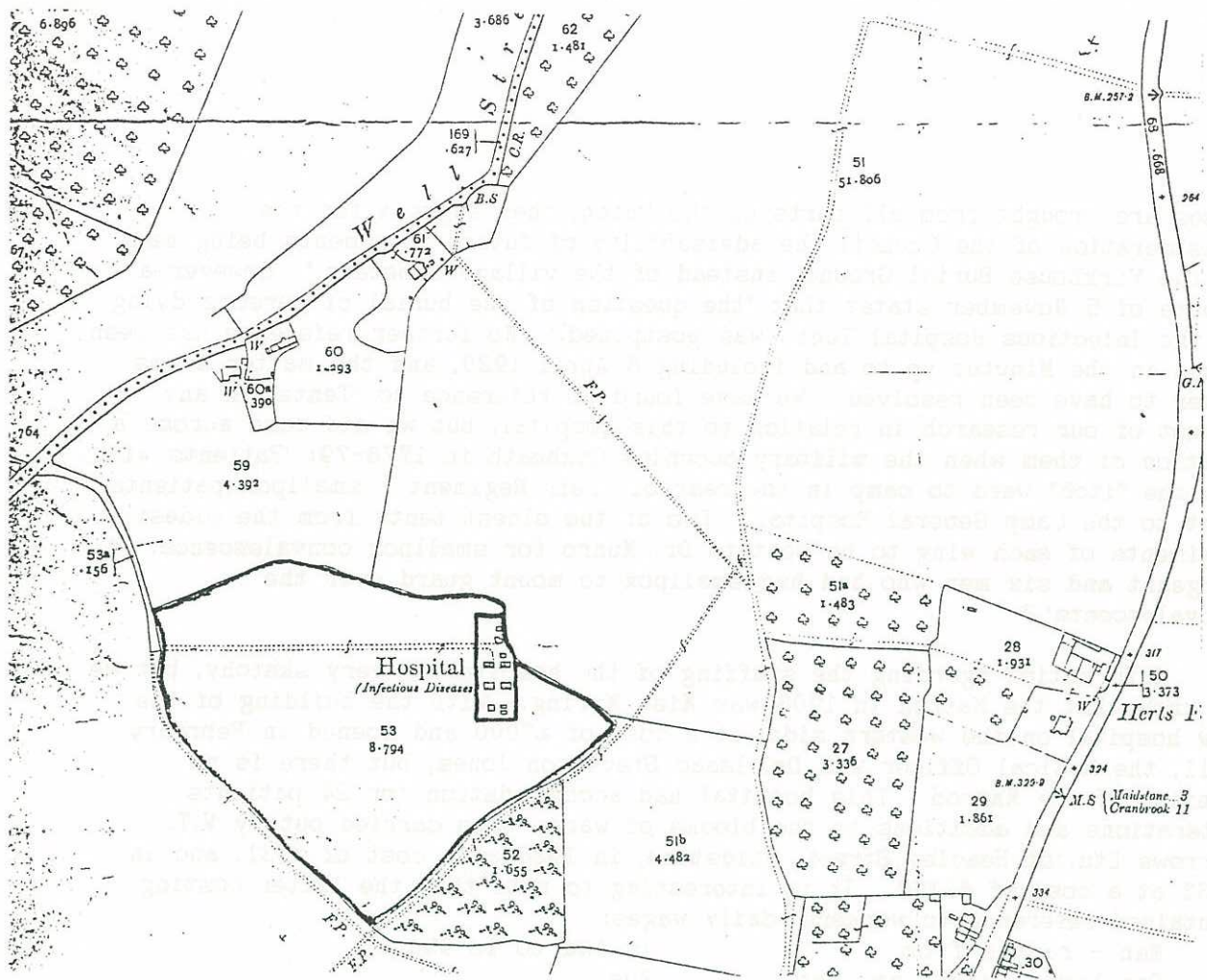
In the Loose Parish Council Minutes of 11 May 1896, it is recorded that 'the Loose Parish Council beg to call the attention of the Maidstone Rural District Council to the question of the burial of persons dying in the Infectious Hospital Tents (our italics). Having regard to the fact that these



Above : Fig. 1. The bare Isolation Hospital site as shown on the first edition six-inch O.S. map of 1865-6 (with amendments to the late 1880's), reproduced here enlarged.

Opposite, top : Fig. 2. The 1:2500 O.S. map of 1908, reduced in size.

Opposite, bottom : Fig. 3. The 1:2500 O.S. map of 1933, reduced in size.



cases are brought from all parts of the Union, they suggest for the consideration of the Council the advisability of future interments being made in the Workhouse Burial Ground, instead of the village cemetery.' However a Minute of 5 November states that 'the question of the burial of persons dying in the Infectious Hospital Tents was postponed.' No further reference has been found in the Minutes up to and including 8 April 1920, and the matter seems never to have been resolved. We have found no reference to 'Tents' in any aspect of our research in relation to this hospital, but we did come across a mention of them when the military occupied Coxheath in 1778-79: 'Patients with the the "itch" were to camp in the rear of their Regiment - smallpox patients went to the Camp General Hospital. Two of the oldest tents from the oldest Regiments of each wing to be sent to Dr. Munro for smallpox convalescence. A sergeant and six men who had had smallpox to mount guard over the convalescents'.<sup>2</sup>

Information regarding the staffing of the hospital is very sketchy, but we do know that the Matron in 1903 was Miss Myring. With the building of the new hospital on the western side, at a cost of £7000 and opened in February 1911, the Medical Officer was Dr. Isaac Stevenson Jones, but there is no mention of the Matron. This hospital had accommodation for 24 patients. Alterations and additions to the blocks of wards were carried out by W.T. Burrows Ltd. of Headley Street, Maidstone, in 1926 at a cost of £331, and in 1933 at a cost of £2138. It is interesting to note that the latter costing contained reference to workers' daily wages:

Man - ranged from	1s 4½d to 1s 9½d,
One horse, cart, and man	20s,
Two horses, cart, and man	29s 6d,
3-ton lorry with driver	60s.

The land immediately surrounding the hospital, known as *Hospital Fields*, was let out to tenants, and records show them as:

1919	Mr J.J. Springett,
1934	Mr J.G. Piper,
1944	Mr S.T. Brislee.

The Tenancy Rules (1919 and 1934) stated that the landlords reserved 'right of access to their hospital huts'. Tenants were 'to keep fences (exclusive of fences around the hospital and sewage tanks) in good repair. No grazing except sheep. Not allowed to cultivate the ground. To destroy all vermin and moles, level mole-hills, and not allow weeds to run to seed'. Upon termination the tenant was, to quote, 'to quietly yield up the meadowland'. In 1944 there was an agreement for the 'Demise of the Land' which lifted the restriction on cultivation, and the tenant was then allowed to plough, cultivate, manure etc.

It appears that the Maidstone Rural District Council was responsible for the maintenance of the public footpaths surrounding this land, but failed to do so, and we have been told that the Matron approached the tenant on one occasion and asked him if he would be kind enough to cut down the grass 'as her nurses' legs were getting wet when they passed to and from the hospital for duty'. It was Miss Gordon who made this request and she remained Matron until the hospital closed.

In November 1987 we visited Miss Edna Dadson, and she was able to tell us that her father, Mr Alfred Dadson, moved with his family in 1917 into the hospital grounds, and they were temporarily accommodated in huts on the far



side of the field (east side) until a house had been built for them - this being the house recorded as the Porter's Lodge, but we now know it was called *Hospital Cottage*. Mr Dadson was the ambulance driver, and the hospital Gardener/Handyman. Miss Dadson told us she remembered the ambulance was a Model 'T' Ford, and this must have been the forerunner of the Morris motor ambulance recorded in the questionnaire of 1934. She also remembers Miss Mannering, a tall, strong lady who came in two days each week to do the laundry, and Miss Nancy Wells who was cook at this time. She spoke with high regard of Miss Gordon, a most kind and caring Matron, who would herself sit up all night to tend a very sick patient.

The last entry in the Schedule of Deeds and Documents referred to earlier, is a Conveyance, dated 6 March 1956, from the Minister of Health to Maidstone Rural District Council, 'as being no longer required for health purposes', for the sum of £5000. The hospital property was then converted into one house, four flats, eight bungalows, and four garages, for general letting to Council tenants, and was named *Gordon Court* to honour Matron Gordon. Although we do know that she officially opened these new premises, we have been unable to find out when this was actually done.

#### REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Kelly's *Directory of Kent*, 1903.
- <sup>2</sup> Brigadier Charles Herbert, R.E., *Coxheath Camp, 1778-1779*.  
*Schedule of Deeds and Documents relating to Loose Isolation Hospital.*

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## OLD LAKENHAM

B. DEE CORDING

I was invited by Anne Creasey, one of the Research Group, to research the Loose Quarries with her, but I got side-tracked and started to find out about *Old Lakenham*, the house at the end of Pickering Street and overlooking the valley, which has at the bottom of the garden a small ragstone quarry.

The house, a traditional brick and tile-hung structure with a wood-lined roof, was built by Messrs Clarke and Epps for Capt. Gordon Larking in 1926-7 on two acres of land acquired from Mr F. Stannett of Walnut Tree Lane who owned all the surrounding land. In 1956 one acre of the land was disposed of for the building of *Fear Patch* and in 1978, on the death of Sir Gordon Larking CBE, further land was sold for building three more houses in Walnut Tree Lane.

Many Loose residents will remember with affection the late Lt. Col. Sir Gordon Larking. He was three times Mayor of Maidstone and ultimately rewarded with the Freedom of the Borough. It was in 1970 that he was knighted for his service, which spanned fifty years, with the Royal British Legion.

## FARMING

KEN SEARLE

So far my research into the changes in the farming scene in the parish of Loose has shown that direct comparisons of areas, stocking and cropping will seldom be possible as, until recent times, statistical returns were usually a one-off affair.

In 1801, for example, the then Home Secretary, prompted by the high wartime grain prices and fears for the country's ability to feed itself, asked the Bishops of the 26 Dioceses in England and Wales to distribute forms for the parish clergy to complete. Bearing in mind it may have been thought the information was being sought for tax or tithe assessments, the figures could err on the side of understatement. Whether or not that is the case, the details recorded by Thomas Cherry, the Minister of Loose at that time, makes interesting reading. He gave the acreage down to cereals as 101%; to potatoes as 13%; to peas and beans as 41%; and to turnips and rape as 42; in all 198%. In a side comment he noted that hops was the main cultivation, and that there were considerable chestnut plantations and orchards, plus two filbert grounds.

1840 saw a Rent Charge Survey. This was carried out by an Assistant Tithe Commissioner, one Thomas Smith Woolley of South Cottingham in the County of Nottingham. According to him, the parish covered 940 acres 1 rood 19 perches, of which some 473 acres were arable. This area, however, included the hop grounds. Nearly 197 acres were meadow and pasture, about 34 were woodland and just over 140 were orchard and fruit plantations. The residue was made up of waste and building land.

In his report Mr Woolley recorded that the holder of the tithes in 1840 was the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that he had leased them to a William Baldwin. He, in fact, was dead but the Annual Rent payable by his Estate was £104 12s., in addition to which the sum of £365 19s 7d had to be paid to the 'perpetual curate of the Parish Church in lieu of tithes'. This, however, did not cover the tithes for 'corn and grain (including hops)' as altogether in 1840 the incumbent is shown as having been due to receive £524 12s 1d.

The 1862 Post Office Directory notes Loose as extending to 960 acres; and the one for 1878 gives the area as 974. In neither case, understandably, is any breakdown of the figures given. Likewise Kelly's Directory for 1895 gives the parish as being 983 acres. Come 1911, however, Kelly's shows quite a jump to 1054 acres, due to a change in the parish boundary - another factor that makes positive comparisons difficult.

In 1980 the area of land in the parish classified by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as agricultural and horticultural amounted to some 907½ acres or, to be precise, 323.4 hectares.

What happened in between has yet to be researched. When it has, it might well make a very interesting story. What effect, for instance, did the intensive home food production efforts of the war years have; and what about the effects of the weather, not least the hurricane of '87 . . . 1987 that is?

## COXHEATH CAMP 1756 - 1757

JULIA PAGE

On the 29 March 1756 feelings were running high in the House of Commons. The French were threatening the frontiers of our American colonies and, with war inevitable, Members were realising that the British army of 18,857 troops (excluding the Irish establishment of 12,000) was far too small to defend both the Americas and England, a cross-channel invasion suddenly becoming a possibility.

As a nation we had always hated maintaining a standing army in peacetime and, with the militia so un-reformed as to be useless, the Commons faced the fact that in order to defend ourselves we would not only have to petition King George II for some of the troops from his Electorate of Hanover, but also sanction the requisition - at a price - of units from Hesse-Cassel, in other words, buy mercenaries. And at this the House was appalled.

Foreign troops on British soil! It went against everything Englishmen felt they had fought for. The fear of coercion by the military was deep seated and when, from time to time, foreign troops had actually been landed for one reason or another, none slept sound until they had sailed again for home, and with the present King combining his duties with ruling his own country, the proposal sounded very sinister to those who always saw trouble behind every tree.

If the situation had not been so acute, the Commons would never have entertained the project but, as it was, they had no choice and, despite William Pitt the Elder putting his weight behind the idea of quickly sorting out the militia, believing that "the natural force of the nation was sufficient to repel any attack on the enemy,"<sup>2</sup> the motion was carried by 259 to 92. And the Lords agreed with the Commons.

Thus was set in train events which would see the Coxheath acreage of Loose parish occasionally, over fifty-nine years, and always during a war, become a vast military camp.

Both the Hanoverian and the Hessian troops needed to be encamped in positions that would cover London, and the Hessians were ordered to the Winchester area while the Hanoverians were to defend the Kentish approaches to the capital. The line of the Quarry Hills was admirable for this purpose, in the middle of which was the long plateau of Cocks Heath, offering what appeared first class facilities in every way.

Up to the middle of the eighteenth century, the Heath had always been just that, a 3½ mile stretch of heath and scrub extending from the *Cock Inn* at Cock Street, through Loose parish and on into East Farleigh. Said to be the haunt of highwaymen, it was a place to cross and not to linger on. Possibly the area between the inn and the main road south out of Maidstone was already, to some extent, cleared of scrub for this was the part chosen for the camp, echoing the decision of over a thousand years before made by the Belgic tribes when the Roman invasion was imminent, witness the great earthworks they threw



up which are still visible today. And indeed, it was a marvellous site in any age, providing the vital ingredients of good drainage, abundant fresh water and firewood, nearby forage, excellent communications and first class observation points.

Research to date has failed to uncover the orders for preparing the camp but these may still exist since those for the Hessians in Winchester have survived, suffice to say that long before the first troops marched in, the Engineer Officers would have surveyed the ground and then the Ordnance would have arrived pegging out the Lines according to the set formula and equipping the place.

War was officially declared on 17 May and four days later the Hanoverian contingent of 10,000 landed at Chatham, "beginning their march in two divisions, the first for Maidstone and the other for Canterbury."<sup>3</sup> The advent of a further 5,000 to swell an approximate population of 5,000 in the county town,<sup>4</sup> and foreigners at that, was bound to cause problems before they could be dispersed to more permanent quarters and the first disturbance actually occurred in Maidstone. But on receiving the complaint, the Commanding Officer quickly showed his mettle. "Point out the man," said he, "and prove him the aggressor and you shall see him hang'd immediately," which took the good citizens slightly aback and "it thought too severe, no particular man was pitched upon."<sup>5</sup>

By July records show that the two battalions of the Hanoverian Foot Guards together with their artillery were encamped on the Heath,\* seemingly under the local command of General Kilmansegg, and nine of his officers' names have come down to us - Oberg, Hodenberg, Herdenberg, Wagenheim, Spotzen, Hauss, Diepenbroich, Zastrow and Fabrice, most of whom were probably petty noblemen.<sup>6</sup> General Sommerfeldt, or Sommerveldt as his name is occasionally spelled, the overall Commander of the Force, apparently set up his Headquarters there too,<sup>7</sup> though it is unlikely he would have been under canvas, accommodation in a large house in the neighbourhood being the usual arrangement, and since later on in the century Linton Place was always used, it was possibly on this occasion as well. The remainder of the Hanoverians were probably quartered in the villages throughout the Weald, where every inn would have had its full complement of enforced lodgers, it being the practice of the time to divide the troops into small detachments and put them up in the pubs - to the dismay of the landlords, one might add - and certainly by August those in Cranbrook, for example, were "withholding 'small beer' from which one might infer 'quarters'."<sup>8</sup>

So far no records have come to light with regard to victualling the camp, but it seems obvious that every mill for miles around would have been grinding corn for all it was worth. Boughton's windmill was actually on the camp itself so may have been required to supply only the military. A glance at the map, dated 1761, shows the roads which would have been used and, of course, the rivers were also a vital highway for heavy equipment. The guns, for instance, may have come down the Medway some distance, but this is speculation.

The impact on Loose can only be supposition too, but with Old Loose Hill and Salts Lane the main thoroughfares, these roads would have been exceedingly

\* Including non-combatants, possibly just under 2,000 men.

busy. The popping sound of musketry and the roar of cannon as the troops exercised and practised weapons drill, along with the firing of the evening gun, may well have taken some getting used to. Strange too, was the light of a hundred or so camp fires flickering on what was normally a dark hillside. That the beerhouses did a roaring trade surely requires no proof, their small smokey rooms filled to overflowing with uniforms of red 'with different facings', whose owners spoke a guttural, broken English and no doubt compared the beer unfavourably with that of the famous Hanover Brauerei.

But not even the most assiduous of commanders can avoid some problems and, on the 13 September William Schrieder, one of Kilmansegg's men from Coxheath took a fancy to a couple of silk handkerchiefs in Christopher Harris's shop in Maidstone and stole them.<sup>9</sup> Before three weeks were past the affair had assumed the proportions of a national incident.

Schrieder was an inept thief and Harris caught him immediately, bringing him before the Mayor and a JP.<sup>10</sup> The offence was clearly shoplifting and proved upon oath but this carried the capital punishment and, because the justices were unwilling to set up tensions between their foreign visitors and the town, they got round the problem by committing him to prison for commonly felony.<sup>11</sup> However, General Kilmansegg, with the terms of the treaty whereby the troops were brought over in his hand, (in which it was agreed that neither the Hanoverians nor the Hessians were to be in any way subject to the laws of this kingdom, either for murder, felony or any other crime), demanded of the Mayor, Schrieder's release - with the rider of using force if his order was not complied with, or so *The Gentleman's Magazine* reported, although it has a maliciously exaggerated ring.<sup>12</sup> And this really put the cat among the national pigeons.

Never minding treaties, the deputy recorder opined that Hanoverians, whilst in England, ought to be subject to her laws and notwithstanding the threat of force declined to release the man, "upon which the General calmly said that an application should be made to the King."<sup>13</sup> The reply, contained in an order from the Earl of Holderness, one of the Secretaries of State, arrived on 18 September and required the Mayor "immediately to discharge the soldier who robbed Mr Harris out of prison and deliver him up to General Sommerveldt."<sup>14</sup> And then, despite the fact that almost certainly Sommerfeldt would have let justice be dispensed by court martial, the trouble began, and it is possible that in the end punishment was deferred indefinitely.

First London, followed by the rest of the country once the newspapers got hold of the story, was furious to discover the terms of a treaty which allowed English justice to be put on one side, and the barrack room lawyers had a field day while those who, all along, had thoroughly disliked the idea of foreign troops on British soil, used it as an excuse to harangue Government, Opposition and anyone else who would listen to them.

"What treaty?" wrote one to the *London Evening Post*. "Will the Hanoverian general say that the King of Great Britain made a Treaty with the Elector of Hanover and the soldiers of his electorate should rob or murder his subjects of Great Britain in England and not be subject to the laws of England? I will not, I cannot believe it. But whether there be any such strange treaty or not, this seems to be a certainty, that these Hanoverian forces insist that, if they rob or murder any of his majesty's subjects here, they are not and will not be

subject to the laws of this land. Thus we see the laws of this once glorious kingdom, purchased, maintained and delivered down to us by the blood of our brave forefathers, forced to submit to foreign mercenaries. How greatly, sir, must we think ourselves indebted to all those who contributed to bring over these lawless masters."<sup>15</sup>

And so they grumbled on, until 9 October when Mr A.B. of London, who was possibly a lawyer, wrote a sensible letter to *The Gentleman's Magazine* and reduced the outcry to its proper proportions.

"While such a mighty bustle and ferment was raised, first in this metropolis and then all over the kingdom", he began, ". . . I did not chuse to deliver my sentiments in public about the affair because I perceived it was made a party matter\* and consequently must be managed with much heat and partiality on one side and with equal vehemence and indiscretion on the other, the main resource of the leaders of each party on such occasion being to avail themselves of the foibles, the ignorance and the prejudices of mankind . . . But are not such crimes [Schrieder's offence] punishable by the laws of Germany and the laws of every civilised nation? They certainly are so; consequently the treaty in question, if such treaty exists, does not mean to tolerate them but could only be intended as a kind of security for the Hanoverian soldiery against the information of envious and evil minded people; for I think a denial of justice has not yet been fairly proved, though it is certain that the offender has escaped punishment because the prosecutor would not appear against him in a foreign court, for fear of incurring the *premunire* enacted in a statute that was made a few hundred years ago against removing causes from hence to the court of Rome.

As to the treaty in question, I doubt whether any such act could be made in due form as one prince is sovereign of both countries; therefore I can only suppose that when a body of the Electoral troops was draughted for England, [it was demanded in Hanover] that they should not be subject to the form of the English laws during their abode in this island and yet be punishable for any crimes and disorders they might commit here, tho' punishment should be inflicted on them by sentence of their own court martial; and if they did make such stipulations before they would march or embark, they were certainly in the right as we wanted them on that emergency, and they well knew how little they were liked by the people in general. For, to speak impartially, as they were invited, they could make terms for themselves whether we consider them as auxiliaries or mercenaries, and I humbly conceive that was not a proper juncture for demurring about the matter.

Their coming over was voted when the nation was in a great fright, which was the properest time for them to make their own terms; but if you insist this was a wrong step on our part, I can only tell you it was a natural one for no man ever acted right in a pannel.

However it be, every unbiased man will allow it was a prudential caution on the part of the Hannoverians, considering they were going into a country where many hate them on principle,\*\* and many only through vulgar prejudices; and considering the temper and morals of the present generation among whom

\* ie. political

\*\* The Jacobites, who supported the Stuart cause.

venality and perjury abound to a degree unknown in former times, I am apt to think that if those forces were not protected by some such treaty or agreement . . . many snares might be laid for them and some scores of them be hanged or transported in a little time; as our natives, according to the adage, might more safely steal a horse, than a Hannoverian look over a hedge.

After all the clamour against them, nobody can deny that they have behaved at least as orderly and soberly as any of our national regiments; upon which account, as well as because they are subjects of our sovereign, we should abstain from all indecent and invidious reflections, whenever there is cause of complaint against any individuals of that military corps. They were brought over at a pinch; and as the necessity of taking them into pay and keeping them here no longer exists, we may suppose they will shortly be sent home . . . But whether we are speedily eased of this burthen or not, we may rest firmly persuaded that no ill use will be made of them here while his majesty lives.  
Yours A.B."<sup>16</sup>

At this point the argument was overtaken by events because, with public confidence in the Administration evaporating, the King asked William Pitt to form a new Government and one of his first tasks was to pass a Militia Bill, thereby giving Englishmen the means of defending their own country, and, at the same time, he arranged for both the Hanoverians and Hessians to be sent back to Germany.

Not that it happened overnight. The camp at Coxheath finally broke up on 6 December and its by now four regiments marched to Chatham and quartered in the town, a Mr Sherbey, for one, having to accept 45 men and counting himself more fortunate than Miss Hayes who was landed with 145.<sup>17</sup> The price of defence can be high in more ways than one. Christmas and the New Year came and went before the transports arrived in the Medway and even then the bills had to be settled before the troops could embark, the Paymaster-General despatching £1054 14s 2d for disbursements.<sup>18</sup> By now, no less than eight regiments, drawn from other parts of the county, were centred on the port and the population must have been heartily glad on 25 February to see the soldiers climbing the gangplanks, and their problematical visitors sailing away.<sup>19</sup>

Peace in Kent? Not quite. For hot on the heels of the departing Hanoverians came the Hessians, admittedly also on their way home, but a trifle later than their comrades-in-arms, and everyone had to put up with yet another influx of troops. Nor was the situation straightforward because their time coincided with an election at Rochester and since the military was never permitted, whatever its nationality, to remain in a town while one was being held, the units had to disperse for a few days. Furstenburg's battalion came to the Maidstone district but his companies seem to have been scattered around the villages, Boughton accepting one, and Coxheath was not re-opened.<sup>20</sup>

But the end was in sight and, finally, on 1 May 1757 the Hessians too, left.<sup>21</sup> For Coxheath, the age of the mercenaries was over and the age of the militia beginning.



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  - <sup>2</sup> The Savory Papers of Lt. Gen. Reginald Savory KCIE CB DSO MC, National Army Museum 8 103-45-14
  - <sup>3</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 21 May 1756
  - <sup>4</sup> In the first census in 1801 England had a population of approximately 11 million, Loose's total being 668. In 1750 historians calculate the kingdom to have numbered about 7 million and on that basis Loose might have approximated 420. There were 469 in the parish in 1786 according to the then curate of Loose.
  - <sup>5</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 21 May 1756
  - <sup>6</sup> The Amherst Papers of Maj. Gen. Lord Amherst, Kent Archives Office, U1350 084/6
  - <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*
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  - <sup>9</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 13 September 1756
  - <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*
  - <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
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  - <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
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  - <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 October 1756
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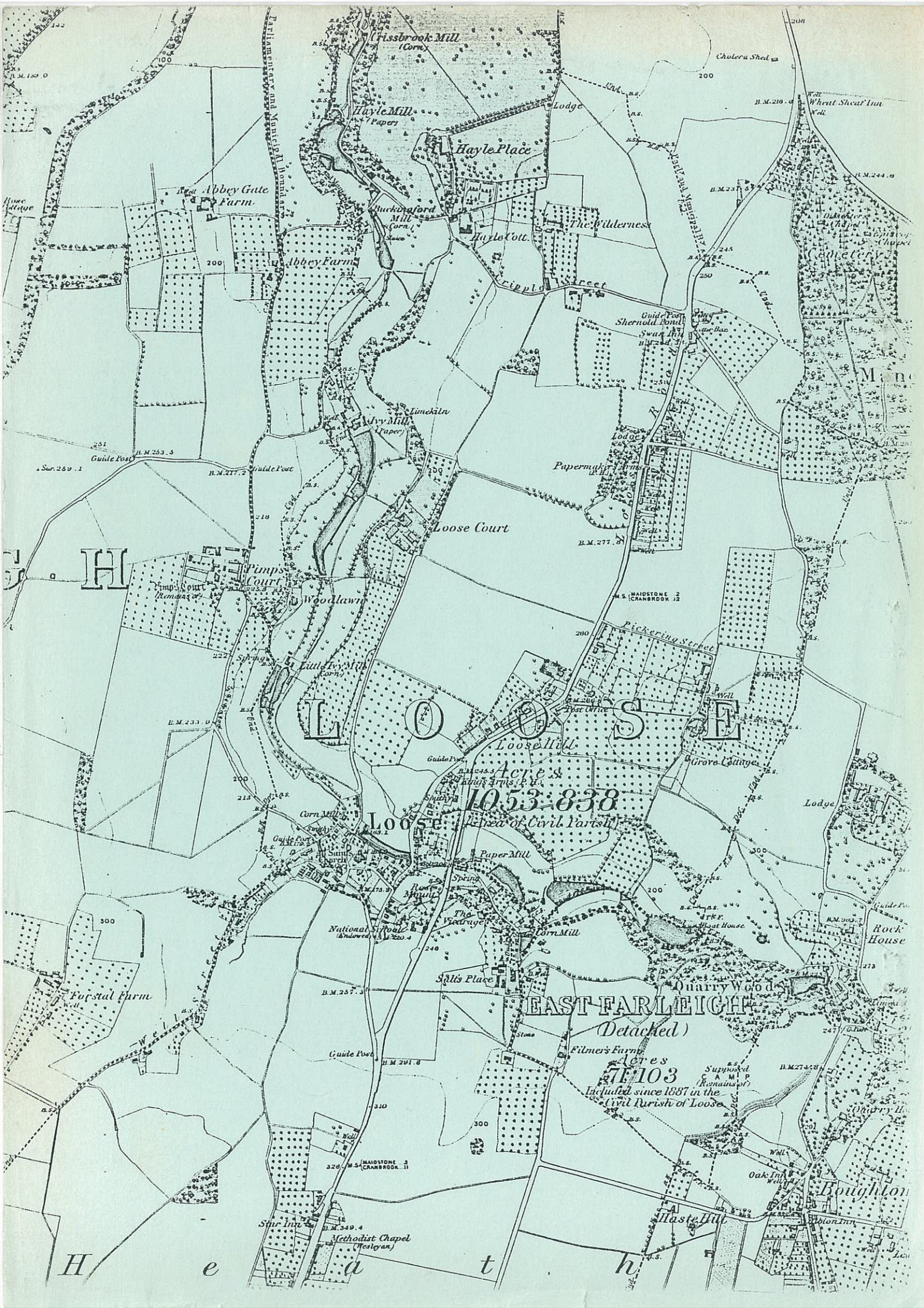
[Author's Note: Unlike later periods in the history of Coxheath Camp, this early one has revealed little, and the author of the article, who hopes eventually to publish a book on the camp, would be grateful for any information.]

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Grisbrook Mill  
(Corn)

Hayle Mill  
(Paper)

Hayle Place

Abbey Gate Farm

Duckniford Mill  
(Corn)

Hayle Cott

The Wilderness

Abbey Farm

Ripple Street

Guide Post  
SHERNOLD ROAD  
SWAN HILL

Jive Mill  
(Paper)

Loose Court

Papermaking  
Lodge

Pumps Court

Woodlawn

Pickering Street

Little Ivy Mill  
(Corn)

Loose Mill

Loose

Acres  
1053.838  
Area of Civil Parish

Paper Mill

Corn Mill

Roofs  
The Wood

Corn Mill

National School  
(Inscribed 1820)

Salt's Place

EAST FARLEIGH

(Detached)

Acres  
71.103  
Included since 1887 in the  
Civil Parish of Loosely

Filmer's Farm

Quarry Wood

Forstal Farm

Guide Post

Boughton

Methodist Chapel  
( Wesleyan )

Waste Hill

Oak Inn