

CHILHAM

THE UNIQUE VILLAGE

Preface

This narrative doesn't pretend to be an original or comprehensive history of Chilham, it is merely a compilation of some interesting events from our past, some of which have been contributed by well-known villagers.

It was apparent from the initial research, that a wealth of information is available concerning Chilham, enough to fill several volumes in fact. There are many omissions from this text, and my only excuse is that others with specialist knowledge will help to fill the gaps in due course.

George Mabbitt

December 1988

Introduction	1
1 Julliberrie	2—4
2 The Church	5—11
3 The Watermill	12—14
4 The Castle	15—18
5 The Mansion	19—25
6 The Heronry	26
7 The Honour of Chilham	27- 34
8 The village & Its People	35—52
9 The Bitter Harvest	53—55
Reflections	56

Chilham

The Unique Village

Introduction

For a village to be judged unique, it must have a good collection of facts and features that when explored, and fables sorted from fact, will still give us sufficient evidence to justify that claim. Chilham seems to be just such a place, so we will consider first what special features we have in and around the village.

We have the remains of a castle, a 17th century mansion, a long barrow, a water mill, a fine church, a heronry, and last but not least, a very handsome village.

Edward Hasted described the parish of Chilham as situated exceedingly pleasant in a fine healthy part of the county' so that statement hasn't altered much since those words were written two hundred years ago - in fact the village square, apart from the intrusion of the ubiquitous motor car and television aerial probably looks much the same as it did around five hundred years ago.

The commissioners of William of Normandy came to the Manor of Chilham in 1085/86, but they were only interested in how much wealth could be squeezed out of our Saxon ancestors, although to give them credit they were very thorough in listing just what was of value in the Manor. We know for instance that 50 inhabitants were accounted for, and that they had 12 ploughs, among the other items recorded was the church, and 6½ water mills. (the half mill implies a mill at a boundary between two manors)

At this time Chilham had to pay the Bishop of Baveux (half brother to William) £80 and 40 shillings per year, it might be interesting to try and work out how much that would be worth at today's prices.

These are but two accounts of Chilham but the history of a village cannot be considered in isolation, and so all the features ought to be investigated in relation to the general history of Kent.

The following chapters have been arranged in chronological order, starting with the oldest man-made feature in the Parish.

Julliberrie

Chapter 1

Julliberrie - The Long Barrow

Much has been made of the legend that the body of Quintus Laberius Durus

- one of the tribunes of Gaius Julius Caesar - was slain in battle and buried here in 55 B.C., so perhaps we ought to examine the known relevant history of that period.

Caesar made two invasions on Britain, the first in 55 B.C. was a disaster, the English Channel was at it's worst and many of his ships were destroyed. Some of those recovered from the storm had to be repaired, and together with the frequent skirmishes against the Kentish tribes, both he and his men were probably glad to set sail and call it a day!

He came again the following year, and landed somewhere in the vicinity of Deal with the VII Legion (a legion had a nominal strength of 6.000 men)

In his own account of attacks on hill forts and Roman works during the Gallic wars (*De Bello Gallico*) he gives two accounts of battles in Britain, and only one of these was in Kent.

A summary of Caesar's account of the battle tells us that the site was 'a place in the woods excellently fortified both naturally and artificially, which they (the Britain's) had previously prepared for an internal war (*domestica belli causa*) for all the entrances had been blocked by felled trees laid close together'. The VII Legion took it by forming *testudo* (1) and under this cover formed a mound against the fortifications.

From further details given by Caesar concerning the actual mileage covered from Deal to the river crossing of the Stour, most historians are of the opinion that the battle took place at Bigbury Iron Age hill fort near Harbledown. If this was the case, and given the fact that Caesar crossed the Thames and fought his second battle at Wheathamstead; it was likely that he would take a direct route to the Thames and not linger in the Stour valley. This would mean that he didn't come to Chilham at all, he certainly wasn't here in 55 B.C. and his stay in Britain the following year must have been fairly brief, because in the same year we find him leading three more battles against the Gauls in what is now modern Belgium.

Still it will be worth examining any facts that we can discover about the barrow, the first serious attempt took place in 1702 when Lord Weymouth and Heneage Finch, who was afterwards the first Earl of Aylesford, conducted an excavation and recorded their progress. From all accounts there wasn't much to report, just a few animal bones as Finch observed in a letter written in 1745 to Archdeacon Battely - the vicar of Reculver.

A workman employed by Thomas Wildman (Chilham Castle estate 1792-1861) to fence off the site of the barrow, found an urn containing coins of the Roman Emperor Constantine (306-337 AD.) At a later date a trench was dug into the barrow probably by a member of the Wildman family, but there is no record of any finds. This was a period before the fundamental science of archaeology was recognised, and some excavations were carried out on a treasure hunt basis.

The first modern study of the barrow was undertaken in July 1936 by R.F. Jessup on behalf of the Society of Antiquities of London, and a further excavation was carried out by the same person in 1937. The entire cost of this work was funded by Sir Edmund Davis the owner of Chilham Castle estate at that time, and the final report was published in 1939.

The full reports are held in the reference library in Canterbury, but a brief summary gives a real mixed bag of finds. From the first excavation there were found:

153 worked flints, pottery shards of Iron Age and Roman periods, a Roman coin of Magnus Maximus (383-388 AD.) and a large number of animal bones including, red deer, sheep, ox, pig and fox.

The second excavation in 1937 produced:-

75 flint flakes, a polished axe of cream coloured flint. 8 Roman coins, 2 illegible but the others of the 4th century AD., and four Roman burials, all considered to be from the middle of the 1st century AD.

Roman Burial

Inhumation, child 5-7 years old, bronze bracelet on the right arm and bronze brooch.

Roman Burial II

Inhumation, girl 17 years old, with pottery vessels.

Roman Burial III

Inhumation and cremation, same burial, young adult, 6 pottery vessels.

Roman Burial IV

Full cremation, adult, urn and dish.

There were signs of two further burials, but owing to inclement weather the dig had to be terminated before an investigation could be carried out.

The evidence obtained from these excavations confirms that no megalithic structure was used in the barrow, the original builders relied entirely on the materials available at the site, and as we know there is an absence of suitable stone in this part of the county.

The barrow has been dated to about 2,000 BC mainly based on the discovery of the polished stone axe, but apart from a fragment of Neolithic pottery, no traces of occupation from this period were found.

We will probably never know who the burial mound was made for one can only assume that it was for a tribal chief who lived some 3,000 years ago. To put this period of our history in perspective, this is the same time that the first phase of the building of Stonehenge was begun, and also the period when Man discovered the value of village life.

This is the only known barrow in the Stour valley, so dare we say that these unknown builders were the first inhabitants of the village we now call Chilham?

The burials discovered at the site were situated in the ditch surrounding the barrow, and were firmly placed archaeologically as being of the middle of the 1st century AD. Since the evidence for this dating is based on grave goods and not on the people themselves, we could hardly call them Romans. From the post-mortem carried out on the remains there was no evidence of the nature of their death, and certainly no signs of foul play.

The Roman occupation began in 43 AD., and would in the beginning be primarily of a military nature, and it is hard to imagine that the graves of children would be Roman in origin so early in the occupation.

So although we haven't found any evidence concerning Quintus Laberius Durus we have another mystery on Julliberrie, we don't even know if these people were related it's possible that they may have been of one family.

Perhaps the only way to confirm a little more of the history of Chilham would be for a total excavation of the barrow, but that costs money; so maybe it would be as well to leave any other occupants in peace and make up our own minds about the fate of poor old Quintus!

(1) testudo:- a Roman army method of defence when the soldiers locked together the standard rectangular shields over their heads to form a barrier against falling missiles.

Note

The barrow was observed by Hilaire Beltoc (1870-1953) during his journey along the Pilgrims Way, and he commented that 'here is the memorial of something far too old to have a name'; it was also the background for a novel written by Dr. R. Austin Freeman entitled 'The Penrose Mystery' which was published in the 1930's.

The Church

Chapter 2

Canterbury

Shrine of English Christendom

The Church

If the Roman occupation hadn't ended in 410 AD there would have been a very good chance that Christianity would have arrived in Britain about two hundred years earlier than it did. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome, died in 331. but not before he declared in 313 his Edict of Toleration in favour of the Christians, and finally made Christianity the religion of the State. An earlier Edict made by Caracalla in 212 granted Roman citizenship to all freeborn inhabitants of the Empire and since Britain was part of the Roman Empire at this time, it's reasonable to assume that Christianity would have been tolerated by the Roman-British administration. The only proof of early Christianity would be the churches of this period.

There is some archaeological evidence to support Bede's statement (1) that 'on the east side of the City (Canterbury) there was a church dedicated to St. Martin (7) which had been used by the Romano-British Christians in this part of the county'. The little church of St. Martin still stands today, but the remaining structure is probably early 7th century.

What really happened of course was that after the evacuation of the Roman Legions, the invaders from the western coastlands of Europe arrived in some strength. We call it the Saxon invasion, but the tribes were mixed and consisted of Saxons, Angles, Jutes, and Frisians; the Jutes seem to have settled in the south of Britain, and especially in Kent.

These new invaders were pagan of course and they had not been subjected to Roman rule, but a certain amount of trading must have taken place between them.

This period of history until the Augustinian Mission in 596 is shrouded in mystery and legend. There were no contemporary writers of the period. Bede gives us some details of events, but these were written some 100 years after they occurred.

We all know the story of Hengist and Horsa being invited by Vortigen to defend the native Britons in 449, and then betraying him by bringing in their mercenaries not to defend, but to oppose him and settle in the country themselves.

It doesn't, appear as if much resistance took place against the invaders although legend has it that the great Arthur fought many battles against them. The stories of valor and chivalry are very romantic, but the evidence concerning Arthur and his Knights is very flimsy, and must, at this moment in time, remain a fanciful myth.

Whatever did happen in this early period of Saxon domination, it seems that Augustine was pleasantly surprised when Pope Gregory sent him to convert the heathen Anglo-Saxons in 596. When he landed in Kent, instead of a horde of savages that he had been led to expect, he found a strong and fairly civilised Kingdom ruled over by Aethelbert. Although the King himself was not a Christian at this time, his wife Bertha was a practicing Christian, with her own chaplain Bishop Liuhard (3)

So Augustine founded his monastery and Aethelbert gave him land within the City for his great Cathedral, which survived until 1067 when it was destroyed by fire, it was rebuilt by Lanfranc, the first Norman Archbishop of Canterbury.

Although Christianity was slow to spread throughout the country as a whole, it gained a foothold in Kent at an early stage of the Mission. It has been said that by Christmas Day 597, Augustine had baptised over 10,000 converts in and around Canterbury

So this was the period of history when Christian churches re-appeared; but like most of the humbler buildings of this time, they would have been constructed of timber, only the grandest of ecclesiastical stone built structures would have survived. In Canterbury we have evidence that one church was probably used in the late period of *Roman* occupation, and that the church of SS Peter and Paul was started in the lifetime of Augustine and completed just after his death (604/609)

At just what stage the building of churches outside the City commenced is difficult to say the early Anglo-Saxons built mostly in timber, but the extensive building program in Canterbury could call for a large number of skilled masons as we know from the remains of these buildings. These stonemasons were probably recruited from Europe along with supplies of natural stone, apart from local flint and rag stone from the Monchelsea quarries, stone suitable for building is not found in this corner of Kent.

There was a thriving brick and tile industry around Canterbury during the Roman occupation, but so far no trace of Anglo-Saxon kilns has been found.

No doubt the local craftsmen would soon learn the skills of masonry, but in the early days at least, the City would take preference in both men and materials.

Although the basic church of this time was fairly simple in construction consisting of a nave and chancel in a single story, if it was going to be built to survive it would involve a great deal of money. Such a church built outside the City would need the wealth and patronage of the Lord of the Manor - if he was a convert to Christianity.

We have to remember that the old pagan beliefs existed for many years. Pagan grave goods have been recovered from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Bifrons and Kingston (just outside the City) which have been dated to the 7th. century.

It is interesting to note that from the grave of one woman at Kingston Down came a jewelled brooch, which is considered to be the richest piece of Anglo-Saxon jewellery outside the Sutton Hoo grave.

It wasn't until the 8th. century that the Church took full control over the burial of the dead in this country.

We know from the Domesday Book that Chilham had a church in 1085/86, but this is nearly 500 years after Augustine's mission, and it's hard to believe that one didn't exist here before the Norman Conquest.

So all we have to do is to find documentary, architectural, or archaeological evidence to support a date for the first church.

Documentary Evidence

The Anglo-Saxon artist came into his own under the influence of the Church in the 7-9th centuries. The standard of calligraphy and illumination of religious manuscripts was very fine, and we are lucky that some of them have survived to this day.

The literacy of the population was confined mainly to the monastic scholars and their time was taken up with the copying of the Gospels and other religious matters, so that very few local facts were ever recorded. At least none seem to have survived which is not surprising considering that this period of comparative calm was interrupted by the Viking invasions. They came at first in small bands to plunder and pillage, but by the end of the 9th century, great armies of them were ravaging the country. Canterbury suffered at their hands and as late as 1011 the City was under siege by the Danes, just prior to Canute being accepted as King of England in 1017.

After the Norman Conquest, about a half of the City of Canterbury was owned by the Church. and it was at this time that the documentation of City affairs were carefully compiled.

Great numbers of these charters and rentals are kept in the Cathedral archives and it is from these that we learn something about the churches in the City. We know for instance from these records, that in the year 1200, there were 22 parish churches in Canterbury, and that no less than 6 of them were dedicated to St. Mary

Some evidence that churches even in the City had been constructed of timber comes from a record dated 1180, which states that the church of St. Mary Bredin which was founded by Hamo the Sheriff of Kent 'used to be made of wood'.

Canterbury in common with other towns of this period, didn't escape the threat of fire. There are records which confirm that the City suffered these disasters in 1161 1174, 1198, 1224. 1247, and 1670; just to add good measure there was the great flood of 1272!

The record relating to St. Mary Bredin dated 1180, may confirm that the early wooden church was destroyed by the fire of 1174. Some of the documents in the Cathedral archives have badly scorched edges that bear witness to these events

The only documents which contain information about churches outside the City is the Domesday Monachorum, which mentions some 11th. century churches in Other parts of the County.

Although the church at Chilham is named, there is no account. of the year it was founded or by whom. The document refers to St. Mary by name, and seems to be a bill for 28 denarios recorded in the year c. 1200.

It is just possible that early documentary evidence has never been contained in this country at all: it appears that even as early as the Feign of Stephen. this church had been given to the priory of Throwley (Faversham) which was controlled by the Benedictine abbey of St. Bertin at St. Omers Flanders. It has been reputed that manuscripts dated c. 1140 were held at the Abbey which related to St. Mary Chilham, and that they bore the name of Hugh do Dovera, son of Fulbert.

These alien religious houses were tolerated until the time of the wars with France, when it was realised that the incomes from them were being returned to the mother church to help finance the war-

They were finally suppressed by Henry V in 1415, but, this time the church at Chilham was settled on the Monastery of Sian (Middlesex by Henry VI. It seems to have stayed in this situation until King Henry VIII passed his act of suppression of all religious houses in 1540.

The dates of the early priests, may have been held in the records of Throwley priory and now lost forever, but in 1321, according to the records of the church, the first known incumbent was Galfridus who held office during the reign of Edward II. There is a complete list of all his successors and although some of the dates are obscure, we can see that Robert Pele probably had a worrying time during the period of his incumbency.

He came to office in 1497 during the reign of Henry VII and ceased in this position by 1539, but during this time of course, Henry VIII declared himself the supreme head of the English Church in 1555. So poor old Robert started his living at Chilham under Papal authority, and ended it by bearing religious allegiance to Henry!

A few other ministers are worthy of note: Ezekias Fogq served Elizabeth, James I, and Chilham for 56 years. he must have liked it here. William Belke and Sampson Hieron seemed to have survived this trauma of the Civil War, Sampson carried on into the reign of Charles II but got himself ejected from office in 1622 - this was probably the talk of Chilham at the time - you know how a scandal quickly spreads through the village - even to this day!

Architecture

The late Sir John Betjeman once commented that - 'old parish churches are buildings rather than architecture' - in which lie meant that succeeding generations of restorers have added or subtracted to its structure whatever the fashion of the period decreed,

We wouldn't have recognised the church in the 14th - 15th centuries, it would have been a simpler building, and would have been put to much greater use. The nave of the church belonged to the people the floor would have been strewn with sweet herbs and yew, and they would have used it as today we use the village hall.

At prayer times there was no standard service as yet, the priest would intone some Latin as decreed by the Church of Rome, at which the congregation would genuflect, make the sign of the cross and depart. The church was used every day, and was especially busy on feast days. Near the entrance to the churchyard would be the church-house, where the churchwardens would store the beer or ale for use during the Saint's days. This is said to be the origin of the fact that, inns are usually found close to churches!

In architectural terms, the present day church is classed as English Perpendicular - a historical division of English Gothic architecture roughly covering a period 1350-1530 - although we know that, it must have had earlier beginnings.

A good example of the amount of work carried out over the years is contained in an extract from 'The Topographer' dated February 1791. The church was actually surveyed on the 26th. of December 1771, during the reign of George III, and the details are as follows: -

The church situated within the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the diocese of Canterbury and deanery of Bridge, is dedicated to St. Mary. and is a handsome spacious structure of the mixed Gothic kind It consists of a body and two side aisles which are divided from the nave by two rows of octangular pillars upwards of two feet in diameter crowned with Gothic arches: it also has a transept or cross aisle, and a high chancel.

Length of nave: 63 Feet. Length of transept,; 94 Feet 9 inches.

Height including steeple: 119 feet 11/2 inches.

At the west end is a well-constructed tower steeple which is 19 feet square and 68 feet high to the top of the battlements. At the southeast angle is a beacon turret (5 sides of an octagon) projecting from the tower, within, which is a newel staircase of stone consisting of 100 steps. This turret was finished with battlements, within which was an octagonal spire covered with lead: the battlements were taken down in 1720. the spire, having lost its vane and other ornaments, and being likewise out of repair was deemed an unsightly object and was taken down on the 29th. of November 1784. A handsome vane together with suitable ornaments were erected on the 9th of June 1786.

The steeple was built about 1530, and at that time there were only five bells in the tower, the extra bell, together with the clock and chimes date from 1651. The treble was added in 1710 but in 1760 the 5th bell being broken, the whole peal was recast by Lester & Pack of London. Permission was obtained from the archdeacon to melt down 24cwt of old bells to defray the cost of the new castings (£200) the present peal (1771) weighs 68cwt 4lb

(It is interesting to note that bells 6 and 7 and the tenor, still survive From the original casting of the peal of 6 bells by Lester & Pack in 1760: the full octave of 8 bells from about 1883, now weighs 75cwt)

The walls of the nave and side aisles that had been finished with battlements were taken down in September 1784 and the walls finished in a tow straight parapet, leaving the roof exposed to view, destroying the uniformity of the building.

Other items concerning the fabric of the church include:

Altar-piece - Royal Arms of Queen Anne - 1712.

Pulpit and desk - £28-10s - 1751.

Ceiling to nave and two side walls - £56- 7s - 1771.

Gallery for use of company of singers, west end of nave £50 - 1772

South side of tower, octagonal dial made for clock - 1727. Taken down and re-painted - 1755. erected 20 feet higher. Repaired and re-painted - 1790 and a minute hand added to the clock for the sum of £6.

The old vicarage was built by James Colebrooke in 1740

The church also has the distinction of having the work of three eminent artists in the field of sculpture: the earliest of these is Nicholas Stone (1586-1647), followed by Sir Francis Chantrey (1781-1841), and Alexander Munro (1825-1871). There are also assorted memorials chiefly those of the Lords of the manor', the policy of the church in those days was that the rich and influential were buried inside and the poor outside - it wasn't too wise to argue with the wealthy the church depended on them too much for it's upkeep.

Archaeology

For very good reasons it is hardly ever possible to carry out excavations on churches, the ethics involved concerning the consecration of the site have to be observed. It is sometimes possible, if the church has a crypt, to ascertain something about the original foundations - but alas - St.

Mary's has no crypt.

We can safely say that St. Mary's has been in continuous use for almost a thousand years in some shape or form. Generations of Chilham folk have prayed there from our Saxon and Norman ancestors to the present day. Over the years they certainly took their religion seriously, there were 359 communicants in 1578. it looks as if old Ezekias Fogg was really packing them in!

(1) Venerable Bede (672-735) English historian and theologian.

(2) St. Martin, Bishop of Tours (375) first Saint of the Roman church.

(3) Aethelbert, his Queen Bertha and Bishop Liuthard were all originally buried in St. Martin's Porticus of the church of SS. Peter and Paul. Canterbury.



S.E.View of Chilham Church and Vicarage House

Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica 1790

‘Opposite to the South side & the steeple is a very large fine tree it was formerly much larger than at present, as nearly one half of it was taken down some years since to give the village a sight of the clock dial. It now (1792) measures in circumference twenty-three feet and seems to be thriving well.

Addendum

The Conservation Foundation are extremely concerned over the condition of ancient Yew trees that were damaged as the result of the recent hurricane, and the following report was the result of the interest and concern felt by Mr. Roy Lloyd concerning the present condition of the Yew in the churchyard of St. Mary's Chilham

Report On The Condition Of The Ancient Saxon Yew Tree (*Taxus baccata*)

By V. Meredith

21st. June 1988

The top of the trunk has completely broken away • and the only visible signs of life are several small withered branches and small shoots near the base of the trunk. The tree should recover if not interfered with too much, nature should be allowed to take its course, the power of rejuvenation is remarkable within the Yew but it may be some years before recovery takes place.

The Yew is Southwest of the church and is over 22 feet in girth, precise measurement is not always possible with various obstructions, however, at about 3 feet from the ground it is 22 feet 5 inches in girth. Since the tree has been broken many of its inner rings are clearly visible, however ageing and the process of decay has obliterated the earlier centuries. Of the present information available I would say that this tree is about 1300 years old.

The Yew tree has long been associated with churches, but the connection between them is obscure. It may be that the longevity of the tree came to be related to the immortality of the Church or on the other hand it may have connections with the old pro-Christian religions. It has been said that because the long bow was made of Yew, it was grown in consecrated ground for the protection of the archer in warfare, but it is unlikely that so many churchyard Vows would have survived if too many six-foot boughs were removed to manufacture long bows: The estimated age of the tree however, does give us an indication that a Saxon church could have existed here at the end of the 7th century - with the tree being planted some 80 years after the death of St. Augustine.

Incumbents of St. Mary's Chilham

NAME	YEAR	MONARCH	COMMENTS
Galfridus	1321	Edward II	
John May			
Adam Strangman	1391	Richard II	
John Westwood			
Thomas Chundler	1446	Henry VI	
Thomas Garowde	1456		
William Trettfotte			
John Rocheford	1457	Henry VI	
Hugh Duppa	1466	Edward IV	
Robert Pele	1497	Henry VII	
John Wiloughby	1539	Henry VIII Henry,	Head of Church 1535
Harrionom Hanshaste	1552	Edward VI	
Robert Brome	1564	Elizabeth	
William Darell	1565		
Ezekias Fogg	1568		Minister for 56 years
Thomas Jackson	1624	James I	
William Belke	1646	Charles I	
Sampson Hieron	1656	Commonwealth	Hieron ejected 1662
Robert Cumberland	1663	Charles II	
Richard Bate	1711	Anne	
Wadham Knatchbull	1739	George II	
Philip Francis	1761	George III	
Jarvis Kenrick	1762		
R.V. Tylden	1809		
C.H. Ramsden	1862	Victoria	
G Howard Wright	1893		
W. G. Elnor	1900		
F.Pemberton	1927	George V	
J.Hilton-Spratt	1946	George VI	
L.G. Courtney	1953	Elizabeth II	
Sir R. Champion	1961		
J.L. Lawson	1973		
F.J.E. Evans	1982		
A.A.W. Dawkins	1985		
C.R. Duncan			

French Mill

Chapter 3

The Watermill

French Mill

The history of the watermill can be traced back to about the 1st century B.C. but the first evidence of mills in this County has been found at Ickham where the sighting of two mills have been dated to the Romano-British period.

Only about a half dozen mills of this period have so far been found throughout the country, but considering the adverse conditions relating to the preservation of these sites, the archaeologists concerned have been extremely fortunate to find them.

During the Anglo-Saxon period of our history, the watermill became the first source of mechanical power in the land, and could be considered as the beginning of our industrial development.

By the time of the Norman Conquest, we find that the County of Kent had 351 watermills, Canterbury alone had 38, and the Manor of Chilham is credited with 6½.

The earliest documentary evidence mentioning watermills is an Anglo-Saxon charter dated 664., and although these early mills are difficult to find, the remains of one in Tamworth Staffs., has been carbon-dated to 700-770 AD.

Of the 6½ mills recorded in Domesday for Chilham, we now have only one, but it is almost certain that this mill is on, or near, the site of an original Saxon mill. Watermills in Norman times were either the property of the Church, or part of the estate of the Lord of the manor, and in the case of Chilham it seems likely that it was always part of the Manor.

Hasted tells us that it was so in the time of James Wildman (1794-1816) and that it was referred to as 'French' mill. This title is connected with the type of millstones used called 'French burr' as distinct from 'Peak' stones.

When the mill was surveyed recently (1) 5 pairs of 60 inch diameter 'French burr' stones were found together with 1 pair of 66 inch diameter 'Peak' stones

This mill is probably the best preserved in the south-east of England thanks to the care of the present owners - the Mid-Kent Water Co. - who use the ground-floor to house pumping control equipment.

The building is large for a rural mill consisting of five stories, together with the miller's house, stables, and a wagon shed; and in the prime of it's life it worked 6 pairs of mill-stones, and a good deal of ancillary equipment, during this time a steam engine was installed to work in conjunction with the water-wheel

The boiler chimney is said to have stood some 5 or 6 feet taller than the mill building (2) Although the mill has probably been used for centuries and the machinery has been renewed and modified over the years, it is still an imposing sight. The main structural beams are of oak, with the first floor being bricked between the timbers, and the upper floors are weather boarded. Most of the machinery can still be seen, and it doesn't take much imagination to visualise the great water-wheel turning the millstones again. As was usual with most river watermills without a great head of water, it was of the 'undershot' design. (3)

It has always been said that millers lived to a ripe old age, and our last miller was no exception to the rule. His name was Joe Jordan, and he was a miller for 69 years. He retired in 1925 having worked as a miller since 1816. He was still alive in 1935. being 83 years old when his daughter Christiana retired from Chilham school after teaching there for 40 years.

He was well remembered by the late Mr. J. Marsh who as a young man could remember collecting flour from the mill for the women of Old Wives Lees to bake their bread, It seems to have always been a flour mill, which confirms the name of 'French' mill, since 'French' burr millstones were always used for the very finest flour.

Apart from the miller, other craftsmen would be involved in the maintenance of the mill, including the blacksmith and the carpenter. No doubt someone well versed in the history of Chilham will remember their names.

In conclusion, we must not forget the most important member of the miller's staff, employed to keep the thieving rats at bay- the miller's cat!

Windmills

Windmills were not introduced into this country until the 13th. century, and although there was never one in Chilham. it is interesting to note that the nearest windmill was at Perry Wood.

Sometimes known as Selling mill or Shottenden mill, it is shown on a map prepared by Philip Symonson of Rochester, as one of the 39 windmills of Kent in 1596. A mill was still working as a flour mill on the same site in 1910, but like many other mills, it was allowed to decay, and was finally pulled down in 1920.

Some of the millers were John Sutton (1866) George Harris (1873) George Atkins (1878) Fred Neame (1881). The mill was owned by Lord Sondes.

The fact that flour could now be milled in any location that took advantage of the wind and didn't have to rely on water power, made a great impact on the county.

From an Ordnance Survey map dated 1819-1843 it can be seen that windmills reached peak numbers in the County, being listed as 226 working mills, but by 1903-1910 this figure was down to 134.

After this date there was a rapid decrease in the amount of local milling taking place, and by 1930 the number of active windmills in Kent went down in number to 17.

The days of having wheat milled into flour and baked into bread all in the same village, had gone forever, never to return.

Although the demand for stone ground flour is said to be on the increase, and the power to produce it will be electrical, there are signs that the use of water and wind power may still be with us in the future.

- (1) 'Watermills by M.J.Fuller & R.J.Spain - surveyed 1975
- (2) The mill complete with chimney was seen in the film- 'A Canterbury Tale' made in 1948. A photograph showing the chimney still in place was taken in 1953.
- (3) A type of water-wheel, such as that found at river mills, which has radial floats or paddles, working in a more or less level water-course.

The Castle

Chapter 4

The Castle

Chilham castle was in a sad state of decline when Hasted observed it in the 18th century. 'It is plainly Norman' he said, 'with no doorways, arches, windows or pillars left to form any judgment of its original state'.

Its condition wasn't much improved when one ambitious owner tried to convert it into a brewery! Without a proper archaeological survey to ascertain if it was built on the site of an earlier fortification, we have to agree with Hasted. There may have been a Saxon dwelling here - excavations were carried out in 1927, and there were signs of an earlier dwelling beneath the keep, but no confirmation was given regarding its period in time.

As for the Romans, it is very doubtful if they had a hand in earlier fortifications at Chilham. If we take a brief look at the history of the Roman occupation we have a clear picture of the location of their forts in Kent.

Under the orders of the Roman Emperor Claudius, Aulus Plautius sailed from Boulogne with four legions and auxiliary troops. His force included the Legio 11 Augusta, IX Hispana, XIV Gemina, and XX Valeria, the total number of men was estimated to be in the order of 40,000.

He landed at Richborough, which at that time was a natural harbour (but now due to geographical changes is some considerable distance inland) and consolidated his beach-head. The Britons fell back to defend the river Medway because the first objective of the invading army was to take Colchester. The Britons were defeated somewhere near Rochester and their leader fled to Wales. Plautius defended his position, and awaited the arrival of Claudius before advancing to Colchester.

The invasion port of Richborough now became the first Roman fort on these shores, and during the 1st century became the supply base and chief port of Roman Britain (Rutupiae)

Three more Roman forts were built in Kent at Reculver (Regulbium), Dover (Dubris) and at Lympne (Portus Lemanis) all four were to become Saxon shore forts when they were re-built during the 3rd century.

After the brief shock of the occupation, this part of Britain seems to have enjoyed a period of peaceful acceptance of Roman rule, and there are no records of hostile acts against the invaders.

In fact no more Roman forts were built in Kent, and the chief town became Durovernum Cantiacorum, the Civitas of the Cantiaci, the City we now call Canterbury.

So peaceful was the local scene, that we have the unique situation of a Roman theatre being built at the junction of St. Margaret's Street and Watling Street in 60/90 AD, about two hundred years before the walls of the City were completed in 270/290 AD.

The final proof that the Romano-British were not in conflict in this part of the country is the absence of fortresses in Kent. These were built by the Romans in hostile areas of Britain and were permanent bases large enough to garrison a legion (6000 men). The chief of these were at Caere (Isca), Chester (Deva) and at York (Eboracum).

The geographical position of Chilham held no special significance to the Romans, the nearest important roads were those we now call Stone Street (Canterbury-Lympne) and Watling Street (Canterbury-London) which leaves Chilham isolated in the center of these busy routes.

Roman forts were strategically sited for pure military reasons, and were in fact the barracks and stores for the legions during nearly 600 years of occupation and there doesn't appear to be any apparent reason for one to be built at Chilham.

The Normans on the other hand were great builders of castles, this was no occupation of the country, it was a conquest, and they behaved accordingly. There was very little attempt to work with the Church or the administration they just took over and replaced churchmen and noblemen with their own kind.

Sired of Chilham was the last Saxon Lord of the Manor and he was a person of great importance in Canterbury in 1066. He was one of the three great thegns who dominated the Borough Court and bore witness to many transactions. He owned property in the City, but we are not told exactly where he lived, he probably drew rents from his holdings in the City and resided here at Chilham.

He is said to have fought at Hastings with Harold. but then we hear no more about him, he may have fallen in battle of course, but in any event his Manor was usurped by Fulbert the Norman. This was the most likely time for the castle to be built, maybe using part of the old Saxon structure to add to their building materials, when it was finished it would house Fulbert and his retainers, and also serve as a symbol to intimidate the local population.

To add insult to injury, most of the man-power required for the construction of the castle would have to be found locally, so under Norman supervision, the villagers of Chilham would be forced to work for their new masters.

(1)

The word 'castle' is an emotive one, it conjures up a picture of moats, drawbridges, battlements, and everything else that, the word brings to mind, but of course the early Norman castle was nothing like that at all.

When William of Normandy entered Canterbury in October 1066, one of his first tasks was to order the construction of a castle. This was of the motte and bailey type, which was basically a defended mound and a ditch; and Domesday tells us that 30 dwellings were demolished to make way for it. The motte was landscaped in 1790 to its present form, and we can still get some idea of the size of it because it is known today as Dane John, and it is in the center of Dane John gardens. (1)

It wasn't until 20 years later, at the end of William's reign, that the Royal castle was built further west from the old site. The remains of the keep stands at the corner of Castle Street and Rheims Way, and it certainly looks more like our idea of a castle. William may not have seen the completion of his second castle in Canterbury, he left for Normandy, just after the Domesday Book was completed in 1086, and died there in the following year.

Chilham castle may have started life as a motte and bailey of course. the contours of the site today suggest that this was so, but the remains of the keep that we see, would not have been built before the Royal castle in Canterbury

Fulbert, as a Baron, held his land from the King, in return for Knights service to supply a certain number of armed men for the defence of Dover castle. The right to build a castle was delegated by the King, and at this time no castle could be private property, it merely extended the King's power over his Barons and retainers. (Vassals)

The early motte and bailey was comparatively easy to build (with cheap English labour) and would probably be completed in a few months using easily acquired timber for the construction of the fortified motte. Living quarters, also of timber, would be secure within the palisaded ditch, varying in size, depending on the numbers in the garrison.

The development of the stone built castle however, would require the transportation of suitable materials, the involvement of a considerable sum of money, and usually take several years to complete. It has been estimated that the cost of building the keep at Dover was in excess of £3,600, at present day values, this would be in the order of £900,000

The stone castle when completed, would be the defended home of its Lord and he would feel considerably safer especially against the threat of fire, a source of danger in all wooden buildings of this time. Depending on the wealth and influence of the occupant, this would be the time to add the embellishments that we come to expect, although not all castles had every refinement included in their construction.

The most humble of them however would have a gatehouse. a drawbridge to span the ditch or moat, and a good supply of drinking water, the gatehouse and drawbridge have long gone from Chilham, but at least we know that there were two wells on the site. (2)

Inside, the most impressive feature would be the hall, here the Lord could entertain his guests - maybe the King himself - and it would also serve as a suitable location for local courts held by him in the execution of his duties as Lord of the Manor.

The standard of comfort in such dwellings was spartan to say the least, heating was usually provided by an open fire burning in the centre of the hall - no chimney of course - the smoke found it's way eventually to a hole in the roof.

The toilet arrangements don't bear thinking about, even in the 13th century we know that King John only had a bath once a month, and that it cost him about £6 a time in present day terms, to pay the man who collected the wood and heated the water! What a pity that the Roman luxury of public baths and central-heating got lost in our history for so long.

By the 13th Century, the main period of castle building was nearly over, some of the most wealthy and powerful of barons re-built them on a grander scale, but in England at least their purpose had been served.

Some historians have said that Norman castles were symbols of tyranny, built by slave labour, and used to enforce an alien regime on the people. It can certainly be said that the Normans gained control of England through them, extended their power to encompass all of Britain and their descendents enforced the feudal system throughout the land.

Turning once again to Chilham castle, we can do no better for a description than that provided for us by Brian K. Davison (3) "Chilham castle has a rectangular bailey with late medieval curtain wall, late 11th century hall, partly demolished and buried in the moat, an octagonal keep with pilaster buttresses built on masonry c.1170 with projecting stair turret and a latrine."

(1) Corruption of Norman-French 'donjon' meaning a keep.

(2) Chilham Village Hall has recently had it's water supply connected to it's own main, having previously been supplied via Chilham Castle!

(3) "Castles" by Brian K. Davison, The Observer's Series 1979

The Mansion

Chapter 5

The Mansion

The history of the mansion that we see today, presents us with no problems, we know when it was built, and by whom. However we have to return once again to the castle, because there is some evidence to suggest that there was another building here in the period between the construction of the castle, and the development of the mansion.

The name of the estate has always been known as 'Chilham Castle, even the present day mansion has no separate name, so maybe this earlier structure was merely an extension of the original castle, in any case it appears that their history is intertwined.

Edward Hasted has given us a comprehensive record of all the Lords of the Manor of Chilham from the Conquest to the end of the feudal system, he is not very explicit however about the development of their place of residence. One or two clues are included in his writings on Chilham and for that reason perhaps it will be easier to consider three phases of history:

- (I) From the occupation of the castle by Fulbert at the end of the 11th century until about 1553, when Sir Thomas Chene vandalised the greater part of the structure that was here at that time.

- (II) Whatever was left of this building may have been suitable for habitation, because this second phase lasted another 50 years, until the structure was completely demolished by Sir Dudley Digges in the late 16th century.

- (III) The final period covers the erection of the present day mansion by Sir Dudley Digges during the reign of James I until modern times.

This phase covers a period of some 500 years, and during this time the castle must have evolved into a dwelling that Leyland (1) described about 1540 as 'a building here at Chilham, that was not only commodious for use and beautiful for pleasure, but strong for defence'

During the early years of Fulbert de Chilham's Lordship, one of the conditions of his title was that he had to supply a certain number of men for the castle-guard at Dover. He seems at this time to have added the name 'do Dovera' to his title, and this has always been assumed that it was awarded for his service in Dover, Kent. There has been some discussion however that this title may belong to the Norman 'Douvres' north of Caen, and some 30 miles from Bayeux. Fulbert was one of the Bishop of Bayeux's men, and the rare Christian name - Fulbert - has been found in early charters relating to the Barony of Douvres, which belonged in the 12th. century to the Bishop.

Fulbert de Dovera died sometime during the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) and the position of supplying men to garrison Dover castle was eased for his successors in the 13th. century when arrangements were made for the knights to pay a sum of money (scutage) for the hire of men-at-arms to carry out these duties.

The castle here was not a major structure like Dover or Rochester, and was never involved in any acts of warfare. Rochester was under Beige from 13th. October - 30th. November 1224 and the defenders were starved out by the forces of King John. Dover withstood a siege by Prince Louis of France in 1216, but as far as we know, here at Chilham a bow was never drawn in anger!

The use of castles as defensive measures was coming to an end. By the 14th century, developments in warfare and a changing society made the need for a comfortable home a necessity, sometimes at the expense of security.

In the next century. the battles of the Wars of the Roses (1455-1487) were fought almost entirely in open country, and the power of the castle as a feature of strategic warfare was diminished. The development of the castle into a home could evolve fairly quickly in times of peace. The living quarters need not be confined entirely to the keep -which probably at this time had been extended to two or three stories anyway and improvements would be made to make life more comfortable all round.

The heir's of Fulbert seemed to have prospered here at Chilham, his son Hugh became Sheriff of Kent (1160-1168) and a direct descendant through his other son William, was Roesia.

She was married three times, and her second husband was Richard le Fitzroy bastard son of King John - whom she married in 1214. It was during this time that the King is reputed to have stayed at the castle whilst arranging reconciliation with Archbishop Langton at Canterbury. Isabel de Dovera appears to have been one of the last of the line, she died here at Chilham in 1292, and is buried in the undercroft of Canterbury Cathedral. Her last husband, Alexander Baliol survived her, and held this Manor until his death in 1305.

The fortunes of the following holders of the title were varied to say the least, some came to a sticky end for backing the wrong side, and the Manor seems to have spent long periods in the hands of the Crown.

The only reference that may have a bearing on the condition of the castle is that a private chapel was built here in 1349. Once again we don't know exactly where it was built sometimes chapels were built over the gatehouse, or it may have been separate from the castle proper, but we do know that the patroness was Margery, Lady Roos sister of Giles, Lord Badlesmere, and that her chaplain was Osbertus.

The Roos family survived here until 1461 when Thomas Roos got involved too closely with the house of Lancaster during the Wars of the Roses, and his property was confiscated by the Crown.

In 1541, King Henry VIII granted the estate and Manor to Sir Thomas Chene. Treasurer of his Household, and Warden of the Cinque Ports. He resided here during the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553) and sometime during this period he pulled down the greater part of his residence, and removed the materials to his Manor of Shurland in the Isle of Sheppey to create a fine mansion there.

(II)

This is the shortest period of its history and one that we know very little about. Although it was to be another 50 years before the structure was completely demolished, it may have never been a residence as such during this time.

It was sold to Sir Thomas Kempe of Wye in 1568, but having other estates he may never have lived here. His son who inherited, also had an estate and mansion at Ollantigh, and it wasn't until one of his daughters, Mary, inherited the Manor, that her husband, Sir Dudley Digges decided to demolish the structure Hasted called it 'the ancient mansion of Chilham'.

Although this was the shortest period of its history, it should have been one of the most important from an archaeological point of view. We are told that when Sir Dudley had the remaining structure demolished, there were clear indications of the foundation of an even older building beneath the rubble. The operative word here is foundation, which implies a compacted layer of building material, and not the simple post-holes of an Anglo-Saxon dwelling.

A considerable amount of Roman pottery was discovered, but details are scarce, and can only be taken at face value. The classification of pottery is a science in itself within the field of archaeology, but at the time when these discoveries were made, all 'pots' were Roman!

There doesn't appear to be any other information about further finds made during the demolition, but if anything of value was discovered, it probably found its way into the coffers of the noble Lord!

It was to be another two hundred years at least before it was recognised that a well-disciplined archaeological survey could contribute so much to the history of our development as a nation (2). Had a modern archaeologist been present at this time, our knowledge of the history of Chilham would have been considerably advanced by his conclusions.

(III)

The mansion was designed by Inigo Jones (3), the original plans are still in existence and are held by the Royal Institute of British Architects.

It was completed in 1616 during the reign of James I, and in 1637 Sir Dudley was created Master of the Rolls by King Charles I. He died the following year leaving several sons and daughters to succeed him. The last of this family to hold the Manor was Colonel Thomas Digges, who in 1726 conveyed the Honour, Manor and Castle at Chilham, together with other estates, to James Colebrooke of London.

This was the notable gentleman, who sometime between 1726 and 1750 turned the keep of the castle into a brewery! He seems to have played havoc with the castle, but he also extended his estate at the expense of the road system of Chilham.

In 1726 he altered the line of the Chilham-Ashford road (Mountain Street) to provide himself with a lake, and in 1733 he turned the Dane Street-Godmersham road, to give himself another 230 acres of land! This was only one of the 'perks'

allowed to the Lord of the manor under the feudal system that still applied to the country at this time.

James Colebrooke died in 1752 at the age of 72: his eldest son, Robert succeeded him and sold the estate in 1774 to Thomas Heron.

Although Heron did make some alterations and improvements to the castle and mansion, he too seemed to concentrate on enlarging his estate. The poor old road from Dane St. to Chilham was turned again, and together with the addition of a 91/2-acre field at Dane St. (Topley Field) he gained another 50 acres of land. The enclosed deer park and pleasure gardens at this time amounted to 352 acres.

Heron was also the character who tried to put an end to the May races held at Old Wives Lees. These had been held there since Sir Dudley Digges had instituted them in 1638 - Heron sounds like a man who didn't like to see his workers enjoying themselves. Hasted's only comment was that 'Mr. Heron found it out of his power to stop the races'.

Heron died at Chilham in 1794 and the estate passed into the hands of James Wildman his son, James Beckford Wildman inherited in 1816. He had great plans for the renovation of the mansion, but these did not materialise in his lifetime, and he is best remembered in Chilham for being responsible for the building of the village school, and for planting the avenue of Limes between the house and the square. Wildman died in 1867, having already sold the estate to Charles Hardy in 1861.

The Hardy family were the first to make any serious attempt to renovate the mansion, and against the advise of their architect (David Brandon) to 'demolish and start again, they insisted that the old house should be preserved and 'restored to such a state that modern requirement demanded' It appears that they weren't quite satisfied with the completed work - the architect had substituted too many of his own ideas - that sounds familiar!

Many of these improvements were made during the lifetime of Mr.C.S.Hardy, he was High Sheriff of Kent in 1874 a magistrate, and Deputy Lieutenant of the County. He died in 1914 and was succeeded by his eldest son - Charles.

Chilham Castle Estate was sold by auction in 1919 and became the property of Edmund Davis, Sir Edmund, as he later became, is well remembered by the older people of Chilham for the benevolence he showed to the village.

We have arrived at a period in time when the authority of the Lord of the manor was beginning to wane. These were more enlightened times, and although some minor rights were still in existence these were hardly ever enforced. It's true that the Church still had a stranglehold over the landowners with regard to tithes, but by the middle of this century, this tax on agricultural produce had gone forever.

Sir Edmund Davis died in 1939. and now the history of the Manor is almost up to date. Many people in the village took part in the great pageant presented by Somerset de Chair in 1966. and a good few will tell you about the characters that they portrayed.

All that remains is to add one name - Massereene and Ferrard, 13th Viscount. John Ctotworthy Talbot Foster Whyte-Melville Skeffington - the present owner of Chilham Castle Estate - now we are back to the Normans again!

Without a great deal of evidence, we can only theorise on the identity of the building whose foundations were revealed when the remains of the ancient mansion were demolished.

It is just possible of course that these foundations were the site of a Roman villa; modern archaeologists have long lamented the fact that the Stour valley from Canterbury to Ashford has not so far produced any Romano-British buildings of note.

With this in mind, we have to account for the lack of evidence so far produced; although the events of it's history are merely conjecture, it is possible to put forward a reasonable case for it's existence without the benefit of an archaeological survey to help us, we will have rely on known facts relating to the relevant periods of our history.

During the years of Roman occupation, the standard of living had risen beyond belief compared with the conditions in 43 AD. A town like Canterbury eventually had sophisticated dwellings of comparative luxury; it had a theatre, public baths, a forum, and a well engineered system of roads and drainage yet even after 400 years of occupation, this scene of Romano-British culture was allowed to decay with the coming of the Saxons.

There is conclusive evidence from archaeological surveys carried out in Canterbury, that the early Saxons built their wooden dwellings along side the houses of the Roman town, and made no attempt to occupy the superior living quarters.

We know from the various examples of pottery and coins that have been discovered over the years that Chilham was occupied during the Roman period so if such a villa did exist it would probably have been allowed to decay by the Saxons. However some of the structure may have been used in a building that survived until the time of Sired - the last Saxon nobleman at Chilham. If by this time any masonry from the Roman villa had survived, it would have been incorporated by the Normans into the construction of the castle.

Stone-robbing had been the accepted practice of the early masons, and numerous buildings in all parts of the country have had Roman stonework in

their foundations, some examples have even been found with the original Latin inscriptions still legible.

So it could be possible that the present mansion is built on the site of a Roman villa, but who would have lived there?

The initial administration of Chilham would be centred at Canterbury, and being the Civitas of the Cantiaci, it would soon embrace self-government under Roman law.

The Romans liked an urban development, it was easier to administer a city than it was a sprawling settlement, but the villages and farmsteads were here and could not be ignored.

Chilham would have been the ideal setting for a villa, it could have been the home of a Roman official but on the other hand it may have housed an influential Briton who had benefited by the Roman occupation and had acquired wealth and status in the community. Such a man would certainly be in a position to enjoy the luxury and comfort that the Roman culture offered him.

(1) John Leland, born London 1506, died 1552. He studied at Cambridge, Oxford, and in Paris, on his return to England; Henry VIII made him his chaplain and librarian, and gave him the title of Royal Antiquary. In 1533 he had a Royal Charter to search for objects of antiquity throughout the land, and spent six years in travelling for this purpose.

(2) General Pitt-Rivers is considered to be the first British archaeologist to bring order and discipline to the art in the 19th century, but most of us will have gained our interest of the subject from the excellent television programs of the late Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

(3) Inigo Jones, son of a cloth-worker, was sent to Italy by a rich patron to study landscape painting, but turned to architecture, greatly admiring the style of Andrea Palladio. He is best remembered for his design of the Banqueting House Whitehall, and for the west wing of Greenwich Hospital. He became Surveyor General of Royal Buildings under Charles I. and died in 1652 at the age of eighty.

The Heronry

Charter 6

The Heronry

Heron is the common name of birds of the genus *Ardea*, which includes the bitterns and shoebills. They are very numerous and are spread almost throughout the world. They are distinguished by having a long bill, cleft between the eyes, a compressed body and long slender legs naked above the tarsal joint, three toes in front and two outer, united by a membrane. They have moderate wings, and the tail is short, rounded, and composed of ten or twelve feathers.

The common heron (*Ardea cinerea*) is about three feet in length from the point of the bill to the end of the tail, builds its nest in high trees usually with others of its kind (heronry) Its food consists of fish, frogs, mice, voles, and similar small animals: it haunts rivers, lakes, marshes, and also estuaries and saltings. Its nest consists mostly of twigs, and three to five greenish-blue eggs are laid in February or March.

It can be proved that countless generations of herons have returned to nest at Felborough wood, following the tradition that they must return by St. Valentine's day or some nameless evil will strike the owner of the Castle! At the beginning of this century, the heronry was said to contain an average of 130 nests, and was the oldest and largest in the country. The Public Record Office has a manuscript c.1280, which gives account of the Chilham heronry, and bears the name of Alexander Baliol who was the husband of Isabel de Dovera (1)

Owners of ornamental ponds should beware, herons are voracious feeders, and those prize plump goldfish are irresistible for a quick snack Many of us have wished the curse on the herons - Valentine's day or not!

Hérons were considered to be a delicacy for the table in mediaeval times, and often the prey of the falcon, so maybe the herons were preserved only for the falconer to provide his Lord's dinner!

For the benefit of those with Latin. part of the document reads:

Hundredum de Ffeleberghe

Alexander de Baytol tenet j.f. et dimid in Chileham de Rege in Capite
Richardus le Jonene tenet j.f. in le Heyroner de dicto Alexandro et idem
Alexander de Rege

The Honor of Chilham

Chapter 7

The Honour of Chilham

A Court Leet (1) and Court Baron (2) was held for the Manor of Chilham at which the several rents from the Weald were collected, the tenants holding them in soccage tenure (3) The Manors and lands held for the Honour of Chilham included those of Shillinghelde (Shottenden), Esture (East Stour Farm), Herst (Hurst Farm), Juvens (Young Manor Farm, Old Wives Lees, Dingley or Boreland (Bowerland Farm). Denne (Denne Manor Farm) and Esinge. The Royalty on the River Stour extended from Shalmsford Bridge to the bounds of Godmersham parish.

The Manor of Shillinghelde

A Manor situated about 1 mile NW. from the church adjoining to Selling and was once of eminent account though now almost sunk into obscurity. The mansion was on the site of Stone Style Farm which is situated in the village we now call Shottenden. This is a good example of how names are changed over the years: the Domesday survey called it Shillingham and in the 18th. century Hasted knew it as Shillinghelde.

John de Shyllingheld was in possession of it in the reign of King John (1199-1216) as was his descendent Guido in the reign of Edward II (1307-1327) and in the 20th year of Edward III his heirs paid the aid that had been levied on it. It was then held by John Clerke until his death in the 41st year of Edward III (1368). Soon after, Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March held it and died possessed of it in the 5th year of Richard II (1382) when it was found by inquisition that he held it of the King 'in capite' as of his castle of Dover.

His two grandsons Edmund and Roger both died f.p. and by the inquisition taken after the death of the latter (1632) he was found to have died possessed of this Manor. and that Richard. Duke of York was his heir. Richard was slain at the battle of Wakefield in 1668 during the Wars of the Roses, and at an inquisition held after the death of Henry VI, his eldest son, Now King Edward IV, was found to be heir to this Manor.

About the middle of Edward IV's reign, the Manor came into the possession of Cicely, widow of Richard Duke of York. until she died in 1695. This Manor remained with the Crown until Henry VIII granted it to Thomas Hawkins of Boughton in 1538 and later in 1544, he had letters patent to hold it of the King in 'soccage'.

This Manor has continued in his descendents to the present time (18th century) Thomas Hawkins of Nash in Boughton being owner of it and of the adjoining Stone Style Farm.

- (1) Court Leet - an old English Royal Court, held periodically in a Hundred, Lordship or Manor, presided Over by the steward of the Leet, and attended by the residents.
- (2) Court Baron - as above but not a Royal court.
- (3) Soccage tenure - a tenure of lands in England by the performance of certain services.

All Anglo-Saxon in origin.

The Manor of Esture (East Stour Farm)

So called from it's situation on the river, it is a Manor in the South of this parish adjoining to Godmersham, and was another part of those lands given to Fulbert de Dovera and became part of the Barony of Chilham.

Stephan de Esture held it in the reign of King John (1199-1216) as did his descendent John who lived here in the reigns of HenryIII (1216-1272) and Edward I (1272-1307) as appears by ancient deeds. At length, John leaving an only daughter and heir, she carried it in marriage to Thomas de Valayns. who in right of his wife paid aid for it in the 20th year of Edward III (1347) being held as of the castle of Chilham.

Soon after it came into the possession of the family of Apulderfield of Chaltock in which it continued until by a female heir Isabel, it went in marriage to John Idelegh. His descendent William, leaving an only daughter and heir Agnes, she entitled her husband Christopher Ellenden to it, and from him this Manor descended to Thomas Ellenden whose daughter and heir carried it in marriage to Edward

Thwayts. In the 31st year of Henry VIII (1540) he had his lands disgavelled (1) by the act then passed for that purpose. He died in the 4th year of Edward VI (1551) and the Manor was passed to his grandson Thomas Thwayts whose name is spelt Twayts in the escheat rolls (2) of Elizabeth (1565).

He sold the Manor in about the middle of that reign to George Moreton who had three sons of which Sir Robert, the eldest, was a Captain in the Netherlands. On his fathers death, Sir Robert resided at this Manor with his wife Anne by whom he had two sons George and Albert and a daughter May who all died f.p. He died in 1637 (3) and was succeeded by his son George who about the year 1642 alienated this Manor to Sir Nathaniel Finch who was King Charles I's Sergeant - at - Law.

He was succeeded in it by his kinsman John, Lord Finch, Baron of Fordwich who died possessed of it in 1661 f.p. leaving his widow Mabella (daughter of Sir Charles Fotherbye. Dean of Canterbury) surviving, and she was possessed of it until her death in 1669.

By the will of Lord Finch, it came to Anne, Lady Morgan. his niece, and on her death to his niece Elizabeth, wife of Sir Thomas Modyford, Knight and Baronet, late Governor of Jamaica. He died in 1692 and it passed to his son of the same name, and on his death to Anne Modyford, Mary and Richard Oldfield and William and Charles Bowles. They afterwards in about the year 1736 alienated it to Thomas May of Godmersham who afterwards took the name of Knights He died possessed of it in 1781 as did his son Thomas in 1796 and his widow Catherine, now of the Whitefriars in Canterbury, is the present owner of it. (Late 18th century)

(1) Disgavelled - repeal of the old Kentish law of gavelkind, land tenure in which all sons inherited equally.

(2) Escheat rolls - accounts of all properties that had lapsed or been confiscated by the State.

(3) Sir Robert Moreton and his wife Anne are buried in Chilham church.

The Manor of Herste (Hurst Farm)

Situated on the S.E. side of the Ashford Road, adjoining the Manor of Esture and Godmersham, this was also part of the lands granted to Fulbert do Dovera, and made up part of the Barony of which it was held by Knights service by John do Herste in the 2nd year of King John (1200)

This Manor was still held by his descendent Hamo de Herste in the reign of king Edward II (1307-1327) and in the 20th year of Edward III (1347) the heirs of John de Herste were charged for the aid levied by Knights service as of the castle of Chilham.

The next owners were the Darells, and in the 30th year of King Henry VIII (1539) Thomas Darell held this Manor of the Honour of Chilham. His son, Thomas alienated it to Phillip Chute whose son Thomas alienated it to Sir Thomas Kempe of Wye who likewise purchased the Honour and castle at Chilham (1568).

Since when this Manor has continued to be part of the Honour of Chilham, and as such is now the property of Thomas Wildman. His son, James Beckford Wildman inherited in 1816.

There was a small turret in Dover Castle which belonged to the owners of this Manor to defend and repair.

The Manor of' Juvenis (Young Manor Farm)

The house is situated a little more than a mile SW from the church and was also part of those lands granted to Fulbert for the defence of Dover Castle.

The Manor was held by Knights service by owners who seem to have given their name to it. William Juvenis (alias Young) held it by the above tenure as did his descendent Richard afterwards in the reign of King John. After this name was extinct here, this Manor came into the possession of the Evenings. one of whom, Thomas Evening held it in the reign of Edward III. Soon after the family of Beverly. seated first at Harbledown and afterwards at Fordwich, became owners of it, in which this Manor continued until it was alienated by George Beverly in the 4th and 5th year of William and Mary(1557-1558)

to Robert Barley in whose descendents it continued until about the middle of Elizabeth's reign (1580)

It was then sold to a family named Fleet from the Isle of Thanet who quickly passed it to Shepheard whose descendent Richard, clerk, died possessed of it about 1638. His co-heirs were his two daughters Mary and Ruth who became entitled to it in undivided moities. Ruth the younger daughter, having married John Browne, they joined in the sale of their share to Anthony Hanwnond Esq of St. Albans who afterwards resided here having married Anne daughter of Sir Dudley Diggs, several children of the marriage were christened at St. Mary's Chilham, the Manor house at this time was a large mansion, though it has now been reduced to a farm house.

Ruth's sister Mary died unmarried and John Browne succeeded in the right of his wife to her share of it, so that he and Mr Hamond became joint owners of it and about the year 1653 they joined in the sale of it to Thomas Digges.

Since then it has continued in the same owners that the Honour of Chilham has, and as such is now the property of Thomas Wildman
A Court Baron was held for this Manor.

The Manor of Old Wives Lees

Situated on the South side of the Lees about a mile East from the church. it is usually called Oldslees, but it's more ancient and true name was Oldswood Lees as appears by ancient deeds belonging to it.

It was so called from a family named Oldwood who were certainly owners of it until the reign of Henry VI (1629- 1471) when a daughter of John Oldwood carried it in marriage to Payne, in whose descendents it carried down to William Payne who resided here, and dying in 1549, lies buried in Chilham church. William Payne left four daughters his co-heirs, and on the division of his estate this Manor was allotted to Mary the eldest daughter, then married to Thomas Cobbe, son of Martin Cobbe of Limne, and he became possessed of it by the right of his wife during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547)

It passed by his descendents down to Thomas Cobbe of Chilham who alienated it at the beginning of this century to Thomas Belke D D who died possessed of in 1712.

By his will, he devised the estate to his niece Mary who in 1713 married Bryan Bentham of Chatham, and their eldest son sold it to John Garlin Hatch in 1772.

In 1776 the Manor was alienated to Thomas Heron of Chilham castle by John Hatch, and again to Thomas Wildman the present owner of it.

This Manor was the venue for the foot race instigated by Sir Dudley Diggs when he was Lord of the Manor of Chilham. He left a codicil to his will allowing the sum of £10 to be paid to each of the winners of the race (one young man and one maiden between the ages of 16 and 24). After several heats, the final was run yearly on the 19th May and the two winners were given £10 each, considering that this was started in the 17th century the prize money must have been considered as a small fortune to the lucky winners.

In spite of an attempt by Thomas Heron to have the races stopped early in the 16th century Hasted confirmed that the races were still being held when he visited at the end of the century. There doesn't seem to be a record of how and when the races were stopped, the prize money came from a charitable trust tied up with some property in Faversham, so perhaps this was sold off and the money lost. If you are between the ages of 16 and 24, it might be worth your while investigating the lost races, if the Trust is still in existence the prize money may be worth considerably more than the £10 awarded in the 17th century!

The Manor of Boreland (Bowerland Farm)

A small Manor in this parish, the house of it lying about 3/4 mile N.E. from the church. In the reign of Henry VIII it was in the possession of Sir Mathew Brown whose son Sir Anthony, appears by the Kings Receivers Roll to have been possessed of it in the 30th year of that reign (1539)

After this name was extinct here, it came into the possession of Austen, one of which. Mathew died possessed of it in 1640 It afterwards descended to Thomas Austen who in 1681 sold it to Sir John Fagg, his second son Charles inherited and his great-great grandson, Sir John Fagg Bart is the present owner of it.

The Manor of Denne (Denne Manor Farm)

Lies at the NW extremity of the parish, and seems to have had the same owners as Dane Court and continued so until Robert Dixon alienated it to Clement whose descendent Richard Clement, devised the Manor of Denne to his daughter Catherine. wife of Bryan Taylor. After his death in 1785 it was conveyed by sale under a decree of Chancery to Cyprian Rondeau Bunce of Canterbury, who afterwards alienated the same to James Finch.

A Court Baron was held for this Manor.

The Manor of Dane Court

Situated about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile West of the church, it was the patrimony of Thomas de Garwinton of Welle in Littlebourne. and he held it in the reign of Edward (1272-1307) and Edward II (1307-1327). His great-grandson William dying f.p. in the 11th year of Henry IV (1400) Joane Garwinton was found by inquisition to be his cousin and next of kin, having married Richard Haut and he became entitled to it.

His son Richard lived in the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509) and left an only daughter and heir - Margerie - who carried it in marriage to William Isaac. His descendent Edward Isaac in the beginning of Elizabeth's reign (1558) alienated this Manor to Edward Hales, third son of Edward Hales of Tenterden, who as appears by a date still remaining in this house, had it rebuilt in 1580, he died in 1586 and was buried in Chilham church.

His son Edward resided in Faversham where he died in 1634 leaving four sons as his co-heirs in gavelkind (1) who in 1635 conveyed this Manor to Robert Dixon of Chilham, and he in 1650 conveyed it to Robert Sprakeling of Boughton Aluph. It continued by descendents to another Robert Sprakeling who in 1743 conveyed it to James Colebrooke of Chilham castle, after which it passed to Thomas Wildman in 1792.

(1) Gavelkind - in law, Kentish land tenure by which all sons inherit equally

The Manor of Ensinge

Another small manor here, the house being about 1 1/4 miles N.E. from the church. The manor was in the possession of a family named Ensinge, one of whom, Robert, in the 30th year of Henry VIII (1539) was in possession of it and held it in Knight's service of the Manor of Chilham.

After this it came into the family of Petit in which it continued until about 1640 when it became divided into moieties, one of which continued in the name of Petit. Later it came to a family named Belke in which it remained until Anne Belke, widow at her death in 1736. devised her interest in it to her relation Elizabeth Plaster, widow, who in 1744 purchased of Richard Grant the other moiety, and became possessed of the whole fee of it. She died in 1759 and willed this Manor to Sir Henry Oxenden Part, the present owner of it.

The history of these Manors has been compiled from Edward Hasted's work - 'The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent'.

The first edition in four folio volumes was published between the years 1778-1799, and it is interesting to note, that apart from a few exceptions, we are able to identify the location of these Manor houses even today.

Time does not deal kindly with buildings of this age. and most of them would not now be recognised for what they were.

There are one or two exceptions of course, and probably the best of these is Dane Court. As Hasted relates, the house was rebuilt by Edward Hale in 1580 and believe that this date is still legible within the house.

Markets

A Charter for a market and fair for Chilham was granted to Alexander de Baliol and his wife Isabel by Edward I in 1291.

The market was held weekly on a Tuesday, and the fair held every year on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Lady Day - 25th March)

At a later date a cattle fair was held annually on November 8th.

The Village & It's People

Chapter 8

The Village & It's People

The village itself has remained relatively unchanged over the last centuries mainly for two reasons; firstly in it's history it was always part of the Lordship of Chilham and was owned lock, stock and barrel by whoever held the title, secondly, the village tended to be bye-passed when the turnpike road from Ashford was constructed. The old road that the pilgrims from Winchester certainly used (Mountain Street) fell into disuse, and travellers in later years no longer had to pass through Chilham village to continue their journey to Canterbury.

So the village dreamed on over the years in splendid isolation, and luckily managed to avoid most of the worst parts of modernisation. The people were not always as affluent as they are today, at the end of the 18th century there were at least fifty parishioners who existed on poor-law relief.

The continuation of the village in the ownership of the Lord of the Manor, allowed for very little change in the style of the houses, and when eventually the properties passed to individuals, it wasn't too long before the introduction of the various types of preservation order ensured, that as far as possible, the village retained it's old world charm.

When electricity finally came to Chilham, the village even escaped the curse of overhead distribution lines that the rest of us have to suffer - the extra cost of using underground cables was paid for by Sir Edmund Davis.

There is no doubt that Edward Hasted's authoritative work on the history of the County of Kent, was a massive task, apart from a few genealogical surveys carried out for various members of the aristocracy, this was his only major work.

He personally visited every town and village that he wrote about, and he consulted many records that were available to him at the time. We may not agree with some of his views, but his book remains as an important reference work to this day, some two hundred years after it was written.

It was a pity that he didn't look after his finances as well as he could write he spent some considerable time in the Fleet debtors prison!

The accusation sometimes levelled against him, is that he didn't write about the ordinary people, but there is a very good reason for this fact;

He had to write his book by subscription; in so much as he had to persuade the rich and famous in the county to promise to purchase his work on completion. The average person at this time wouldn't have been able to afford the luxury of books (except perhaps for the Bible) and of course the standard of literacy throughout the county was extremely low - so Hasted had to make sure that he wrote about the right people - those with the money!

That leaves us with a huge gap in our history, and we have to rely on the memories of our older inhabitants and work backwards to the beginning of the century at least, and the following accounts will help us to contemplate the past.

Contributed by Mrs Evelyn Hopkins

It may come as a surprise to most of us, but at one time Chilham had its own gas works!

Mrs. Hopkins story starts in 1923 when she lived with her parents in the same house that she and her husband occupy today. It is situated between the station and Chilham Farm Stall, and in 1923 Chilham Gas Consumers Company were housed in the back garden and made the coal gas for Chilham and Chartham.

Apart from the retorts and other necessary buildings, there were also two gas holders for the distribution of the gas, and it was also possible for local people to purchase tar and coke for their own use.

The coal came into Chilham station, which in those days was well staffed; it had a stationmaster, two booking clerks, two signalmen, and porters, the station-master's house was situated where Mr. Hadfield's factory is today.

The retort house must have been a fascinating sight for a child, the workmen shovelling coal deep into the furnace and then sealing the doors with a kind of clay called 'pug' just the thing for a little girl to make pies with!

Evelyn's father, Mr. Hunn worked for the company, and on one occasion had a near fatal mishap. When houses were connected to the gas main there was no provision for isolation apart from blocking the pipe with a pig's bladder, and on this job he inhaled too much gas and was only revived by the intervention of a gentleman from the station who was trained in first aid.

Gas meters in those days took the old penny coin and these had to be emptied and carried by Mr. Hunn on his bicycle. The coins were bagged up, taken to Canterbury once a week with the aid of Mr. Bushel's lorry this was the same gentleman who used his vehicle to bring the children from Molash and Shottenden to the village school.

Evelyn started at the village school when she was five, and can remember how different it was from today. The playground was open to School Lane, but with the scarcity of traffic it wasn't as dangerous as it sounds. There was no canteen then and sandwiches were the order of the day for those who couldn't make it home to lunch, children covered quite long distances on foot and thought nothing of it in those days.

The schoolroom was partitioned with a curtain to provide two separate classes, and it must have been chaos for the teachers with two sets of lessons being taught at the same time! A great event for the children was the lighting of the two gas lamps on dark afternoons in winter.

The toilet facilities were primitive to say the least, consisting of a bucket that was emptied only once a week - obviously a place to avoid except during a dire emergency!

There was no playing field and the highlight of recreation in the summer, was learning to swim under the instruction of Miss Lucas. A pool in the river was the venue a plank gave you access, and a long pole attached to a belt around your middle gave many a potential channel swimmer a head start! The changing arrangements were very proper and effective - a length of calico around a tree with girls inside and boys outside!

It was always regretted at that time that there wasn't a blade of grass close to the school for the children to relax in summer later on, the school house was no longer used by members of staff, and the school at least acquired the garden for their use.

Pupils stayed at the school until the age of fourteen - when the dreaded scholarship examinations sealed their fate, if successful they went on to school at Canterbury but sad to relate, the pass rate was very low.

Evelyn was one of those who made good however, a scholarship to Canterbury and then on to college. She returned to Chilham in 1953 as a teacher - and eventually gained the further distinction of being appointed Head Teacher at the very same school where she began her education.

We are told that the supplies of natural gas from the North Sea are running out, so who knows, perhaps we will have to revert to the old retort made gas once again, so long as it isn't made in our back garden!

Contributed by Mrs. Myrtle Paton

Mrs Paton's memories of childhood cover the 1920's-30's, and are mainly concerned with her own village of Shottenden, which in those days, was a bustling community composed of folk who worked almost entirely on the farms, like most rural areas, the main transport was by bicycle, horse and trap, and the railway.

There was however, a local carrier, who would collect your shopping from Ashford or Canterbury, and on Saturday afternoon he would convey passengers to Canterbury and back for six pence. Walking was a necessity, and also a great pleasure in those quieter times; the postman walked all around the village, and the roadman worked his patch daily keeping verges tidy and digging channels to drain the water from the roads.

These two men were met daily by the children on their way to school, the journey for the children of Shottenden to Chilham school was 2½ miles each day, and that made a tiring day for a five year old, the children who went to school in Canterbury also had this walk, and then caught a bus to the City.

Children's games in those days tended to be seasonal, and were simple pastimes compared with the elaborate toys of the modern child; the commonplace games employing hoops, tops, 'conkers and skipping ropes, would probably be greeted with disdain by the children of today. The girls formed themselves into teams for skipping with long ropes across the road, such traffic as there was, had a much slower pace, and could easily be avoided. The various skipping steps were accompanied by rhymes, which although they were in general use throughout the country, were usually adapted by regions with stories inherited from the past.

The great attraction for a child was the variety of sweets that the village shops stocked, most of which could be obtained for a penny. What memories these old confections bring to mind - liquorice braid, sherbert fountains, 'gobstoppers', aniseed balls, jelly babies, and toffee apples - to name but a few!

Chilham had a variety of shops contained within the village, and they all had something in common that has been lost today - they all had pleasing and distinctive smells! You could pass most of them with your eyes closed, and still pick out the saddler by the smell of leather, oil and wax, the grocer with the mixed aroma of spices and unwrapped cheeses, and the beautiful perfume of new baked bread. There was also a haberdasher and post office, two butchers and a hardware store; all goods purchased would be delivered if required. Practically everything could be obtained in the village, with just the odd visit to town for something special.

A regular visitor to Shottenden was a fishmonger, who used to walk from Faversham with his fish in a pram, and Myrtle confesses that as a child, she always thought that with his long sad face he resembled a haddock! The rag and bone man was also in evidence from time to time, and children were given a windmill on a stick in exchange for jam jars.

Mr. Goldup the dairy farmer, was remembered well; his milk float contained the large shiny brass cans that milk was supplied from in those days, he always wore highly polished leather gaiters and would give you a forecast of the weather at no extra charge - he was seldom wrong either! He seems to have been one of the first to own a car, a Trojan with solid tyres. In fact he bought two identical cars, and kept one in his barn for a spare!

The houses at Shottenden were lit by oil lamps, and water was drawn from a deep well which had to supply many houses before the days of piped water. It took two men 10 minutes to draw one bucket of water and when two bucketfuls had been drawn they were carried to the houses with the aid of a yoke. This well was used by all the people of Post Office Row and access was allowed through Myrtle's grandfather's garden for their water supply.

After water and electricity arrived at the village, it was usual to convert the third bedroom into a bathroom, and the huge copper boiler that was contained in the kitchen and used for boiling water, would soon be used no more.

A great event in Chilham was the annual Flower Show and Fete which included sports and side shows, a special event that was conducted by Myrtle's father was called 'bowling for the pig'! The day came to a great finale with a dance in the Castle hall (This would be during the time of Sir Edmund Davis)

Events in the year which we now take more or less for granted, were, in those days, looked forward to with great excitement, especially the wonder of Christmas Day once again to the generosity of Sir Edmund Davis and his Lady, all the children of the village school had a grand party complete with Christmas tree, and there were presents for all. These could be selected by the children themselves from a prepared list, so that no child was disappointed with their gift.

This was the time when entertainment was centred around the family, and most of us over a certain age can remember the sing songs that always produced a star from our relations. Myrtle can remember an uncle whose rendering of 'The Galloping Major' was a great favourite, her father preferred 'Mother's Baby Boy' but no selection from this 'Top of the Pops' was complete without numerous choruses of 'Mrs. Mulligan's Christmas Cake - it had a verse for every ingredient!

The village of Shottenden was transformed once a year with the arrival of the hop pickers, hops were picked by hand until 1963 and members of the same families came year after year to fill the 'pokes' with the harvested hops, which were carried to the kiln by horse and wagon. They were a warm and friendly people who really enjoyed their stay in the country, and they made the village come alive for a short period of time - this was probably the nearest they ever came to a holiday in the earlier years.

Myrtle's grandfather James Horton, was reputed to be the best wagon builder in East Kent, along with two sons he ran a business of considerable importance to the community apart from wagon building he also specialised in agricultural implements, ran a forge, and was also a farrier and undertaker. The business was carried on from premises at Shottenden, Old Wives Less (where Mrs. Wonfor Snr. now lives) and at Hambrook Lane. A considerable number of houses had wrought iron gates that were produced by the family business, but unfortunately the majority of these, including those at Dane Court went to support the war effort in 1939. All kinds of garden tools were made, and Myrtle's mother had her own lightweight models with her name inscribed.

Timber was selected and felled locally, a steam-powered saw was contracted to come once a year to saw the planks, and it would be at this time that the timber would be graded into that with the best grain markings to be approved by the family of the deceased when a coffin had to be made. Customs were strictly observed for funerals in those days, all the bearers would wear black silk top hats, and the sexton was paid one shilling to ring two bells for a woman and three for a man, curtains and blinds would be drawn in all the houses on the day of the funeral as a mark of respect for the deceased.

Timber would also be selected at this time for the use of the wheelwright; elm for the central have, oak for the spokes and ash, beech or elm for the circular frame, a metal rim had to be expanded onto the finished wheel, which always attracted an audience each time it was performed.

No drawings were ever used in the manufacture of these items; everything was contained in the skill and practice of the craftsman. James Horton was indeed one of these craftsmen retaining his skills later on in life - he was still sign writing at the age of eighty!

Contributed by Mr Ron Akerman

Mr Akerman's memories are of a very pleasant and privileged childhood, his father was the head gardener to Sir Edmund Davis at the castle, and Ron was born at Castle Cottage in 1921. All the staff including the children were allowed the liberty of the whole estate when Sir Edmund was not in residence, and there was always a feeling of mutual respect between him and the members of his staff.

This feeling extended to the village as a whole, and Sir Edmund has always been portrayed as a very generous man; he made his money from copper in a country, which in those Colonial days, was still called Southern Rhodesia, but as everyone who ever came into contact with him will tell you, he was a gentleman in the highest sense of the word.

As a child, Ron can remember that the lake held a fine collection of ducks, and that when Sir Edmund left his dogs in Ron's care so that he could inspect his ducks, he was rewarded with the sum of ten shillings - a considerable amount of money in those days. The lake also contained Roach, Perch and Eels, and Sir Edmund allowed it to be fished by his employees; also the produce from the estate could be eaten by all - what a delight for a child to walk around the garden on a fine summer evening and end up in the peach house!

The village halls were used for entertainment, silent films were shown, and the large hall even contained a snooker table. Sir Edmund also went to the expense of having a hard court built in the grounds for the benefit of his staff with their eye on Wimbledon!

An annual event was a Scout Jamboree held in the grounds during the Whitsun weekend, there was a church parade on Sunday, and Whit-Monday was the sports day, Sir Edmund was always present on these occasions and never withdrew his patronage of the event.

To celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V and queen Mary, a whole ox was roasted in the grounds, with an invitation to everyone in the village to make merry on this special occasion (1935)

Pocket money for a child had to be earned in those days, and Ron can remember mowing the paths around the kitchen garden for half-a-crown a week (12½p) he also delivered eggs on a Saturday, but he doesn't appear to have made his fortune in this venture, he remembers walking all the way to Shottenden to deliver a dozen eggs to a Mrs. Phillips who rewarded him with a halfpenny tip!

When the family moved to Chilham Cottage, Ron's bedroom overlooked the square and two regular events are clear in his memory, one was when the hop-pickers

turned out of the 'White Horse' at closing time and woke him with their not too melodious renderings of the current songs, and the other was the fearful clanging sounds emanating from the horse and cart, that came once a week in the evening, to collect the sewage from the school! To return to the castle grounds, Ron remembers that the existing gates and gatehouses on the square were erected around 1926, one housed Mr. Troke, the butler to Sir Edmund, and the other was occupied by Mr. Elger who was one of the gardeners. Sir Edmund carried out a very extensive building programme for the benefit of his employees, and also for the village as a whole.

If we enter the gates and follow Ron's description of the gardens as they were maintained during this period, those with an eye for a fine garden could only wish to be transported back in time to view the efforts of the estate staff.

It's true that there were 16 gardeners employed, but we have to bear in mind that most work at this time was labour intensive; apart from a couple of motor mowers, all the work had to be carried out by hand - even the equipment for fruit spraying had to be hand pumped - many aching shoulders there must have been to keep up the pressure!

From the top terrace adjacent to the mansion itself ornamented with cannon (now gone) would be a sea of colour and design bordered by the closely clipped box and yew hedges, and with many examples of topiary work.

The top terrace would always contain plants that produced blue flowers - the favourite colour of Lady Davis - but the view of the multi-coloured flowerbeds across the tennis court and down to the lake must have been magnificent.

In 1935-36, Sir Edmund commissioned the design of a rock garden from Dartington Hall Totnes; the actual designer was a Mr Jacobs, and the Westmorland stone was delivered to Chilham station, there to be collected by the garden staff. To supply the water for this display a pumping station was built down by the river, and with the aid of suitable pipe work and a 40,000-gallon storage tank, sufficient water was made available to maintain a fountain and stream to flow through the rock garden. When the construction was completed it was planted with alpines, and became the responsibility of Ron Knight - one of the castle gardeners.

The path around the lake was about 8-10 feet wide fringed with Rhododendron and under planted with spring bulbs. Down by the corner of Mountain Street was the cricket pitch which was extensively used (1) the village team played here, long before the playing field was acquired.

Sir Edmund also had a swimming-pool built by the side of the Norman castle; this was later to become the home of the 'Battle of Britain' museum which has now moved.

Every manner of fruit and vegetables were grown on the estate, and Ron laments

the passing of the old varieties of apples and pears, and the fact that we hardly ever see peaches and nectarines grown these days, those in the castle were 'fan trained' by another of the gardeners - Jack Kennet.

There were all varieties of 'caged' soft fruit, a mushroom house, a tropical house containing paw-paws, pineapples and exotic orchids. There were many species of trees grown on the estate including Walnuts and of course an orchard of Kent Cobs. It is interesting to note that Ron relates that this orchard was located in the same position as the present Village Hall car park! Ron's father as head gardener was paid 3 guineas a week in 1939, and the lowest paid of the gardeners received £1-10 shillings. Considering the 'perks' of the job - free fruit and vegetables, fuel etc. this was an enviable position and one that gave a great deal of personal satisfaction in a job well done. Like all head gardeners of this time he had his own special compost, the formula of which would remain a closely guarded secret for all his working life.

Ron relates that the recent T.V. programme 'The Victorian Garden' brought back memories that were very true to life even in the 1930's. The supply of vegetables and flowers to the mansion and Sir Edmunds Town House in Holland Park the rows with the cook over the size and the colour of the vegetables and fruit, and the strict demarcation line drawn between the members of staff with regard to their various duties - woe betide a member of the house staff who would dare upset a head gardener!

Although as a young man, Ron didn't even consider horticulture for his future; in later years after the war when he returned from the R.A.F. the experience of his childhood in the gardens with his father must have influenced his choice of a career, for he turned to horticulture, and has remained in that field ever since.

(1) During the 18th/19th centuries, cricket developed into a favourite pastime of the gentry of England, and many of the early matches were held in the castle grounds.

In 1878 one of the first matches between England and Australia was staged here when the Estate was in the possession of Mr. C.S.Hardy.

Mr. Chris Taylor, curator of Kent County Cricket Club, was able to confirm that the event did indeed take place, the Club have in their possession, the original poster relating to this event, and the following details have been kindly

submitted by Mr. Taylor : -

The Australian team was on tour at the time, and had previously played at Hastings, when this match at Chilham was arranged between them and a selected Kent eleven captained by a Lord Harris. Unfortunately there are no records of the score, so we don't know who won, but we do know that it was a benefit match for the Kent bowler E. Willsher.

In 1987, some 110 years after this event, an exhibition match arranged by K.C.C.C. with the approval of Lord Massereene, was played on the top lawn of the castle grounds. This was conducted under the old rules of cricket that were observed in 1878 (but without the distinction between Gentlemen and Players!) and this time it was a benefit match for Kevin Jarvis.

Contributed by Mrs. Connie Smith

An event that is clear in the memory of Connie Smith is the great pageant that was held at Chilham in 1946 to celebrate the ending of the War. It was the idea of Somerset do Chair who was the owner of the Castle Estate at that time, and he agreed to write a script to cover some of the history of Chilham, which would be performed by all the local people. Not only Chilham was involved most of the villages contributed their acting talents to make the whole idea a great success.

The director who took charge of the whole performance was Edith Craig, who was a daughter of Dame Ellen Terry (1) and the narrator was Mr. E.P. Smith, who was the local Member of Parliament.

The first scene was a representation of the supposed battle between Julius Caesar and the Britons in 54 B.C. Wally Brice played the great Caesar, and John Harding and Arthur Birch were officers of the Legion. Connie was playing an Ancient Briton dressed as she tells us, 'in black rags' with a child on her back and another at her skirt, who, together with about 30 women and children, retreated to safety after the battle.

The second scene was performed by Kennington and involved the association of King Henry II with his mistress - the Fair Rosamund. (Perhaps a more important theme would have been to remind us that this was the Monarch whose hot-tempered question brought about the murder of Becket.)

The following scene was the responsibility of Ashford, and also dealt with a King and a Priest, this time it was King John and Archbishop Langton who always seemed to be at each others throats until a reconciliation did eventually take place. Ashford also covered the invasion of Kent in 1216, at which time Dover Castle successfully withstood a seige by Prince Touis of France.

Bridge covered the marriage of Roesia granddaughter of Fulbert be Dovera, to Richard le Fitzroy, bastard son of King John. This took place c.1214, and it was at this time that John stayed at Chilham Castle whilst trying to arrange a reconciliation with Archbishop Langton.

It was left appropriately to Canterbury to portray the variety of pilgrims who journeyed to see Becket's tomb and Tenterden presented the visit to the Castle by Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Henry divorced Catherine of Aragon in 1533 to marry Anne, whom he courted at her parents home at Hever Castle.

Boughton Aluph gave an idea of the meeting between Sir Dudley Digges and the architect Inago Jones concerning the design of the mansion that was completed in 1616, and Connie gave us some lines from the original script: "For 16 years the good Sir Dudley Digges lived within these walls, towards the evening of his life the King (Charles I) makes him Master of the Rolls, his name becomes respected throughout Kent. There were those who were wont to wink an eye at this young upstart who had built himself a brand new mansion by a castle keep, married an heiress (Mary Kempe) bought the land, and now his proudest friends extolled his name - when suddenly he dies' (1638)

His funeral was also played by Chilham with Mr. Martin of Pilgrims Lane as the coachman, Dr. Fennel as the lawyer, and John Harding as the heir (Thomas Digges) In all, this scene involved some 60 Chilham people to ensure that Sir Dudley had a good send off for the second time around!

It was left to Selling to present an old Kentish pastime - smuggling!

The smugglers were portrayed as delivering their contraband to the Woolpack Inn -in the shape of barrels of brandy, and being pursued and caught by the Revenue men.

Next came an outstanding spectacle - a garden party for Jane Austen. She was represented as being brought to the Castle by her aunt and uncle from Godmersham Park and presented to Mr. and Mrs. Wildman who were then the owners of the Castle.

The penultimate display was by Chartham entitled 'The Kent Volunteers' their theme was the period in history when Napoleon Bonaparte threatened to invade England.

The finale was with everyone back on stage, and then the dramatic appearance of the officer who became known as Monty's double during the war -back to his job of impersonating Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, 1st Viscount of Alamein.

(1) Edith Craig followed her mother into the acting profession, appearing in many dramatic roles in London theatres at the turn of the century. She accompanied her mother to Buckingham Palace in 1925, when Ellen Alicia Terry received the Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire from the hands of King George V.

Old Wives Lees

Old Wives Lees is not recorded in the Domesday Book, but then, apart from Chilham (Chilham), only two locations are mentioned that were, later in history, to become manors, and part of the Lordship of Chilham; one of these is Herste (Hurst Farm) and the other appears as 'Shillingham'. The latter has a correct map location in modern translations showing it to be Shottenden, but no details are recorded in the text.

In the late 18th century, Edward Hasted located the manor house at Stone Style Farm, but he calls the village 'Shillingheld'. This manor was certainly held by John de Shyllinghelde during the reign of King John (1199-1216) and it was probably held by his forebears during the compilation of the Domesday Book, out how the village name changed to Shottenden is not clear.

If we consider the number of factors that have influenced the language that we use today, it's a wonder that we can recognise most of the place names that were written in Latin by William the Conqueror's scribes.

'Old Wives' is said to be a corruption of the name Oldwood, whose family held the Manor before 1429. The word 'Lees' is worthy of mention; the modern dictionary gives it as being derived from the French (lie) - to mean a sediment at the bottom of a liquid (usually wine). The other alternatives are 'lee' (Anglo-Saxon lead) - sheltered from the wind, or 'lea' (Anglo-Saxon lead) - a meadow or open ground.

Since no record of extensive wine making has been recorded for this area, and that the village, far from being sheltered from the wind is some 200-300 feet above sea level, we'll have to settle for the third definition. The word is not used in Domesday at all, it either wasn't used in Kent at this time, or it defied translation into Latin!

A well respected and much loved character from the Lees that the older inhabitants will remember, was Mr. J.H. Marsh, his outlook on life and his home-spun philosophy is apparent in the collection of his poems that were published in 1975; titled 'Day by Day' the subject matter is diverse, and the poems convey in simple terms, the observations and thoughts of a countryman. He was persuaded by Mrs. Dorothy Lloyd to write an account of his walks around the Lees, and the surrounding countryside, and acknowledgments are due to Dorothy who supplied a copy of his recollections on which the following article has been based.

Contributed by the late Mr. J.H. Marsh

Joe Marsh commented a little on the history of Did Wives Lees, to him it was always called Chilham Lees, although he did agree that the name 'Old Wives' was probably a corruption of Oldwood. He had also heard accounts of the running races that were held there long ago, and in his imagination; he creates a scene in which Sir Dudley Digges in his carriage, drives through the castle gates with the post-horn sounding, and his dogs trotting behind, to take the route through Bowerland Lane (1) to present the prizes.

He was acquainted with Joe Jordan who was the last miller at French Mill, and also with his daughter who taught at Chilham school for 40 years. He remembered Mr. Coleman the baker at Church Hill, and the local chimney sweep, who was known as 'Grandfather' Jarvis, and who lived at Vine Cottage at the bottom of Cobbs Hill. (2) These were the gentlemen who told him something of the old days of Chilham and the Lees, and no doubt some of these yarns were very close to the historical truth.

He begins with a walk from the bottom of Mulberry Hill, and comments on the fact that when this was widened to form the new main road, the old signpost had been discovered that no one could remember having seen before! He passes the house named Pilgrims, said to have been built about 1913, and says that it was built by the side of the old pilgrims track that joined another in Hawkins Rough (3) apparently a shooting range was held here for many years, and he believed that the track became unused for safety reasons.

Further up the hill, he laments the fact that a thick belt of fir trees had now gone, along with a bungalow close to Mulberry House. Mulberry cottage was the site of the old bakery with an underground oven, and bread baked here was

delivered as far away as Sheldwich and Selling, but the bakery was moved to the centre of the village with the arrival of a modern oven. Further up the hill, he relates that there used to be a path from Bowerland marked with two fir trees down Acre Drive, and then he arrives at Thorpe Farm, where the bricks from the demolished oast were used to build Cosy Cot. At Cobbs Hill he passes Vine Cottage the home of the local sweep, and arrives at the houses that were built around 1965, except for six older ones standing between Lees Terrace and Cobbs Hill Estate, one of these earlier houses was said to have been a butcher's shop in earlier times.

At the crossroad, he turns into Tong Hill, and passes Cork Farm, which was then a dairy and hop farm belonging to the Studd family, Joe says that the field opposite the farm was used by children from the Sunday school for their 'outings' and picnic area.

It was near here, that the old foundations and the partial tow walls of an old workhouse was sited and Joe remarks that there is still one in Chilham village, now used as a garage. (4)

Looking back to the crossroads from Cork Farm, there was only one old tarred weatherboard house in his day, set among a field of bluebells in the Spring, and he tells us that Star Lane was then the postman's path to Shottenden.

He retraces his steps to the Mission Hall, and says that it is about 80 years old, and that the land was given to the village by Mrs. Hardy (5) The local people were invited to purchase bricks to help in the building costs, it was intended to be used as an infant's school, but funds did not ever permit it being used as such It was extensively used during both wars - dances were held there for the soldiers in World War I - and in the last war it was the H.Q. of the fire-watchers and wardens.

Joe now turns back to the crossroads and the top end of Pilgrims Way, although he tells us that in his day it was known as 'Middle Road'. He relates the end of the pond by the side of the road near North Court, which used to drain water from the top of the Lees, water which in heavy rain would now flow down Pilgrims Way (it still does!)

He comes to the first oast, which in those days before it was converted into dwellings, had a mailbox let into the front wall, this was before the arrival of the post office. This oast was about a hundred years old and was built with bricks from the local brickworks, the clay was obtained from Mountsford and the kilns were situated at the back of the bungalow known as The Nook, probably in the vicinity of the new telephone exchange at the bottom of Pilgrims Way.

Across the road from the oast, we come to Forge Cottages, this was one of the locations of James Horton's family business, and as Joe remarks - 'many an elm overcoat was turned out from here!' Joe also lived at one of the cottages, Mrs. Marsh still lives here of course, and the builder's yard is used by their sons.

He arrives at the other end of Bowerland Lane leading to The Glebe, there are two old houses here, one of which supplied Joe and his family with well-water for drinking, before mains-water arrived at the Lees. He passes Walnut Tree House, which used to be a laundry, and complains that the lovely old walnut trees had 'tong gone'. He approaches Garden Cottages, the site of the old inn, and tells us that one of the cottages has a cellar and a well that have both now been sealed, he passes Sparrow Court and the second oast, and arrives at the Island Cottages or Pamphlets Green (6)

He now takes the road to Tower Ensdon, remarking that there is a bridle-path here that links up with a path to Dunkirk, or over Sadleton Bank to Chartham Hatch; by turning right; the path crosses the brickfields at Mountsford, to join Shalmsford Lane.

At Tower Ensdon, at the side of a path to Dunkirk, he passes a large chalk pit with quite a few caves, apparently this was used by the charcoal burners and hurdle makers; pushing up the hill to Upper Ensinge, he comments on the age of Upper Ensinge House, and of the view from Pond Cottages.

He walks as far as the path crossing Selling Tunnel (Grove Lane) and recalls that near here are the remains of an old dwelling, that is said to have been the staging post for the coaches that used the old Faversham Road.

He turns back to the Lees by using the lane that skirts The Mount (7) and tells us that the flowing springs of water at the side of the lane, makes this a delightful walk, especially on a warm summer day.

He arrives at the junction of Selling Road with New Forest Lane; New Forest borders the New Cut, and was composed of larch and fir trees in Joe's time. He tells us a yarn about the ghost of a girl on a horse who was said to haunt 'Cut Throat Lane', although he had never seen the apparition himself, he blamed those who had, on being tricked by the moonlight shining on the chalk, especially after 'turning out time' at The Star!

He arrives at The Willows, and says that there used to be a water tank under the floor of the living room with a pump by the window, at the back of Shrimptons orchard there were some wooden cottages, but Joe says that three of these were destroyed by fire. There is a well just here, which Joe estimates to be about 375 feet deep.

He continues along Selling Road, remarking that Phyllis Farm is about 300 years old, and that Hawley Cottage is very old and has been rendered over the original weatherboard. Now he comes to the Methodist Chapel, and there seems to have been an awful tot of fires at the Lees, for Joe remarks that the present chapel is built on the site of an older structure that was burnt down tong ago.

As he approaches The Star, he tells us of the chalk hole on the other side of the road, which once contained a thatched cottage, and at the back was an old house lived in by 'Old Humpy the local carrier. Joe says that it was a pleasure to see him turn out of the lane with his freshly painted cart pulled by a well-groomed chestnut horse.

He completes his journey at The Star, remembering the old days when a large grindstone was positioned in the corner by the side window for the benefit of those with hoes and axes to sharpen - provided by an enterprising landlord for the benefit of his trade!

(1) Bowerland Lane - takes its name from the farm, and has had several different spellings over its tong history. Formerly the main route from Chilham to the Lees. it connects with Pilgrims Lane, which before the advent of the Turnpike (A28) was the main route to Canterbury. The first Ordnance Survey map of 1819 names the farm Boarland, Hasted calls it Boreland, and a map prepared by a Canterbury surveyor in 1735 has it written as Boorland. These deviations were acceptable in the days before standardised spelling - at least they sounded the same - but now it has evolved into Bowerland! It was known for a while as Whitehill - but the old Whitehill Farm was on the South side of Pilgrims Lane and extended almost as far as the original course of the river as it was in 1735.

(2) Cobbs Hill - the manor was held from the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) until the beginning of the 18th century by a family named Cobbe, the last owner was Thomas Cobbe of Chilham.

(3) Hawkins's Rough - the adjoining Manor of Shottenden was held by the Hawkins family from 1538 until the end of the 18th century.

(4) Workhouse - in Chilham, this was the old structure opposite the Woolpack Inn, once used as a garage and owned by Mr. H. Arnold, it has now been converted into Motel accommodation by the owners of the Woolpack.

(5) Mrs. Hardy - the Hardy family held the Manor of Chilham, of which Old Wives Lees was a part, from 1861 until 1919.

(6) Pamphlets Green - said to be the site of a butcher's shop in earlier days, probably derived its name from the owner.

(7) The Mount - not to be confused with the landmark of the same name at Shottenden, this hill is about 500 yards south of Upper Ensinge and is a triangulation station with a spot height of 395 feet above sea level.

It was the meeting place for farm labourers after the First World War, who gathered here to form their first Trade's Union for the area.

Perhaps in conclusion, it would be appropriate here to include a couple of verses from one of Joe's poems:

'Why Can't The Summer Stay Forever?'

'Why can't the summer stay forever
With all it's beauty, and skies of blue?
Alas, like the golden summer sunset
It floats behind the hills, and away from view.

If only the summer could stay longer,
With all it's scenes it has to show -
But like all good things that God has given us,
There's a time to come, and a time to go.

Chapter 9

The Bitter Harvest

Hop-Picking from the 19th Century

For 4-6 weeks of every year, Kent, including Chilham, Molash, and Selling was occupied by the hop-pickers who hand picked the female fruit-head of the hop-bine (*Humulus lupulus*). Prior to 1914, the County of Kent cultivated and harvested 60% of Britain's hops, and it has been estimated that the total itinerant work force required for the whole of Kent for one season was in the order of 10,000 men, women, and children.

Some of the workers came from the local towns, but the main bulk of the labour came from the East End of London. These were the people from the slums of the Victorian London of the 19th century, and they travelled to Kent by whatever means they could. Some walked, carrying their luggage and the smaller children on hand carts, some by horse and cart, and those that could afford the fare came by train.

These were specially chartered trains, with the worst grade of rolling stock and they travelled during the night. They arrived here either at Chilham or Selling station, and the farmer would arrange transport to the hopping camps. In the early days, the accommodation was primitive to say the least, but then it has been said that most of the hop-pickers from London were verminous, the straw bedding in their huts had to be burnt when they left - it couldn't be left to infest the farm animals!

The reaction of the villagers was mixed; the environmental conditions of country folk were far superior to those of Victorian Londoners, and it showed. No matter how poor, country people were cleaner as a whole, and even with low wages, they always had a small plot of land which helped to feed the family. Those in the community who did welcome the visitors were the publicans and the shopkeepers, taking more money in a week than they usually took in a month, but these customers had to be denied credit, it had to be cash on the nail - they wouldn't bother to settle their debts before they left!

The majority of workers were women and children, they worked together as units and the greater number that could pick together would increase their tally for the day. In East Kent the hops were picked into 5-bushel baskets, and of course a full basket would always depend on the amount of shaking applied to it by the measurer when he checked the tally.

Payment was by piecework, and sometimes the farmer would not set the rate until he knew the state of the market, but a woman and her children around the year 1900 could probably hope to earn between £6 - £8 for the whole of the hop harvest.

In these early days efforts were made to improve both the physical and moral standards of the pickers; even an Act of Parliament was passed in 1874, which allowed local authorities to make byelaws to improve their living conditions on the farms. By 1905 the Church of England Temperance Society of 64 Burgate Street Canterbury had 40 full time workers, who visited the families, provided Sunday schools for the children, and nursed the sick.

It is interesting to note that the demand for labour was so great during the hop harvest that a Local Government Board Inspector reported in 1889 - 'that apart from the very young, and the old and infirm, all the workhouses in Kent were empty' - most of the inmates were out picking hops!

Social conditions slowly improved after the First World War and by then the hop-pickers that older members of our village can remember in the 1920's and 30's were socially acceptable in the community during the hop harvest. They were still lively, boisterous, and fond of their ale, but most villagers remember that their coming was an event that made a break from the humdrum of country life.

Hand picking of hops continued on after World War 2 right up to the 1950's and by then whole generations of families had returned to the hop-fields of Kent.

The farm workers themselves took no part in the picking of the hops, but were engaged in related tasks including pulling down the bines to facilitate the picking, transporting the 'pokes' of hops to the oast (a poke was a bag containing 10 bushels) and generally supervising that the hops were clean and free from twigs and leaves. Since the worker's tally was based on the volume of the 5-bushel basket, some of the pickers were inclined to cheat and add various bits of extraneous matter in the bottom of the basket!

The farm worker's wives and children certainly took part in the picking; the extra money was always welcome. The employment of children in the early days was not subject to the strict laws that we have today. However, the work was comparatively light, and a month in the clean air of the country for London children probably improved their health anyway. It was certainly preferable to being a sweep's boy, or working in a match factory!

The key man on the farm was the head drier, he would have had vast experience in the control of temperature and the duration of the drying period, the farmer had to rely on him for the condition of his crop, which would determine the price that he could expect from the brewer.

The driers virtually lived in the oast until the whole crop had been processed; the only concession that they made was to prepare their food away from the oast, so that the smell of cooking would not taint the drying hops.

Even in these modern days when the hops are no longer picked by hand, and the control of the drying process has to a large extent been automated, the drier will always be available in the oast until the task has been completed.

The skill of the drier was (and still is) much valued, sometimes long after these men had retired from everyday work, one such was 'Young Charlie' Daniels from Pilgrims Lane, who even in his late 70's would be requested during the hop harvest to lend his 'know how' to the process.

At the end of the picking, with extra money in their pockets, many more people left for home by train, and they would be transported either to Chilham or Selling station. Accounts from some of the carriers relate that they looked forward to this event; both stations are close to public houses - 'The Alma' and 'The Soudes Arms' - and the generosity of the pickers regarding 'the last glass of ale' was readily accepted. Many a horse had to find its own way back to the farm carrying a driver who was half full of Shepherd Neame's brew and not quite up to his task!

The hop industry has slowly declined over the years; the introduction of imported and cheaper hops has forced many farmers to avoid this crop. The trend today seems to be towards European and Scandinavian beers (mainly lager) - the taste of which, would make an old hop-picker turn in his grave!

Note

It is likely that most of the hop-pickers from London traveled on the old London, Chatham, and Dover Railway, which would bring them to Selling station, Chilham was served in those days by the Ashford and Ramsgate Branch Railway.

Reflections

The common factor that emerges from the reminiscences of an older generation, is that modern life is not always as pleasant as we like to think, although the 'good old days' weren't always so for everyone, we all share a certain amount of nostalgia for the days that are gone.

Country people in particular, yearn for the quieter friendly community spirit that sadly is beginning to fade. Lovers of nature too, regret that we have created an environment that is at last giving cause for concern.

Since 1949, an area of prime natural habitat, the size of the Lake District has vanished. We have destroyed 95% of our hay meadows, 30% of our upland heaths, and 40% of our ancient woodlands. Over 300 wild flower species are now threatened with extinction, and there has been an alarming decline in those animals dependent on wild flowers for shelter and food - have we left it too late?

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