

Churt in Late 19th to Early 20th Centuries

The following account was written by my [father](#) in 1967 and is mainly about the village of Churt from the late nineteenth century to the start of the Second World War. There is a copy in Farnham Library or Museum, and extracts were printed in the Farnham Herald and FMN Volumes Nos. 2 to 7 after my father's death. The following is the full account [square brackets contain information I have added]. I have also added section titles.

A short preface was written by Philip Brooks (who lived next door to my father and was the author of Churt: A Medieval Landscape) as follows:

This family first appears by name in the Pipe Rolls. These are the records of the Bishop of Winchester's Manors. The Tything of Churt is part of the Manor of Farnham. The Rolls start in 1210 and extend over some 500 years.

The family is first described as 'atte Cruce'. Later forms are Cruche, Crouch and finally Croucher.

By 1294 William atte Cruce holds a messuage and virgate of land [see <http://www.croucherconsult.co.uk/genealogy/Croucher.htm> for explanations of these terms and details of the entries]. During the next 50 years Agatha atte Crouch and Henry atte Croucher pay dues for land. There appears to be a break after the Black Death in 1349 until 1450 when John Crouch is in default for land called 'Hollands'. This may have been the family land as it is mentioned indirectly one hundred years earlier. [Hollands is the low ground north of Ridgeway Farm bisected by the track Maryners Lane which leaves the road to Elstead in a dip – the name has the same origin as the country – low land.]

In 1489 a William Croucher asks for the privilege of being buried at Waverley Abbey before the altar of St. Katherine.

In the surviving Frensham Parish Register the name appears regularly from 1657.

There is no doubt that this family has lived in and around The Tything of Churt for at least 800 years.

P.D.B. 1975

January, 1967

I have never made any serious New Year Resolution until now. This year, however, I will jot down some of the events of bygone years as they occur to me. Many have certainly gone beyond recall.

The way of life, socially, at work, leisure and, in fact, all things during the past 100 years have changed completely but so gradually that one became accustomed to the change without realising it had happened. Many things that my father told me seemed almost incredible. I, therefore, understand Edward's manner when I tell him what must seem to him to be strange.

My father was born on December 19th, 1860. Edward's date of birth was October 30th 1946 so two generations span 86 years and a period of the greatest advancement in science and mechanics.

Grand Parents

My paternal grandfather was born in or around 1835 at either a cottage where 'Old Kiln' now stands or on the site of 'Old Pottery' on the Thursley Road beyond Pitch Place. [I believe the former to be correct – he was christened at Frensham Church on 11 January 1835 – a long walk from Pitch Place where Thursley Church was much nearer. In the 1841 census the family was living in Lower Churt which was to the west of Green Cross Lane, Hale House Lane and Tilford Road. Pitch Place was to the east in Upper Churt.] His father was a potter and a small-holder but no doubt his biggest income came from trade with smugglers. My grandfather was still taking part in this illicit trade at the time of my father's birth and later.

In later life my G. Grandfather lived at Squirrels where they had a small shop. [This refers to Charles and Charlotte Croucher – he died on 22 December 1843 aged 52 so would still be working as a potter. I assume Charlotte moved to Squirrels after his death. She was still there as a grocer in the 1881 census. Squirrels was a tented property over 200 years old belonging to Hale House or possibly Greencross. It was divided into two tenements before 1749. Only half the original building survives (Philip Brooks - Churt: A Medieval Landscape Page 42)].

The premises were searched by Revenue Officers on several occasions. The 'breaking down' of brandy involved continuous stirring of the liquor in earthenware pots, It took several hours of work and made inebriated those who inhaled too much of the fumes. On one occasion Revenue Officers arrived on the scene soon after my G. Grandparents had returned from the coast. He had evidently been followed but was then turning his pony loose in the paddock, and remained out of view. The teenage daughters took the kegs to the palour and sat on them covering them with their crinolines. The officer found nothing. The smuggling men travelled in large parties for strength. A small party would have been robbed and left naked at any point between Midhurst and home, lonely roads and tracks having necessarily to be used for the purpose. [The crinoline story is not unique to the Crouchers! I suspect that the smuggling was based at Old Kiln. I received an email containing the following "One thing I questioned her about was the reference you made to Charles Croucher, the potter, smuggling. She said yes that was right, she remembers playing in the builder's yard as a child and finding chain harnesses used for dogs to pull barrels of brandy on carts up from the coast. The Old Kiln is only a short way away. She also believes that a lot of the earthenware and pots (flower pots, chimney pots, rhubarb pots, kitchen crocks) around Red Hearne came from the kiln]".

Barford Lower Mill

My father was born at the Lower Mill at Barford [the mill is on the Headley side of the stream, but James was christened at Frensham on 13 of January 1861 and was born in Chert (sic according to the Parish Records), but he was living in Barford, Headley aged 3 months in the 1861 census] the mill then being out of use as it was so many times in its history. Family squabbles and the stealing of title deeds was the cause of this. The house was then not only reputed to be haunted, but my G.M. heard strange noises so often during G.P.s absence. This may have been the reputation taking effect.

In the late 70's or early'80s the mill was equipped with new machinery and Harry Cooper was Manager. [The family had moved to Pond Cottage next to Frensham Pond before the 1871 census.] A fire took place soon afterwards and he was said to have run to Farnham, East Street to call the Fire Brigade in 35 minutes. [Farnham had only two manual fire engines bought in 1754 – the first steam fire engine was not purchased until 1896]. He was a very tall man, but elderly when I was a boy. His wife was small.

I do not remember the mill in use [my father was born in 1900 – there is a history of [Barford Mills](#)]. The sheds between the mill and the bridge however, were full of rags, mostly in sacks. As boys we went into them despite warnings. Years later the roofs caved in. By then the rags had sunk into a solid mass. That was during the time that Mr. and Mrs. Verstage lived there. An elderly couple, pleasant, but reputed to be misers.

In 1911 an evangelist who had arrived in the village, converted a cart shed which stood between the rag sheds and the place where the stream emerges, into a chapel. The shed had only 8 uprights on which the roof rested and was open on all sides. A disused cart which had stood there for years, and on which I, or we, played for many hours was removed. The shed was weather boarded and lined with match boarding, the M.B. also being placed under the rafters, a floor was put down and the whole place was cosy inside, warmed by oil heaters.

For several years I and my sisters and brothers attended Sunday School there, and my mother with one or other of the children, Sunday evening service which was conducted by local preachers. It fell into disuse after the war when two large families which had supported it emigrated to Canada and others moved away.

Barford Middle Mill

The mill, often called Middle Mill, as earlier there had been three, was in use when my memory begins. Sam Larby was the miller and my father bought pigs' food there, mostly barley meal for fattening. I often accompanied him on such occasions and, of course, that was our only way of reaching the village and school [my father was born in a cottage now demolished very close to Upper Mill, the track to which passes the Middle Mill]. Later Mill House was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Pride, Dorsetshire people who emigrated to Canada as so many families did when their daughters married Canadian soldiers.

Mrs. P. was one of the local women who contracted to do soldiers' washing during the war. It was poorly paid and more poorly washed. A soldier's bundle consisted of one of each shirt, pants, towel, pair of socks and a household would take a G.S. wagonful each week. As none of the cottages had a hot water supply beyond what could be heated in a pot over the fire, one can understand the result. All the water had to be carried from the stream in pails.

Children's Games

The Bargate quarry was in use on and off up to the outbreak of war, and it was a school boys' paradise. School boys during the two hour dinner break in the summer roamed many miles playing soldiers, fox and hounds and games that have been long forgotten. Every girl had her wooden hoop and every boy his iron one. It was common for up to 30 boys with hoops to go charging up a road and leave the hoops to run downhill when the speed became too great to follow. The hill from the Church Green was a favourite.

At that time a cart would give notice of its approach with its iron tyres on gravel. The carriage tyres being of solid rubber, the clip clop of the horses' hoofs and the tinkle of its bells warned us. But it was only the carriage which we were afraid to upset. Mr. Dockeral, who was coachman for Mr. Pritchard of Llanover would avoid the school vicinity at the times when the 'kids were out'. He, also, would never attempt to drive past the steam roller.

Churt School

I commenced school in June 1905. Many children commenced at a younger age, even at three years. The Head Master was Mr. Hurley or Early but he died a few months later, but I scarcely believe I had worried him to death [Frederic Hurley master of Churt School died on 11 October 1905 aged 50].

The School was comprised of two rooms, the small one for infants, the other for six standards with three teachers. The infants' room was like a small gallery, each row of seats being a little higher than the one in front of it and from the rear seat it was possible to look out of the high window behind. There were at least 40 children in that small room. The school at Beacon Hill opened later that year and the numbers dropped very much. Until then no school existed between Churt and Shottermill and Grayshott. The big room must have been packed to capacity.

As infants we had strips of leather and boot laces to learn how to lace our own shoes. Cards with holes on dotted lines through which we passed wool to make the shape of one of a number of animals. Children in class 1 were given pieces of cloth on which to sew buttons. It was there I learned how to thread a needle quickly and years later won thread needle races for different girls. We used slates for writing and "Wipe your slates clean", meant spit on them and rub it off. We were told not to use our handkerchief for this purpose, but to bring a piece of rag. Most of the children, however, had only a rag for a handkerchief.

I forget the name of our teacher but she was very nice.

I was about six years old when, with two other boys, I chased cows in the field beyond Morton House entrance. How the cows ran and the more they ran, the more eager we became. Someone told teacher and we were hauled before the class. A girl of our age (Lena Ransley – the daughter of the chauffeur to Col. Findley of Barford House) jumped to her feet and said "Willy Croucher wasn't there teacher". I was told to go back to my place. I did. Who was I to say that she was fibbing. I wonder where she is now. That was more than 60 years ago. Her people left Churt soon afterwards when Col. Findley's command at Longmoor terminated. As a digression, I will mention that Gen. Findley was the first General Officer to be killed in 1914 in action.

I was dreading the big room. My sister told me that Miss Green was a tartar, but she left the school at that time and was replaced by Miss Ford who was an excellent teacher.

Up to now the Head Master was little known to me except by sight. He had a great ego, was arrogant, but a bit afraid of some of the big lads and they were big at that period and a little rough, but they were the ones that caught the full force of the war. There was always a rubbish place behind the school in the boys' playground. Three big boys were detailed to burn rubbish and old exercise books. Among the rubbish they placed blank cartridges which could be found in dozens after army manoeuvres. As they banged away, the Head Master went to investigate but quickly returned. The boys were in the shed and he could not get to them. Anyway he could not punish them and he knew it.

I was quite young when some boys picked me up and stood me on the big pool which stood most of the year at the lower end of the playground. After heavy rain, the pool was about 15' x 9' and in the winter made a lovely slide. On the morning in question, the Head Master was watching and called me over. He said "You looked like a trout" and "Trout" became my nickname for a decade or more.

At that time one only went into the next class having passed the exams. Age did not enter into it. I was in Class 6 at the age of 10 but all I received for competing with older children was ridicule from the Head Master. His stick I did not mind but the ridicule ate into one. It was not until I was serving in a particularly tough platoon years later that I was able to shake off the effects. I had won a book prize presented by Mrs. Hook of Silverbeck and in handing over he read a verse from it to the class, a verse that he used to make me foolish. After he moved away at Easter 1911 I promised to go to Badshot Lea and give him the thrashing he deserved as soon as I was old enough. The promise was not carried out but I never forgave him.

I remember him punishing a girl named Smith who was particularly badly dressed always. Her mother was housekeeper to old Titford, a firewood merchant of Outmoor. He put her across a desk, raised her frock and battered her across her bottom with a cane. Several big boys from the back pew came from their seats towards him and he released her. Two at least of these boys died in the war. Both were gunners, one a regular, whose name is on the Headley Roll of Honour, the name of the other on Churt War Memorial. However he left Churt at Easter 1911 and was replaced by the best Head Master the school might ever have.

Little teaching had been given to the upper classes in years. Good instruction in Standards 3 and 4 given by Miss Brown (a strict but competent teacher) was wasted, children being left to themselves for whole periods. All this soon changed. Discipline was installed. There was little caning but very severe when it came.

At this time a new infants' room was being built and there was the most severe epidemic of measles before or since. The school was, therefore, closed for a long period. Not only school children but lots at home, babies and some adults suffered, so that no one was susceptible for a long time and it was many years before another outbreak. Mrs. Bryan Hook died as a result of measles towards the end of the outbreak.

The first we saw of our new Master was at the Coronation festivities. He was already taking charge of things. It was a wet day, but by late morning the heavier rain ceased and it became a drizzle. A dinner for all was provided in the school. Accommodation being limited, the people went in relays. The sports was postponed until a fortnight later and were held in the Vicarage meadow. As with the summer school treats, the races were run in a wide circle around the H. Chestnut tree which still stands. As a memorial a beech was planted on the Green and a seat placed by it. It was a miserable looking specimen at the time "Many a better could have been dug from Barford Copse" was the comment. Yet it has grown to be a fine tree.

The new Master entered children for the Diocese of Winchester special written examination in Scripture, R.I. it is now called. All studies had to be taken at home and the examination was on a Saturday in February. There were three classes of passes. In my first year I gained a second class certificate and a first class prize in each of my next two years, both of which I still possess – a Bible and Wordsworth's poems. The results in our school were very high with no failures in the last two years.

In the winter of 1911 we gave our first concert, three performances. With the exception of serious songs and the tots performance which were learned by the whole class during music lessons and perhaps I should say, the Morris Dancing taught in Mid-day break and drill periods, all rehearsals took place in the evenings and script was learned at home. Nothing was to interfere with lesson time. It was a $2\frac{1}{2}$ hour performance without the time lag between items. Some of us were on the stage four or five times, but it was so arranged that we had time to change.

For these events there was a strong platform laid across trestles which was erected at the western end, was about 3' high and was normally housed in the sheds at the rear. It was used for many meetings, political and otherwise. The difficulty always was the removal of desks. These were made to seat 8. Seats and desks combined. The legs were cast iron, the seats and desks of a hard thick wood. Very heavy indeed and the length made them difficult to manipulate. They were too strong to be damaged by children and it took a sharp knife to make an impact on the woodwork.

During my last two years I was bell ringer, taking over from Eric Larby. It was rung at 8.45 for two minutes and from 8.55-9. The same at the appointed time after mid-day break, The early bell was needed for the children came mostly from long distances, Stream and Wishanger and Simonstone in the west, Pride of the Valley and Stock Farm in the other direction, Crosswaters, Hatch Hill, Whitmore Valley and Hammer Lane, also from Rooks Cottage and beyond. After dallying on the road, children would break into a run at the sound of the first bell. I remember the H.M. telling a couple of families of children who had arrived late "You are like a lot of cows shod with copper lids".

The girls of the day wore pinafores which were the length of their dresses. These garments covered much untidiness beneath. Small boys wore sailor blouses, the older ones, knickers which buttoned below the knee. All wore stockings, kept in place with garters worn above the knee. Very few of the garments were first hand. They had been either gifts or acquired at a rummage (jumble) sale.

Most boys had a nickname, sometimes a corruption of the surname or a nickname handed down from a father to his elder son or derived from some oddity which had transpired. My own I have told. One was called Barley, he had at one time worn a pair of his father's trousers cut to size, but looking like barley bags. Lardy, a boy who had brought lardy cakes for his dinner and handed some to others. Shiny for shiny boot black – his boots were always clean. Toady was a boy who was seen playing with a toad.

Our headmaster kept a few hens and once during mid-day break some balloons appeared coming from the direction of Headley. The hens were goggle eyed and quiet. They were really frightened. As the years passed by animals and bird life ignored things appearing in the sky and the youngest of animals are not frightened by a noisy machine as were their antecedents.

I believe I kept a good attendance at school. The attendance officer, a retired policeman named Edmunds called twice weekly at the school. One summer day he called at my home to ask about the absence of someone. He had ridden a bicycle from the direction of Frensham Pond and told my mother he had ridden over the tail of an adder. He was still agitated and glancing round saw lying in the path a torn tyre from a perambulator wheel. He jumped into the porch, pushing mother through the doorway. He had to rest for a while and drank some home-brewed beer before leaving.

The number of children attending school during 1912-1914 varied between 98 and 110. During this period I kept the attendance chart and remember the difficulty of working out the attendance percentage to two decimal places. Children commenced school on their fifth birthday and left on the fourteenth whatever day of the week it should happen to be. One may wonder where so many lived in those days, but there were often four from a family attending at the same time. There were Elsons and Marshalls from Hammer Lane, Lees, Cains, Taylors (there were three families of them), Vollers, Earls. Eames, Whites, Triggs, Steels, Aldertons, Matthews, Larbys, Crouchers, Mansells, Wheelers and Willises. Members of nearly all these families are yet living in the neighbourhood [at the time of writing – 1967]. In addition there was a moving population when the fathers were gardeners or farm workers and therefore living in tied cottages.

[There were two Catholic families] and they were excused from Scripture lessons. They were in the cold lobby from 9am to 9:40, there being no other room in which to go. The Vicar, Rev a W Watson entered the school each morning and would remain for ten minutes. At times he would call again in the afternoon for the school children distributed the Parish Magazines on their respective ways from school. He was a very likeable man known to one and all as “Daddy”. This was a mark of respect than otherwise. His favourite pastime was angling and he would fish the Tilford Road ponds calling in at the Pride of the Valley on his way home. The ponds in question were then well cared for and well stocked and belonged to the Cubitt Estates.

Grandfather

My grandfather died on October 11th at Pond Cottage where he had lived for 35 years to a day, He had moved to the house on October 11th, 1870. October 11th was also the birthday of one of my father's brothers. It was also the date on which my father died in 1939. It seems remarkable.

The cottage had a yearly lease and with it were a few acres of woodland, including where “Woodcote” now stands. He also had the meadow (now almost a copse) opposite to Churt House (once Romsey Lodge) stretching from the bridle path to Gorse Cottage. It was there his pony grazed.

I believe he had never any regular employment. He took odd jobs at times. Helped the fishing of the pond when it was drained at five yearly intervals [see Frensham Then and Now by Baker and Minchin Revised Edition 1948 page 20], snared hares on the common, and sometimes as many as 30 in one night. These were disposed of at Officers' Messes in Aldershot.

In earlier times he went into Sussex in the Spring. There, with my father and uncle, they would carry through from grass cutting to corn cutting. All scythe work. It kept them easy during winter months.

Oddly he was one of the few with an electoral vote in Churt. As a lease holder he paid rates in a direct manner. This was the qualification. Even as late as 1911 Mr. Rushbrook of Dye House, Thursley, a house with many acres of land was disqualified because his wife and not he was the real owner. His wife, of course, had no vote.

My Grandfather's death coincided with that of Mr. Compton of Churt House, the owner of the Estate, and although my father had taken us to live with his mother, a year's notice to quit was soon received. Mr. McRay had bought Pond Cottage and an inducement to my father was made and we left for Copse (Coppice) Cottage in the spring.

It was there that most of my boyhood was spent. Just 6 years. It was from there I was pulled to the ground by four Scottie dogs whilst on my way to school and which has prejudiced me against dogs to this day. I was 6 years old, and alone.

It was from there that Capt. Morris offered me a penny or a three penny piece and was pleased when I choose the smaller coin. He died after a long illness when I was seven.

Hop Picking

It was also from there that my mother took us hop picking. School holidays at that time were delayed for this reason, commencing about the last week of August.

Families from Whitmore Valley and Hammer Lane went to Frensham in numbers. Most Churt folk went to the fields of Mr. Richard Beale whose kilns were at Pit Farm. His brother, Mr. Edgar Beale engaged mostly Frensham and Batts Corner folk. On a Sunday in August old Tom Voller who lived near Frensham Church and was senior hop man would walk to Churt calling on past pickers to tell them the day picking would start and which field would be the first. Some fields were at Speakley, others at Pit Farm and at Dockenfield. Picking period was 23 to 27 days and payment was by the bushel [8 gallons]. This varied according to the crop from 2d to 3d. A farmer at Wrecclesham once paid as low as 8 bushels for 1/- [one shilling - equivalent to 1.5d], but Mr. Beale declined to do so.

There were between 30 and 40 families engaged, a six bushel basket being provided. Individuals used smaller baskets which they emptied into the six bushel when filled. This big basket was marked on the inside to denote 1, 2, 3 bushels etc. When filled the basket was taken by workmen and emptied into a length of sack cloth, the sides of which were held up by a wooden frame. These sacks were called surplices and held 12 bushels, and on being filled were pinned with 9 inch iron pins. How boys loved to call "Tallyman" when the family basket was filled.

At that time stringing was not done as in the present day. Hop plants were in pairs and a pole to each plant. Strings were used only to prevent damage in a gale, and went from pole to pole. Men were employed to cut the bind and pull the poles. Each man had about 12 families to attend.

About mid-morning Mr. Hitchcock and/or Mr. Rogers would tour the field with a basket of cakes, ginger bread, etc. Food tasted strongly of hops where the hand touched it, for the hands gathered a dirty brown stain. There were no facilities for washing hands and neither were there any lavatory facilities but people managed. It would shock the M.O.H. today to know of the lack of hygiene which existed, for neither did the schools have wash basins for the boys who were away from home from about 8.20 to 4.30 daily. [This was still the case when I was at Churt Primary in the 1950s.] Minor cuts and abrasions made by hop bind were common. A thrashing with hop bind was worse than a horse whip. The danger of wasp sting was always present at meal time.

My sister, two years my senior, and I would leave home at 7 a.m., my mother coming later with younger children. Each basket was expected to be in operation by 8 o'clock. I remember some very frosty mornings, but few wet days, possibly because we would not leave home in the rain and would cease to pick if rain commenced later in the day. All "kit" stools, baskets, old coats, etc. were placed under the up-turned basket on leaving the field about 4.30 or 4.45. A heavy day's picking would mean early knock-off if the kiln had taken capacity. A long tiring walk home, an evening meal, a good wash and an early bed. At the end of the picking our family would have earned £3 plus. Not much by today's standards.

Wages and Prices – Before the War

At that time a general labourer's wage was 17s., a farm worker 15s., a cowman or carter who had animals to attend 7 days a week 16s. and a rent free cottage. Goods were cheap and clothing coarse but strong. My father had two new shirts each year and one pair of cord trousers. The shirt cost 2s. 6d. each, that was best quality. Tobacco – light shag 3½d, dark shag 4d., Taddys 4½d, St Julien 5d, Woodbines 1d for 5, other cigarettes 3d per 10, matches 1¾d per dozen boxes (average contents 50). Beer 3½d or 4d per quart, sweets 4 ozs, for 1d.

Most boys from the age of 12 obtained some sort of a job. Some went to Hindhead Golf Club and acted as caddies; diminutive lads carrying a bag of clubs for a man three times their own weight. I was employed at Barford House from 7.40 a.m. to 8.40 a.m. earning 2d, from 4 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. earning 3d. Saturday 7 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. earning 1/- with 3d. for one hours work on Sunday morning. I cleaned boots, knives (there was no stainless steel), fetched coals, kindling wood etc. and was a garden boy on Saturdays. Often on my way home I had to make detours to deliver letters, parcels and sometimes game. On Christmas Eve 1913 (I'm sure it was a Wednesday), it was our last school day before holidays and I was late leaving school and arriving at the house. I was then told that I must after completing my work, carry a turkey back to Beacon Hill as it was larger than ordered. It was a 14 lb. bird but seemed more like 14 cwt. before I arrived at the destination. I then had to return to Barford before going home. I had been away from home 12 hours. I was very hungry. I was paid no extra money for this.

Food

Bread was made as cottage loaves, the upper half being slightly smaller than the lower with the thumb mark left where the two were pressed together. Although 2 lb. loaves were made, 4 lb. was the size mostly bought. Daily my father took the upper half for his meals, a hunk of cheese and a lump of pickled pork or bacon. At home we rarely had other than pig meat except perhaps a half bullocks head occasionally, or fried breast of mutton for Sunday breakfast. Oatmeal was 2d. lb. and that meant porridge for breakfast for children.

Father's Work

My father commenced work at the age of 9 as carter's boy at Frensham Mill. The mill and adjoining farms were the property of the Beale family. Mr. Ben Beale had come to the mill somewhere about the 1820s and it was his son Richard who was then "gaffer". When Mr. Edgar Beale died soon after the 1914-18 war, it passed into the hands of his son-in-law, Mr Milsam. Young Mr. Edgar had been killed early in the war. In 1870 my father was there, the mill then worked to capacity. There were several teams of wagons and waggoners, with four horses to a wagon. Barley, wheat and oats were collected from farms as far distant as Odiham. Flour, barley meal and other cattle foods were taken out and so the wagons were loaded both ways. A sack of corn weighed 280 lbs (2.5 cwt) and a wagon carried 50 of these. On one occasion on the way from Crondall to Frensham the iron tyre from one of the wheels broke and had to be removed. They could either unload or go on. The carter did the latter, and the wheel kept into being for them to reach the mill. The shocking state of Gravel Hill was no doubt the cause of the problem. The wheels had been made in Sturts wheelwright shop in Farnham (the celebrated shop of George Bourne) [The Wheelwright's Shop by George Sturt published in 1923 is still available – George Sturt was the grandson of Sarah Keen, sister of Frances Keen, wife of Richard Baker, my third great granduncle]. For the descending of Gravel Hill the rear wheels were placed in shoes, even so the wheel horses scarcely took their hooves from the ground and the trace horses having to be kept clear yet with loose traces.

On one occasion the carter, named Marshall, who liked his beer, took the Queen's Shilling from a recruiting sergeant in Aldershot. He dared not go there again. This man would become so drunk that he could sleep on top of the wagon during the homeward journey. My father alone had to back the wagon into the shed in the darkness, and unharness and water and feed the horses. It would then be, perhaps, midnight. He was expected to be there again soon after 5 o'clock in the morning.

In his 'teens he did much hoeing, mowing and harvesting in the fields around Chichester during summer months. In the early '70s he went with his father to a spot nearby the Little Pond where the troops had left a 72 gallon barrel behind after camping. It was carried to Pond Cottage on a wheelbarrow. Until his death in 1905 my grandfather used it for potato storage, having sawn off one of the ends. My father did likewise until his death. I used it for the same purpose until 1949 when I found the bottom had given way. After standing it in the open for a few years, I decided to break it up. This I did with a sledgehammer, but it held out to the last. The staves were of elm wood and sound as ever except where the damp had taken effect near the bottom.

Of other jobs which he did in the '70s were working on making the Portsmouth Railway into a double line and building groynes and coast defence work at Selsey. He was also engaged in building work at Arundel Castle, when walls 5 feet thickness were built. In 1879 he and his brother (18 months his senior) enlisted at Devonport in the 75th Foot, part of the 38th Brigade. [Details of his life in the military where he was based at Aldershot, Malta and Egypt where his brother died of enteric fever, and the attempt to rescue Gordon of Khartoum omitted]. He left the Colours for the Reserves in 1896 holding the Queens' Medal with four clasps and the Khedive's Star.

For one whole spring and summer my father walked to Critchmore daily. He was in charge of a road widening which entailed the removal of the high banks on the eastern side of which is now the A287 road. He left home at 5.15 a.m. returning about 7.15 p.m. In addition to his food he carried a pint of cold tea and a pint of home brewed beer. He was then in his late forties. (During the war, 1916, a man walked from Tongham to work on the road widening through Bramshott camp. This must have been 12 miles each way. He was an ex-soldier in his late forties).

A lady who lived at Inglenook could not understand why my father declined to empty her E.C. twice a week for 4d.

During one summer my father was digging gravel for F.R.D.C. in the field where Chinton Cottage stands. With him were George and James Taylor and James Chandler. The work involved sifting the gravel by hand, the men working in pairs, the stones then wheeled to some level ground and heaped to a height of 2 feet. They were being paid at the rate of 6d per cubic yard of stone. By sheer hard work they averaged £1 per week. This was too much for the Council and they cut the price to 4d per sq. yd. I checked this with George Taylor a year or so ago. He was yet bitter about it.

At that time Mr. Abbot had just come to Beefolds (Threeways). He was an outspoken man and took my father by surprise by asking "are you an honest man Croucher?" He was surprised by the reply "An honest man grows hairs on the palm of his hand". Mr Abbott was a generous man and any service man, before returning from leave, was expected to call on him and receive 10/-. One man called in an inebriated condition. "Are you drunk again?" asked Mr. A. "No sire, same drunk". He had not been sober for four days.

The Evangelist

Earlier I mentioned an evangelist – Capt. Davis, whom I first saw on a Sunday afternoon. I was playing with my younger brothers a short distance from the cottage, having been told to keep them away while my father rested. He first gave me a severe lecture about playing on Sundays and then asked for my mother. Her name, among others, had been given him by Mrs. Matthews of Cherry Tree Cottage. They were the names of those who had attended Chapel Services at Star Hill, a building then being converted into cottages. I was later called to take him past Fallowfield (then Field House) and put him on the road to the Mrs. Kemp and Glover at Stream Farm.

After further lectures he promised me a book if I accompanied my mother to his caravan service that evening. The caravan was stationed a little to the right of what is now the paper and chemist shops. I attended the service, but had great difficulty in persuading him to part with a book. He must have considered me very persistent.

Life at Coppice (Copse) Cottage

Our groceries were delivered by Willy Glaysher (Little Will). A very small man and brother to Mrs. Shrub whose shop in Hammer Lane sold everything. (The shop today is little altered.) [Our bread was still made there in the late sixties and delivered by Mr. Young – I can remember when he stopped delivering. It is now a private house.] He walked by way of Ivy Lane carrying a big wicker basket on his hip, the handle in the crook of his elbow. Over the years this had made him bent and crooked. He delivered on Mondays and Fridays not only our bread and groceries, but of those of my uncles [Fullicks] at Field House. This would mean 16 lbs bread, bacon, cheese, sugar, all of which are heavy.

During the summer my sister and I caught lizards for Mr. Bond of Furze Hills. He paid us 2d each. We were constantly warned of adders. There were many. Old Mrs. Harris who lived at Yew Tree Cottage was cutting bracken in the late summer when she disturbed one with its young. She came to our house in a panic saying it had jumped at her and she had been afraid of falling. Yet throughout her life she had been accustomed to them. Later my father recovered her hook which she had thrown at the reptile and gathered in her bracken. Mrs. Harris had a 30 year old daughter and two male lodgers, one elderly, the other in his early 30s. The younger pair began to quarrel with the older pair. Eventually the old couple left suddenly and married without a word to the daughter. The two left alone decided to marry and my mother accompanied them to Farnham Registry Office to act as witness. The other witness was a Headley man named Gale who drove them in a landau type vehicle which was hired from Gamblins at Headley. It was the strangest wedding my mother said for they were a queer looking pair. She rode on the box on the way home, in order to leave them together. I could only mention the name as there are no relatives hereabouts.

Our drinking water supply had to be carried from the spring at Simondstone Ford. Washing water was taken from the stream where it crosses the Fallowfield pathway. A dam had been built and the meadow flooded upstream from the footpath. On the other side a brick water fall which still exists must have been there for many years. An elderly sister of my mother fell from the footbridge and was drowned below the waterfall some when in the late 70s. [Martha Fullick buried 3 October 1872 in Churt – she had mental problems and some say it was not an accident]. Up to the time when farming became a non-paying proposition, the meadow between Simonstone [there is an inconsistency regarding its spelling] and Frensham Pond Road were good water meadows. In the late summer on Sunday mornings my father and I have picked more than a gallon of mushrooms.

I remember Old Knotty (Mr. Knott) singing 'Old Folks at Home' outside our house. Now Old Knotty was a Bog Trotter, that is he lived in one of the four cottages on the common upstream from Little Pond. At that time the common thereabouts was heather only and Bog Trotters Island really looked like an island in a sea of Heather. There were some quaint characters living there, including Cripple Will (Dobson) who later was burnt to death there.

Home-brewed beer was made fortnightly, four and a half gallons at a time. The malt was boiled in a big pot over a fireplace made in the garden. Being a three gallon pot, this necessitated two boilings. Hops were added for clearing and bittering, brown sugar used for sweetening, and yeast added when it was placed in a big red earthenware pan for working. Later transferred to a barrel, it took a few days to clear before being used. There was little or no alcohol in it. I often drank it for breakfast, and took a small bottle to school to drink at midday.

Although my father kept no pigs at the cottage, being away from home for so many hours each day, he dried sides of bacon in the loft in the chimney. It would remain there for about 14 to 17 days and required turning a few times during that period. Also the loft needed inspection lest a blue bottle had braved the smoke. Most cottages kept one or two pigs which were allowed to reach the weight of 25 stone plus before slaughter. Pigs were slaughtered on the site. Most villages had a pig killer who would be assisted by the owner and neighbours. The animal would be hauled on to a four foot long stool with spread legs to prevent tilting, placed on its back and held by assistants. A stiletto shaped knife would be driven into its heart and then its throat would be slit and the legs moved about to drive the blood from the body. The carcass would be scalded to facilitate the removal of bristles and then hung by the rear legs. By the time the intestines and offal had been removed, it was just as may be seen in a butcher's shop. All this was a fairly common sight, seen by children. Not one piece of the pig was wasted. The long tubes of intestines (chidlings) were cleaned in a running stream and cooked in a frying pan. Very, very tasty, but greasy. Only the lights (lungs) may be given to a cat.

Beneath the loft was a bread oven. This was heated with brush wood, often furze [gorse] wood left after a common fire, for that is almost smokeless. It made a big blaze inside the oven. The right temperature was known by the colour of the bricks, then the fire withdrawn, the cakes or whatnot placed inside and the oven door put in place. [Our bread was made in a similar way by Mr Young up to the late 1960s.]

The hearth fire below was never out. Cooking was done in an iron oval shaped pot hanging on a chain or iron saucepans standing on iron bars supported by fire dogs. A little brushwood or fir cones would cause a blaze to heat a kettle or hanging pot. During the day wood was used on the fire, but when no cooking was needed, turves cut from the common were used. These turves were cut and left to dry in the summer, stacked in the early autumn in a shed for winter use. As children we were expected to keep the supply of wood and fir cones up to scratch. Woe betide us if we failed in our stint.

Whether winters were more severe then I don't know, but I certainly remember the sheet being stiff with frost from my breathing and ice in the chamber pot. This receptacle was present in even big houses and doubly necessary in cottages where the earth closet would be 20 yds. or more from the house. It was said by a wag that was the only time Queen Victoria reigned over China.

Most children had chilblains, mild or severe. Various remedies were used – a raw onion dipped in salt, or urine from the pot placed in a bowl and heated with an iron wedge which had been in the fire. My father insisted on the latter having known a youth who had cured bad feet by walking barefoot in livery stables. Years later at the aged of sixteen, and employed at Hindhead Beacon Hotel, my father, as head gardener advised me to run bare foot in the snow. He had effected a cure that way when a boy. This I did, for the snow was six inches deep. I had no more chilblains until the past two years. On the next morning the Manageress asked my father if anything was missing, "There had been gipsies walking in the grounds".

Chapel

Before 1910 Mr. Watridge lived at Hitchen Croft. He had come from Hitchen where he had been an unsuccessful Liberal candidate. Hence the name Hitchen Croft. I was told that the local welldigger from Hatch Hill had contracted to dig a well by a certain date for Mr. Watridge. They however encountered more bargate stone than anticipated, fell behind on schedule, and the contractor had to pay for all the water used in the building of the house to be brought from Barford Stream. The contract left him with sufficient to pay his men, but he and his wife laboured for nothing. This was not a very charitable act by one who was a Chapel preacher. He started a small dairy farm, but had to rent pasture wherever he could. It was his cows I chased and mentioned earlier.

He obtained a 14 year old boy from an orphanage for cow minding. The boy was often changed for another as unsuitable, but one boy, William Beauchamp, stayed for about two years. He would leave the yard about 9 a.m. carrying sandwiches for his lunch, drive the cows to Redhearn Green and the by way of Lampard Lane to the Furze Hills for feeding. He would turn for home about 3 p.m. He had a hard time. He was made to join the Band of Hope at the Chapel and there was an occasion when he went to the rostrum to receive his prize and gave a kind of curtsey instead of touching his forelock as boys were expected to do. From the rear of the hall came the remark "He squatted like a gal".

The building where the Chapel was held was the property of Mr. Bryan Hook and was really named Village Hall. A peppercorn rent only was paid and Chapel ceased when it was sold with Beefolds. Before then Mr. Watridge had died [I am not sure of the spelling because I cannot trace him]. He had been an overpowering man who wanted his way in all things.

The inside of the building had a sloping floor like a cinema, heavy wooden seats as in many churches, a rostrum at the lower end, with a set of moveable steps leading to it. My sister and I attended Sunday School and Band of Hope and one of us accompanied my mother on Sunday evenings. The services were conducted very strangely at times. Some of the most ardent became almost hysterical in their actions.

There was quiet Mr. Robbins who rode a tricycle from Farnham, Mr. Hawkins from Hyde Farm whose sermon was always about Zachariah in the trees. Mr. Green, an ex-soldier from Haslemere who told of so often walked the streets of Haslemere drunk, and vowed he had spent enough in a certain pub to buy it. The last time I saw him was in 1915 when he arrived late at Barford Chapel and apologised by saying that he had been delayed by seeing his son leave the station at the end of his overseas leave. Then there was the honoured occasion when the Rev. Summerhill from Beacon Hill would conduct a service. In earlier days there were morning and evening services and the preacher of the day would take his mid-day meal with my Grandmother if he lived at a distance. Now Grandmother had a lodger Will Ovington, a stranger in these parts. On Sunday mornings he would take himself to the Pond Hotel, and return with a bottle of beer which he insisted on being placed on the table with his glass. I understand it was quite embarrassing to those who preached "There's a devil in the glass".

I can remember that one Sunday on leaving Chapel, we saw the big fire which raged on Crooksbury Hill. We also saw Hayley's Comet, of which we had been told much at school.

Army Manoeuvres

Every summer late July or August, the army manoeuvres took place. It was children's delight and adults would turn out to watch the troops pass. Usually the Bordon Brigade, with Mounted Infantry from Longmoor would oppose the big divisions from Aldershot and would wear white bands around their caps to distinguish them. Whilst on the march in the narrow roads they brought other vehicles to a halt. Of brass hats, and umpires who wore a wide red band on each upper arm, we were not a little scared. We were on occasion allowed into the playground if the troops with bands playing passed during lesson time. There were years when tented camps remained on the common for two weeks at Frensham. When camp was struck, a gun fired and all tents collapsed as though they had been shot down. It was a good sight. One evening I stood for two hours at the end of the bridle path opposite Inglenook watching regiment after regiment marching to Frensham. Some stiff words were said to me when I arrived home. Yet, the next morning when I heard the bands leaving Frensham and returning the way they had come, I was out of bed and made for the same spot. The men were lively and less tired than the night before and I got many an invitation to join them. Some regiments had full bands, some drum and fife only. The end of a regiment was known by the buggy cart which housed the Field Orderly Room, and each brigade was followed by water carts, ambulances and G.S. carts. Finally would come the high tilted vans of contractors of supply drawn by big draft horses. Solomons did much of the contracting.

At the time of the start of the South African War Mr Watson [the vicar] tried to persuade my father to re-enlist, but he was then forty with a family of three. He told that he, in his youth, had an ambition for the army, but his father couldn't afford to buy him a commission. He died in 1917 about the same time as his gardener Jim Woods who had been with him for 25 years.

Mr. Andrew Karn was the Sexton, grave digger and general factotum at the Church. He retired in the late thirties after 49 years. He and his two brother Ern and George were blacksmiths and the forge was always busy. There was also a forge at Wishanger, to which Charlie Collins from Hungerford Bridge came on two days each week.

Farms

All farms were used to the full. It was in the twenties and thirties that only here and there a few cows were kept to graze and the plough allowed to rust away. Between the wars the following farmhouses were converted into larger dwellings. At the same time I will give the names of the farmers in occupation prior to 1914. Stock Farm (Hawkins), Green Farm (Barchitt), Mayhews Farm (Weeks), Green Cross Farm (Mayhew), Butts Farm (Peppercorn), Kitts Farm (Owner Mr Pritchard and later Miss Byrd), Plaster Hill Farm (Hayden), Hearn Farm (Hounsons), Hale House (Tyrill), Parkhurst (Tyrill). In addition to those other farms were occupied as follows :- Wishanger (Faulkner), Simonstone (Wakefield), Crosswaters (Baker), Hyde (Hawkins) whilst Matthews of Cherry Tree Cottage, Watridge of Hitchen Croft, Mr Hook of Silverbeck and in 1911, Col. Smythe of Barford House also kept small herds of Cows.

All the land from Grayshott Hall to Frensham Pond Hotel and situated west of Hammer Lane and bordered on the other side by the Grayshott-Headley Road belonged to Mr Whittaker. Some of the farms were conducted by bailiffs, the senior of whom was Mr Shepherd. Others such as Plaster Hill, Wishanger and Simonstone were tenanted. The Trimmer family owned Butts, Parkhurst, Hale House and all the fields and woodland northward to Twyford Villa. To the east of this from Beacon Hill Northwards beyond the Devils Jumps was the Cubitt Estate, This again was bordered by the Dye House estates of Thursley, then owned by the Rushbrooks. These estates were broken up and mostly sold in the early twenties. Many tenants bought their farms or cottages, having been given preference and favoured with offers below market price.

Game reserves flourished up to 1914. The war eased it down and finally stopped them entirely. Mr. Whittaker had two game keepers at the Land of Nod – Jimmy Dickens and Tommy Harris, and another who lived at Keeper's Cottage, Simonstone, and who had his hatcheries in the wood opposite the old stables at Wishanger. Here too was his gibbet; a line stretched between two trees from which hung his recent victims – jays, magpies, etc. Perhaps the absence of keepers is the cause of the birds being so prevalent these days for they have no natural enemies. The bug bear of keepers were the poachers and I have been told they were the only employees not expected to attend church. Their attendance would have been an invitation to others to stay away. Real poaching, however, was not done on a big scale, it most mostly the catching of rabbits. The local newspapers of the time reporting the Police Court news were as full of the offence "trespassing in search of conie" as the present ones are of traffic offences. The punishment was usually fourteen days. It would have been useless to fine a man who had no money.

The Workhouse

Another offence which was fairly common during summer months was vagrancy or "wandering without visible means of support". A small amount of money in the pocket (the minimum I believe was 10d) absolved one from this charge. So once again poverty was a crime. The charge was a result of the Poor Law. All districts belonged to a Union which had a casual ward attached to the workhouse (wuckus as it was called). Here tramps were expected to sleep for one night and then move on. Before leaving they were given set tasks of breaking stones, splitting logs or working in the gardens. It is significant that in December 1918 after a dose of Spanish 'Flu and pneumonia, I was transferred with many others from a V.A.D. hospital in a big country house to a wing of Wellingborough workhouse which had been taken over by the V.A.D. [Voluntary Aid Detachment was a voluntary unit of civilians providing nursing care for military personnel]. As we improved in health how we chaffed the poor old casuals as they did their stint below our windows.

The workhouse was dreaded. It was considered very degrading to go there, but illness or old age sometimes made it inevitable. Married children however would crowd an elderly parent into their already over-full house to avoid the stigma. No prison today would dare be conducted on the same lines as existed in these institutions. A few years ago, on its Fifty Years Ago column, the Farnham Herald quoted a remark made at a Board of Guardians' Meeting. A gentleman had offered a pint of beer at Christmas to all adults. A member of the Board asked that it be refused saying "If they had drunk less beer during their lives they would not be here today".

Each year tenders were invited for all commodities used at the institution. As the lowest tender was always accepted, the poorest quality was supplied. An acquaintance of my mother whose 'husband' (for they were not married but had lived as man and wife for a dozen years) joined the forces and at the time my mother was informed was serving in Gallipoli, was unable to draw separation allowance for herself and five children having no marriage certificate. She and her family were taken by the Union and her eldest daughter was not released to get employment when she attained the age of fourteen. She was too valuable as unpaid labour to be allowed to leave.

Transport

The roads and lanes of that time were surfaced with gravel stones with here and there a length of broken bargate. The stones were spread and heavily watered from a water cart which had a length of perforated tubing at the rear. It was then rolled by a steam roller, and what a sticky mess it was for a few days. During dry weather, however, there was a thick layer of dust to be stirred up by passing traffic or a strong wind. A bus service owned by L.S.W.R [London and Southwestern Railway] commenced about 1905/6. I believe in the early buses the seats were placed along the sides with the passengers face to face as in the latter day trams, but later the seats faced the front, but each seat higher than the one before it. I can't remember which was the earlier of the two. The route was via the Frensham Pond Hotel and as the road from Pond pillar box to the Hampshire border was little more than a sandy track, the going was none too easy with solid tyres. Also, it was not until 1908 that the A287 from Butts Farm to Parkhurst was made. Earlier the buses had to negotiate the two sharp turns in the old road.

Houses

The larger houses were occupied as follows:- Silverbeck (Mr Allen Hook and later Mr Bryan Hook), Beefolds/Threeways (Mr B Hook later Mr Abbott), Furze Hills (Lord and Lady Digby, later r C G O Bond), Chinton Hanger (Capt Morris, later Sir Walter Napier), Barford House (Prof Gilbert Murray later Col Findley & later Col H H Smythe), Churt House (Mrs Crompton), Llanover (Mrs Pritchard later Mr Hersey), Bookhams (Col Mark Mayhew, Churt Lea (Mr Allen).

About 1912 Old Kiln was converted from two cottages for Mr Solomon and The Chase was built for Lady Mary Maynell. Wishanger Lodge known then as Billy's Lookout was occupied by an Irish family from Co. Cork. The name however escapes me.

Many of the older houses are built with Bargate stone. A seam of it stretches from Headley Fields to Thursley, and there have been quarries at Plaster Hill, Barford, Green Cross and Stock Farms. The stone in Grayshot Hall was quarried at Plaster Hill and an almost forgotten quarry situated between the stream and the footpath through Barford Copse, the property now of Brig. Lash. Wherever this stone is below ground, elm trees thrive and the varying width of the seam can be told by their presence. Primroses and snowdrops also flourish there. In the '30s I was asked to plant an elm and some primroses at Redhearn (Pipers Pool – Pipers Well). I explained that they would fade away within a few years, the nearest elm trees being at the Crossways, and no primroses being in the hedgerows. Fade away they did. It is interesting that among other trees which I planted, there was a Tulip tree (*Liriodendron Tulipifera*) which is now a lovely specimen.

Frensham Manor

In the early days of the century sand for building purposes was carted from the Frensham Pond sands and that explains the low level of the present sands [below the A287]. The Lord of the Manor at Pierrepont received 1/- per cubic yard – a cart load. Carters from the direction of Hindhead called at Pond Cottage to get a permit. My Grandmother issued this from a counterfoil book. Someone at the Frensham side did likewise for those coming from that direction. There must be many houses at Beacon Hill and thereabouts with Frensham sand in the mortar.

Certain rights on Frensham Manor were owned by various people. It was not a personal ownership, and only held whilst in occupation of certain properties. The Bakers of Crosswater exercised their right to graze cattle on the common. The herd could be seen there daily, sometimes as far distant as Four Gates on the Hotel-Frensham School road. The Manor ended at the bank which runs at rightangles from the A287 to the hilltop. It was also the boundary of Churt Ward of Frensham Parish. The thorn tree on the western side of the road is also the boundary. The tree is yet no bigger than I first knew it to be. It was always a land mark and known to all at that time.

Entertainment

Most places had a village band and Churt was no exception. The HQ was the Old Institute, now demolished. The instruments – fifes and drums (wind and skins). The only members of the band which I can now name were Fred Martin, Ern and George Karn, Frank Glaysher and either Frank or Claude Watridge. They would play at village functions including the annual flower show.

My earliest recollections of this show – at Furze Hills, but all later years at Silverbeck. This took the place of Frensham Pond Club as the day of the year for most cottagers. The latter was dying on its feet as new members failed to come along. The club, which was a sick and thrift club, had once been strong and annually a dinner was given to all members on a Saturday in the summer. A fair with roundabouts, swings, etc. was set up in the meadow and people flocked from miles distant.

Cricket was played on a green upon the Parish ground bordering Pond Road. At the time when the Mardens were proprietors of the hotel (then the White Horse), the green was underlaid with clay from Batts Corner. A footpath, later closed when Gorse Cottage was built, led from the main road to the cricket ground and beyond.

They were keen cricketers. Many players worked an extra hour on three days a week in order to have Saturday afternoons free for cricket.

I believe the inception of Empire Day was about 1907. Each year after that the school in Sunday best (and a poor best at that) marched to one or other of the large houses and had tea on the lawn, sang patriotic songs, danced the Maypole, ran races and, of course, listened to a patriotic speech. A speech often above our understanding. Who would have dreamed at that time that one day the word "Empire" would be as any word contained in Lady Chatterley's Lover. The celebrations were held at the following residences:- Beefolds 1908 or 9, Bookhams 1910, Barford House 1811, Chinton Hanger 1912, Furze Hills 1913, and Silverbeck 1914. I am willing to be corrected should this be in error but it is more than fifty years ago.

In 1910 Col. Mark Mayhew gave a big firework display on November 5th, the effigy of Dr. Crippen being burned instead of Guy Fawkes. Col. Mayhew about that time was experimenting with large kites from the Devils Jumps. His children, I was told, were flown in them. Of this I am not certain. He was one of the founders of the R.A.C. and allowed his chauffeur one hour to get to his London office. He took devious routes to avoid police traps set for him.

Post Office [this refers to the Old Post Office at the junction of Jumps Road and A287]

The Post Office and village store were run by Tom and Ann Martin. They were elderly when I first knew them and had occupied the position for such a long time that the road junction was sometimes called St. Martin's Square. The building was part of the Silverbeck Estate which extended to the Church, and also included Redhearn (Pipers Pool) and the fields enclosed by Bland Lane (A287), Lampard Lane and Star Hill. The shop window was stocked with jars of sweets. Inside the small shop were tins of biscuits occupying the length of the wall and stacked one above the other to the ceiling. Behind the counter above a table were shelves fitted with small drawers, each marked with its contents – cotton, thread etc. One was marked gun power and this remained long after it was kept in stock. I am told that at one time the tobacco scales had a piece of putty beneath the end which took the weights for a long time before being seen and removed.

The mail was brought from Farnham in what was literally a box on wheels drawn by a pony. The driver's name I have forgotten, but I can still picture him. He made the journey twice daily and there was one Sunday delivery. There being a long interval in the afternoon before returning with the outgoing mail, he cycled, the pony running loose beside him to a grazing ground opposite Churt House. About 1912 the mail commenced to be brought by motor van. Heath and Wiltshire had a contract to do this. The van was red and marked Royal Mail, but was owned by the firm and the driver one of its employees.

Water, Gas and Electricity

A water main was brought to Churt in 1912. Its chief purpose was to augment the supply to Hindhead, and a pumping station was built next to Quinette to thrust the water up the hill. The pump was housed in a big galvanized, corrugated iron structure and continued in operation until an alternative water route from Tilford to Hindhead came into being. On the Tuesday following August Bank Holiday of that year the pipe track had reached a point a little above the Crossways. Many men had not turned up for work. Either still celebrating or recovering from a hangover. The navy ganger was there and three men and they had spent the morning drinking to the job instead of doing it. They emerged from the pub during our mid-day break, and the ganger and the only local man among them, little old George Steel, had a fight which left both of them looking a very sorry state.

Twenty years later when a 10 mile length of gas piping was being laid, via Tilford, George applied for a job. The same ganger was in charge. A few days later he asked "Have you got a brother, a well digger, Steel?" "I'm the b. well digger" was the reply. From that day George was given the easier work and though many a more robust man than he applied for a job he was employed until the end.

Water was not immediately available to the whole village, but many bordering the route took advantage of it. Some houses had hand pumps, while Barford House and Llanover had each a ram to pump their supplies. Up to that time the water supply for the main bakery in the village was drawn from a well not many yards from the Church yard. [We did not have hot water in our house until about 1952 – prior to that water was heated by gas, either in kettle or saucepan, or in the gas copper in the shed for washing clothes, and also for baths where it had to be lifted in a large jug from the copper on one side of the shed to the bath on the other. In the council houses a hand pump was used to transfer the hot water from the copper in the kitchen to the bathroom upstairs until about 1960].

Churt had got a water supply, but it was the early thirties before a gas main came through and the late thirties before an electricity cable came. Silverbeck and Churt House had electric generators and soon after connecting with the public supply both houses were badly damaged by fire. This was blamed on the old wiring system of enclosing the flex in iron pipes [and probably the higher voltage].

[Many houses had gas lighting when gas was installed, and this was removed when electricity became available. My father did not have gas lighting installed to prevent the damage when it was removed so used hurricane lamps which used paraffin until electricity came. My girl friend's house still had gas lighting in 1970.]

It is interesting to note that installation of electricity to a cottage cost 15/- per point, including bringing the cable to the house, shades and bulbs. [A point was a light fitting or a 3 or 5 amp socket – the modern 13 amp sockets did not exist]. Up to that time cottagers depended on oil lamps, and in bedrooms, candles.

Most of the larger houses had acetylene gas plants, made and installed by Thorn and Hoddle. For many years I attended one of these plants. [The gas was generated by adding water to carbide, a white powder.]

Men

It seems to be on thinking back that men aged more quickly in those days. I remember so many who were bent nearly double. Perhaps it was too many hours at work, for some could have been only in their early 60s. John Ellestone who lived at Rosemead, bordering the school playground was nearly 90 when I was a boy. [Baptised John Ellistone 1815 in Lindsey, Suffolk.] He had a big frame but was becoming tottery with two sticks. For many years he was proprietor of the Huts Hotel. My father told me that he handled ruffians easily and he would allow no stranger to continue his journey after dark. The woods and commons harboured such rough characters in those days. They, or their fathers had come there to hide from the law, or were army deserters, and whereas some settled down as squatters, others led a life of theft and foot padding. One old squatter named Smith but known as Irish Billy, became a packman and toured miles with his pack and stick. It was he who was said to have thraked (tracked) a hare from Whitmore to Headley.

I did know two packmen who made regular visits, but one changed his pack for a basket and sold only ribbons, cottons, ties, etc. Tramps there were, some nice, some not so nice, but all preferring their own company. Then there was Bob Warren who lived as a hermit in a hut which he built in a wood adjoining Pierrepoint, Frensham. Mr. Coombes left him to his solitude and no one thought of disturbing him. He remained there until his death.

Wild Life

There has been a big change in wild life in the last 50 years, especially among migrating birds. One occasionally hears a cuckoo during May and June. Years ago three or four would be calling throughout the day from early morning onwards. For years I jotted down the date of hearing the first call. It was often on April 15th but never earlier. Today we see one swallow, when in earlier years there would have been ten. Swallows and swifts are becoming fewer and fewer. House martins are rarely seen at all. Sand martins are gone. The faces of sand quarries and steep sand rock were riddled with holes made by these birds, sometimes almost to the length of a boy's arm. A favourite place was the sand rock between Hungerford Bridge and Dockenfield. Another was a miniature cliff face beyond Crosswaters which has now disintegrated. Plovers were continually wheeling over the fields during summer and in the late evenings snipe with their whispering noise from their wings.

The barn owl has disappeared. I last saw a pair about fifteen years ago. They were nesting somewhere near Hale House.

On hot summer evenings thousands of frogs in the marshes upstream from the Little Pond kept up a constant din which could be heard miles away. Stoats and weasels we rarely see and my last sight of a hare at Churt was in 1940 whilst on L.D.V. duty. Myxomatosis has got rid of the rabbit scourge which reached its peak in the '30s. Fields up to twenty yards from the hedgerows were almost devoid of crops and pastures were ruined. No herbage will thrive having been soiled by rabbits. Yet landowners still persisted in prosecuting for "trespassing in search of". During severe weather young trees were stripped of bark to a height of nearly three feet. We now have the two kinds of deer which are becoming a real pest. They were not known here in earlier years.

Bats also seem to have gone, only occasionally is one seen. I remember that we used to try to hit them with sticks. We rarely, if ever, succeeded. Cruel you may say, but the outlook on such matters was not what it is today. Bat folding (the catching of small birds by net at night) had been barred by law, but pigeon shoots (the release of pigeons from boxes for shooting competitions) were still held. I remember some youths throwing stones at three wounded pigeons which had settled in an elm tree after a shoot at the Pond Hotel. Every Boxing Day and at a few other times during the winter a coot shoot was held on the pond. There are few coots there now, only moorhens. Wild duck and heron are also few and far between. In all shoots many birds were only wounded and suffered a lingering death if not taken by a fox, whether it be pheasant, partridge or coot.

Vermin, rabbits and wild pigeon were caught by gin trap, a method now prohibited. Domestic animals only were protected by law and even that was not very effective. Surplus pups and kittens were drowned and even fully grown cats were treated that way. The prevalence of the custom is proved by the comic song "The body in the bag" and the song of the little boy, when twins were born asking his father "Which one are you going to drown?"

The War 1914

In those days the only papers available were weekly editions which were dated on Saturday. There were no Sunday papers before the war. The People, News of the World, Reynolds and Lloyds Weekly News were obtainable at Martin's store [Old Post Office]. So in August 1914 few people knew of the impending crisis as the papers contained only Friday news. The first real intimation was the cancellation of the military band at the traditional Headley Flower Show on August Bank Holiday and the confinement to barracks of the troops. On the next day post office and police notice boards announced the calling up of reserves to the colours, and henceforth the mail van had a fresh driver. There were many reservists in the neighbourhood, eight from the 8th Royal Irish Hussars alone.

A few weeks later two Belgian families arrived as refugees. One very large family including three generations were housed in the old farm house at Silverbeck and the children attended school. They were from Loavaine. Another married couple from Ostende lived over the garage at Barford, to which a Hungarian family came in 1956, 42 years later.

In late August what I believe was 23rd Div. arrived on Frensham Common. It was a Yorkshire Div. and had been formed at Pontefract. Most of the battalions were in civilian dress and remained so for a long time. Others had been issued with full dress uniforms, that is scarlet tunic and blue trousers. All were issued as time went on with civilian overcoats. This division was not dressed in Kitchener's blue whilst at Frensham. They slept in bell tents and without tent boards for some weeks.

Lyons contracted to supply rations which were brought from Farnham Railway Station in big tilted vans drawn by big dray horses. The sanitary arrangements were very crude indeed and it was some time before a water supply was laid on by pipes. Food was plentiful and large pieces of meat found their way into cottages to those who would accept them. Men toured the district during the evenings to find someone to do their washing. Many women did this to help the young men. They couldn't expect much profit.

Early in the morning on my way to work, I could hear the words of command bellowed out by N.C.O.s who had re-enlisted. Ian Hay described it all very well in "The First Hundred Thousand". This division was moved away about early December to enter huts elsewhere. During the winter, a company of A.S.C. was billeted in Churt. They seemed to have a very easy life. On a day in January '15 Lord Kitchener was to review troops at Frensham and other places. I understand that he wished to show French and Belgian politicians and generals that he really had a large new army. Anyway they accompanied him. The morning started with inches of heavy wet snow on the ground and it continued to fall till about 9 o'clock. That morning our task in the garden was to ease the snow from branches of Douglas firs, Eucalyptus trees and wire fruit enclosures. All the while we could hear the troops on the march, a solitary kettledrum, a bugle, a mouth organ and marching songs, with the occasion "hurray". The 9th Scottish division was coming from Bramshott via Headly Down and Bacons Lane, the 8th and 9th Rifle Brigade and 8th and 9th K.R.R.C. from Hindhead and Beacon Hill and other infantry from Bordon.

At about 12 o'clock as we could do no more, I obtained permission to go to Frensham. I walked by way of the Furze Hills. On the common, the troops were lined up in close column on both sides of the road covering the whole of flat ground. They had been in position for two hours or more and were clapping and marking time with their feet to orders. One company ceasing as another started. The ground beneath their feet was inches deep in slush. I walked to the far end and then returned but just as I reached the Pond Road by Pond Cottage, a string of cars came from the direction of Churt. They stopped between me and the thorn tree and Kitchener and his company alighted. It was then between 1.30 and 2.00 p.m. There were about twenty officers and men in civilian clothes and led by Lord Kitchener and two civilians they moved along the road in small groups. No doubt in order of rank! The cars moved slowly behind them. Behind the cars came ME. They walked the length of the road as it crosses the common and entered the cars by the hill at the end.

Few of the troops could have seen him or be seen by him, yet no doubt they had spent many hours dragging up equipment for the parade. Not until the V.I.P.s had gone could rations be eaten. The state of the ground made it impossible to sit even for a moment. They were wet from early snow, and would have to remain on their feet for many hours yet. George Stacey, on his way home to Land-of-Nod about dusk that evening, was compelled to walk with them along Headley Road. What they said about Kitchener would be unprintable even today. George was to die in 1917 after seventeen months in hospital, the result of being gassed. Harry Randle told me later that George had been only one night in the trenches. They served in the same battalion of the Hampshires.

I witnessed a preview of Canadian Forces on Hankley Common in 1916. I believe it was Whit Monday or thereabouts. The troops marched past a saluting base, Mr. David Lloyd George taking the salute with Maj. Gen. Sam Hughes, the Canadian Minister of Defence with him on the platform. Bill Elson was standing near me, still in Hospital Blues following wounds received at Loos the previous September.

The spring of 1915 brought a new array of tents on Frensham Common with corrugated iron ablutions and cookhouses. The troops this time were from the Midlands and about eight battalions in strength. They were part of the command stationed at Witley Camp which had developed into a big butted encampment. Rations for Frensham were brought daily from Witley by a train of two horse G.S. Wagons. Clouds of dust were stirred up by the horses and wagons. Extra personnel rode on the rations. Meat was covered by tarpaulins, but the bread was open to the sky except where a man sat upon the loaves. As the convoy passed Mead End where we were then living, oft-times a loaf would be thrown over the gate. The loaves were round with a flat base and very crusty. This would all be very unhygienic now. At that time it was quite natural.

That year the Canadian forces took over Bramshott Camp and later Witley Camp., both of which they improved enormously with shops and cinemas bordering the A.3 road. Tin Town it was called. Soon after they arrived a Sgt. Crase of one battalion was murdered by a Lt. Condic, a French Canadian belonging to another. The following morning the Sargent's battalion was marched away ostensibly for a route march. They didn't return. This was done to prevent reprisals.

Early in the War the Vicar had a roll printed containing the names of all the serving men from Churt. Copies were shown at various places in the village. Supplementary rolls brought the total to 130 by early '18. The names were from the Ecclesiastical Parish only, and many who had been associated with Churt for so many years had their names recorded at Headley. The War Memorial at Redhearn Green was placed there during the war as a temporary structure, most villages using a wooden notice board to record the names. Additional names were added as casualties took place. It was intended that a more elaborate memorial be erected after the war. The then Vicar, however, vetoed this and the memorial became neglected. Later Miss Milicent Abbott of "Redhearn" when serving as Poppy Day Organiser had short oak posts with chains erected around it and the grass within levelled and trimmed. During the winter of 1945-46 a new War Memorial Committee decided to place paving stones around the memorial with steps leading from the road, and a new and bigger tablet bearing the names of those lost in the two World Wars.

Common Fires

In the summer of 1917 a huge fire was started east of the Punch Bowl by the London Road soon after mid-day. Having work to do by the Beacon Hotel, I saw it soon after it started. Having reached the bottom of the Bowl below the farms it raced up the hill at a terrific rate and almost reached the Tilford Road above St. Albans. Major Watson the A.P.M at Bramshott was soon on the scene and dispatched me to the hotel to 'phone for 500 troops. Later the A.P.M. caught a local man Andrew Snelling lighting another fire, having followed him from the Huts Hotel. He was a resident of the Punch Bowl and employed as a gardener at Twizzletwig by Mr. Turle. He was tried for arson. This was the biggest fire hereabouts. Another big one was in 1928 and started near the Jumps Road just above its junction with Crosswater Lane. It spread finally to Tilford Road having taken in all three Devil's Jumps. Mrs. Betsey Wheeler who had lived so long in the cottage on the Jumps was carried forcibly away. Her chickens, however, were burned to death. This fire lasted two days, reaching Tilford Road about 6 p.m. on the second, and stopping all traffic there.

Winters

Both 1916-7 and 1917-8 were very cold winters. Frost was in the ground for long spells and there were deep falls of snow. On a night during one of those winters I and two companions (Bert Hutchings and Harvey Karn) stepped on to the Great Pond at the hotel and walked to the A.287 road. It was bright moonlight. As we approached the pond verge Bert walked through some reeds to reach the bank, but the ice gave way and he sank to his knees. By the time we had reached the road his trousers were stiff. Every now and again the ice would crack like a pistol shot, as it swelled with increasing frost.

I believe it was in 1895 that a bad tragedy occurred at the Pond. Those old enough to remember which was the cold winter of the 90s can correct me regarding the year. Three boys, two of whom were Collyers from Batts Corner fell through the ice. I'm told their screams were pitiful. A ladder was taken and pushed over the gap but their hands were too numb to grip it. They are buried in Frensham Churchyard. [I can find no evidence for this.]

Most summers there were drownings at the Pond, especially among the troops, but that was the only case I know when breaking ice was the cause.

Wages

As the war progressed wages improved. In January 1925 employers at Tilford tried to revert to the old rates. I was laying out an orchard for Miss Paget (late of Brightwells, Farnham) but was loaned to a neighbouring garden for two weeks whilst awaiting the arrival of young trees. This was to dig the big kitchen garden. Two regular gardeners were employed, one a big youth of 19 years who had lodgings in the village. On my second Monday, when I was contemplating the eventual score of Hobbs and Sutcliffe who had reached 300 runs on Saturday, the gardener came and told me that wages were to be reduced by 25%. A decision had been reached at a meeting held by all the local ladies and gents after Church service the previous day. I pointed out that this could not affect me, Miss Paget was not included. My wages were 6/- per 8 hour day. The youth was receiving £1 for a 50.5 hour week and Sunday work in addition. Both gardeners left, the elder becoming a builder's labourer, the younger an A.A. patrol man. Many others in the district has no alternative to accepting the lower wages.

Class

Class distinction had not relaxed perceptively since pre-war days, and it died hardest with the Church. In the 1930s maids at Churt Vicarage were expected to distinguish between callers, as to whom should be shown into the Study, whom the Parish Room and which should be kept on the doorstep. All this puzzled a 17 year old maid from Walsall. About that time a newly married couple from large Frensham business houses bought a large house in Churt. They were excellent tennis players but as one retired officer remarked "One cannot possibly invite them to play".

At functions held in the village hall and at Church Service a segregation existed akin to that now practised in South Africa between black and white. This applied elsewhere other than villages. At county cricket grounds paid players emerged from one entrance, gentlemen from another. At a representative match at Lords, Patsy Hendron, as the only "player" in the eleven walked alone on the ground to the sound of cheers.

If a man was born a gentleman a blind eye was cast on his faults. We had a couple of these in Churt during the '20s, spongers and owing money in many places. "I haven't my cheque book my good man".

Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves

About 1930 a homeless family from Kent was "on the road". The eldest girl of about 14 years and of a family of six called at my house selling wild flowers. My wife elicited the facts of their poverty and gave the girl a coat to wear. They settled that night in the derelict mill house and remained for a few weeks. They were much reviled and a great effort was made to remove them, but the house was outside the Surrey boundary and too distant for Alton to concern itself in the matter.

During the years that followed many homeless were moving from place to place. These people were distinct from the old time tramps. Just workless and homeless. Tramps and so called gypsies, not the genuine Romani, were common in earlier years. The war may have altered their way of life with its food shortages.

One old rascal of a tramp was picked up by the Headley policeman near our cottage on the Furze Hills. He followed him across the border following some apple-stealing from an orchard. Months later when he was round again selling some trifle or other, he told my mother that he had been taken to the policeman's home and given a good dinner before going to the police lock-up at Alton. This policeman's name was Milam and when after a long stay at Headley he was posted elsewhere, a successful appeal was made for his return by the village. Parts of Headley had a rough reputation and law and order had deteriorated after his departure. He would break up a drunken brawl but only charge a man if he became obstinate. Would cuff young hooligans, and drunks who were inoffensive would be put under cover for the night if he was unable to take them home. Serious crime seems to have been rare.

Roads

In 1920 the hill from Redhearn Green to the point where the hedgerow bears wide of the road, was widened and lengthened to give a more gradual rise to the hill. The peculiar bend, now existing, was made in order to preserve two oak trees, one on either side. These have long since died, killed no doubt by the vibration caused by heavy traffic. It was part of relief work made to ease the unemployment situation. As I was abroad at the time, the following information comes from my brother. After carting away soil from the high banks and paying for it to be deposited on private land, new soil was brought in to fill the place where the other should have been put. During the rolling the steam roller having passed down the hill, had to make the round of Star Hill and Lampard Lane before its next roll. All traffic including buses were also routed this way.

About three years later the road from Spring Ponds to Green Lane was widened easing at the same time the S bends which had existed. Much of the soil was put in the first dell of Green Lane, raising the road by as much as 12 feet.

Many years earlier the Farnham R.D.C. had asked Alton to share in a culvert at Simmonstone, but Alton had refused. Now Alton ventured to bring the matter forward but Farnham replied that the stream crossed the road beyond the county border. The stream had gradually eased more and more in that direction. Hence the ford remains.

Frensham Pond

The proprietor of the Pond Hotel when I was a young boy was Mr. Griffiths. He had a daughter, Peggy, about three years my senior. He was a dapper man with a wide waistband. I remember that on two occasions he gave my father half the carcass of a swan. The swans were killed for stuffing. The meat was coarse but made good soup. The rights of the pond were contained in the lease of the hotel which was part of the Pierpoint Estate.

About 1910 came a new proprietor Mr. Mercer who had two sons in their early twenty's, one of whom was completely deaf. He it was who first introduced motor boats to the pond. This having been brought to an end by the war, was not done again until the '30s when it brought a scathing reaction from certain nearby residents. Some protested regarding the noise, others because of disturbance to bird life, some both. Mr. Mercer must have left during the early war years, but returned to the neighbourhood 15 or 20 years later as landlord of the Halfway House at Bucks Horn Oak, where he died.

It was during this time at the hotel that an experimental water-plane was based at the pond. I believe this was in 1913. A canvas hanger covered it when on land and there was surprisingly little security about it. On water it was supported by hollow wooden floats with struts keeping the fuselage well above water level.

During the war years and into the 1920s there were various proprietresses. The house fell into disrepute, there were various prosecutions connected with it, and rumour had much to say. About 1920 a heavyweight boxer hailed as a future world champion made his headquarters there. He faded away, however, at about the age of 20. Bad living had overcome him. At a later date, around 1929 (January or February of that year were particularly severe), the hotel proprietor conceived the idea of charging for skating on the pond. Staff were sent out when a number of skaters were present and either one or two shillings charged. [I can remember the pond being frozen in 1963 when not only skaters were on the pond but cars were being driven across it].

Evans of Wishanger Lodge dammed the stream leading from the pond outlet to a point 50 yards or more above its overflow to the river. This flooded a water meadow creating a sizable pond. The idea was to encourage Waterfowl and marshbirds, particularly snipe and wild duck.

Summertime

In 1916 British Summertime was introduced. Few people in villages observed it during the first year and on farms the old time was kept for many years to come. The only consequence of the system in my view has been that all work has commenced one hour later than it did in the old days. In 1916 we commenced work during the summer months at 6.30 a.m. This meant my father and I left home at 5.45 a.m. The following year observing B.S.T. we commenced at 7 a.m. and worked to 5.30 p.m. Today with transport available the earliest for work to commence is 7.30 and mostly it is 8 o'clock. It is interesting to note that the fast business trains for London leave both Haslemere and Farnham at 9 a.m.

Carriers

The Chase was built about 1912. The first owner was Lady Mary Maynell who spent winter months in London. Hampers of vegetables and fruit were dispatched twice weekly to the London house. These were collected and taken to Farnham station by Frank Haylor, a one-time butcher and now the carrier from Farnham. Mondays and Fridays he made the round of Tilford, Pride of the Valley and then on to Frensham via the Jumps Road. His charge for bringing a girl's personal washing to her home in Churt and returning with clean laundry was 2d per week. He was a very jovial man and one of two carriers serving Churt.

The other was Mr. Silas Mullard who operated in Upper Churt and whose stables were on the site of the present Churt (Overtons) Garage. Both carriers had one horse high tilted vans. Mr. Mullard I believe did Farnham shopping for regular customers.

The Junior Army & Navy Stores of Aldershot thrice weekly made motor van deliveries in the district. Their store was huge for that time. Every Saturday five or six butchers' pony carts made the same round as did Frank Naylor. How they found it profitable is surprising. There were Fergusons, Ainslie, Alwyn, and Stratford as I recall. Also Heath of Frensham and Mitchell and Larcoombe of Grayshott, and Grinstead of Beacon Hill delivered in the Crossways area. This despite the presence of Marshalls shop which was where the Tuck shop was until recently. Stratford's cart was sign written with "By appointment to Empress Eugenie". Another cart was "By Royal Appointment to H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught".

I remember telling my mother that Alwyn's were selling legs of mutton for 5½d as I had seen it on the cart. I was told it meant 5½d per pound. Another inscription on a cart which puzzled me was "Late Munday" following the businessman's name. I thought they must be late with Monday's delivery but knew not how to spell the day of the week.

Coal merchants were common, all horse drawn. Logs were used mostly by cottagers – coal was 1/- per cwt. At Hindhead where coal came from Haslemere a thick-set red-faced coal man was on regular duty supplying the several hotels that then existed. His name Porky Morly. His dray was drawn by two horses with additional trace horses to bring him to the hill top. He was known to drop a few bags of coal at various cottages on the way. This was known and all efforts made to check the bags at the place of delivery, but as he shot his load he so manoeuvred the empty bags that when he delivered less than he should have done, he invited them to count the empties. They of course were correct.

Other Businesses

Joseph Marshall was the landlord of the "Pride of the Valley" [now Bel and the Dragon] as he had been for many years. He also sold pig meat and sometimes beef. The stables were later converted into a dining room and the stable yard provided room for further additions to the hotel. The stables housed six horses, two of which were heavy and did hire cart work. The others were carriage horses. Two Victorias [a low body, it had one forward-facing seat for two passengers and a raised driver's seat supported by an iron frame, all beneath a calash top and usually drawn by one or two horses] and a Landau [four seats for passengers, the front two facing back, usually with a separate groom's seat, sprung above and behind the rear axle] were for hire. Each summer when the Allens were in residence at Churt Lea (they wintered in Croydon) they were driven on Sundays to the Brethren Chapel at Batts Corner [Dockenfield], the carriages being hired from the P. of V.

The Chapel in question was kept into being by Mr. Allen and the Jessop brothers who owned the Batts Corner Stores and Post Office. There were elderly men with beards and always dressed in black clothes. They also had a small jam factory. Mr. H. M. Chester who at the time was County Councillor for the district, gave it to all in his constituency who cared to apply for it at Christmas, 2 lb. or 3 lb. of jam according to the number of children. Mr. Jessop was the supplier for Churt and Frensham. Mr. Chester lived at Seale.

With the coming of the war with its shortages of timber, the Scots Pine Woods which had been planted last century became valuable. Lumbermen were employed on the Whittaker estates and on the vast stretches of the Cubit estate bordering the Jumps Road and Crosswaters Lane [George Cubitt or Lord Ashcombe M.P. for West Sussex 1860-1885, lived at Denbies, Dorking]. At that time the High Jump was covered with fully grown pines. The timber was mostly used for pit props in the mines. Cut into lengths according to girth they would be stacked by the roadside and taken to rail by steam engine. Bigger bales of trees were drawn from the woods by trace horse, placed on a pole wagon and drawn away by big traction engines. The work was carried out by Gridleys of Godalming with local labour. The horses were stabled at the Pride of Valley.

Development

In 1920 a Mr. & Mrs. Wolfe arrived from Australia and bought Wood Lea and all the fields and woodland from Twyford Villa to Shant Lane (Hale House Lane) , and later Green Farm. Sheep farming was intended but it did not materialise. In 1924 Mr. Wolfe died. His wife built "Sunward", "Big Oak", "Rotherwood", "Inner Meadow" and some smaller properties and sold parcels of land for private building [these included my grandfather's house Fairfield and my father's house Ingledene now Foxwood, both built in the late 1920s]. Nevertheless she died penniless about 1937. Her son told me that the £20,000 which they had brought from Australia was all in the hands of two mortgages, both pillars of the church in Farnham. The old lady had lived an almost Spartan existence, was generous but shrewd, yet not shrewd enough to avoid the vultures which fastened on.

It was also just after the war years that Mr. David Lloyd George built Bron-y-de. Bolton and Paul were the contractors. One of the workmen, an electrician, was a communist. The arguments in the bar of the Pride between he and local men was amusing to listen to. During the next few years several farms were added to Stock Farm, his original purchase. Orchards sprang into existence and market gardening carried out extensively. A small shop was built near the Pride of the Valley for the local sale and lorries carried away crates of crops for wholesale and retail distribution. A pig farm was added to consume unsaleable crops. I believe that 40 men is a modest estimate of the number employed on the farms, as well as giving employment to many working in conjunction with it and at a time when unemployment was rife throughout the country. I may also mention that wages paid were far in excess of current farm wages of the time. Whilst Prime Minister, security guards came with him to Bron-y-de. These were accommodated at cottages and fed at the P. of V. An Alsatian and one of Maj. Richardson's Airedales were within the grounds. This was of course during the Irish troubles when Sir Henry Wilson was murdered. The Airedale was eventually given to the village constable who, because it was too vicious, passed it on to his brother who also found it unmanageable. A reporter who two years later heard a tale of the gift wrote a paragraph about it in the Daily Chronicle. The dog had been dead for two years.

Rushmoor

About 1932 a Mr. Saltmarsh, a Tilford postman, built his house in the angle of Sandy Lane – Tilford Road junction and called it “Rushmoor”. With the exception of “Vine Cottage”, then occupied by elderly Mr. Fred Cover, there were no houses nearer than the Georgian House “Claremont”. Within a short time, however, the whole triangular area between the two roads was divided into plots; and buildings were erected, gradually increasing in density. Sandy Lane was then indeed a sandy track. When later a sub-post office came into being, it was named Rushmoor. Possibly Mr. Saltmarsh influenced the Post Master. In later years the whole of Tilford Road (The Straight Mile) became so known and when it was a separate ward of Frensham [sic – should this be Churt?] Parish it took this name. If “Salty” were alive today I am sure that he could rightly say that he gave Rushmoor its name. He was a lively man and spoke to all he met. In 1924 he had a craze for politics and did electioneering on the round until the Postmaster heard of it. Later he turned to religion but not as a church goer and handed over tracts with the mail.

Further down Tilford Road houses were scattered: Old Mrs. Vickery’s cottage (she was in her 90’s when she died), Mr. Donald’s house “Eden Lodge” later to become the home of Mr. (later Lord Snowden) [Philip Snowden, 1st Viscount Snowden died 15 May 1937 at Eden Lodge] and the “Grange”. Opposite “Eden Lodge” and the “Grange” were “Moorside” and “Malbrech”, than a prep school. These two were the only houses on that side of the road after leaving the P. of V. The backwoods to the west of the road had at some time been divided into plots with roads dividing them although no attempt had been made to keep the roadways clear of heather and trees. A few buildings had been erected which were little more than shacks.

In this wilderness lived Mr. Pickford, a woodsman, selling firewood, posts etc. He was a character who once met, would never be forgotten. He did a bit of carrying with his horse and four wheeler and when his son became old enough to drive a lorry, allowed him and his wife to take over that side of the business. And right well did they succeed. They held a contract with the Railway for Churt and Tilford deliveries and did the rounds daily. Mrs. Pickford was frail in build and wore dark glasses because of failing eyesight. She had been a schoolmistress in her single days. It was surprising how easily she handled heavy goods. The charges were always moderate. They continued with the business until nationalisation of the railway [1 January 1948].

The long drive to “Lowicks” which is in Frensham was a made-up road. The first owners that I knew were Hornimans of the tea firm, and later Kervs.

I have not discovered when the Flashes were made [a flash is a pond created by subsidence but that is not the case here where it refers for a pond in a wet area]. The smaller of these two ponds was almost silted up more than fifty years ago and it was possible during dry spells to reach the island on dry ground. The other was a beautiful pond. The banks were firm and the islands dense with rhododendrons. It was four feet deep at the far corner and clean enough for swimming, there being no weeds to choke it. I think they may have been dug for the benefit of the occupants of a big house that existed near the present site of “Borrow House”.

Some people by the name of Anson lived there about the '80s, and previously an astronomer [Richard Christopher Carrington 1826-1875 famous for his discover of solar flares and determination of the Sun's rotation], who used the central "Jump" for his telescope and had a passage driven to the centre of the hill, lived there. He committed suicide after failing to discover what he sought [the inquest returned a verdict of 'sudden death from natural causes']. I forget the number of paces in the passage where one could walk in an upright position, then in a bended position, changing direction 90°, and then another 90° turn to the left. This brought one to what had been the point of observation but though this had been filled in with soil, by creeping through a hole on one's tummy quite a large cavern was discovered. The house in question was demolished before my time and the stone used to build "Bookhams".

In the grounds of "Borrow House" there is still a flat grass paddock. Before the First World War this was a cricket ground for Sunday afternoon matches. There were never sufficient players to make full teams and no records were ever kept. Among those who played were the Criddles, brothers West (Horace and Ken), Jesse Glaysher, Ern Harris and the Mardons [sic –Mardens]. The war brought it to a close.

Hatch Hill

Road Farm was converted from a farmhouse about 1910, after the death of Mr. Pritchard of Llanover. My great uncle [Stephen Croucher 1837-1914] who was the younger brother of my grandfather, and was also grandfather to Ernest Croucher [1910-1986] the builder, had occupied the farm house as bailiff to Mr. Pritchard. Bucklands was built about the same time for a member of the peerage, With the exception of the cottages a little further on, they were the only houses this side of Beacon Hill Park.

Whitmoor

The hill into Whitmoor Valley was rutted and boulder strewn, as was Kitts Hill, and the road onwards to Grayshott only kept usable by those who used it, with the hill into Grayshott another rutted affair.

Not many years before he died, Harry Chandler told me his father had been offered a big strip of ground where the Hatch and Brachen are, in exchange for a smaller cultivated piece in the valley. He refused because of the nature of the ground and the distance from his house [I assume Chandler's Cottage]. Much of the valley originally only had squatters' rights [adverse possession – a dwelling built and land enclosed without the licence of the legal owner]. The Enclosure Act [1845 – see A Time of Change by Gillian Devine 2005] lost an acre or so to some dwellers, and much of the other was bought later by Mr. Pritchard and Mr. Whittaker.

The Village

During the time of mass unemployment in the 1930s, Mr Bridgman, a staunch non-conformist, bought land in various places in order to build houses and thus relieve the situation as far as he was able. During this period he built the three houses between Pipers Well and Threeways. He also built Daneswood, Foresters and Meadow Cottage in Hale House Lane. Earlier he built the shops of the chemist and newsagent; that was about 1928 and for a time the news agency was conducted for him. It was the first time daily papers were sold from a shop in Churt. Earlier a young fellow from Tongham had delivered papers from a motor cycle and Sunday papers had long been obtainable from a Haslemere man who cycled to various points on a Sunday with them. Mr. Harry Massey had also a very wide area to cover with newspapers on Sundays and for many years the newsagents shop did no Sunday deliveries.

In 1920-21 the Parkhurst Cottages were built. They were our first council houses and were built as a result of directives from the government. This was the Coalition Government, led by Mr. Lloyd George. As time went on many cottages and farmhouses were converted into weekend residences for large houses. At some time or other my father and I were able to count more than thirty (exact number forgotten) which had been lost to cottagers. It is true that some had been vacant for a long time and others were in a bad state of disrepair, but it left a shortage of dwellings. In 1934 the Green Lane council houses were built to relieve the shortage. It is interesting to remember that the contracts to build a pair of these were less than £800.

During the 1930s the policy of the council was to prevent ribbon development, but, in my opinion, in practice they defeated their own purpose. Houses could be built only at one per acre, so that instead of having a group of houses, a small community, houses were scattered along road frontages. The result is that today many houses have grounds which are a liability rather than an asset, and which have become very neglected. In building Green Leas, Moor Ponds and Minaford, the late George Mullard was compelled to buy more land than he wished.

In the late 1940s after the passing of the Town and County Planning Act a Ministry Census of all housing was made. An official called at every house to ascertain the facts. The official who called at my house remarked that it and the nearby dwellings should not have been built as it was creating future slums. My wife asked about the council houses which still had earth closets which were emptied at night by council workmen. His reply was that these would be brought into line, but it was not until the 1960s that this was done. [I can remember the "stink wagons" doing the council houses – we had a flushing toilet but it was outside. There was no bathroom or hot running water until about 1953]. Lack of running hot water supply was considered by him to be a shocking affair.

List of Buildings and Occupants in Churt in the 1908 period. In a few cases a change of occupant was made a few years earlier or later. Houses between Claremont and the Grange were unknown to me. [This list is useful as it is midway between the 1901 and 1911 censuses].

Hale House Lane	Occupier	Hindhead and Tilford Road	Occupier	Green Lane, Crosswater and Old Kiln Lane.	Occupier
Hale House	Mr Tyrill	Churt Wynd		Keepers Cottage	
Squirrels 1	Alfred Matthews	Stock Farm	Mr Hawkins	Green Cross Farm	James Mayhew
Squirrels 2		Stock Farm Cottage 1	Mr Chiverton	Green Cross Cottage	Mr. Voller
Spring Cottage	Mr Mancy	Stock Farm Cottage 2	James Alderton	Farm Cottage 1	William Hack
Outmoor Farm	Mtr Titford	Hiawatha 1	Allen Matthews	Farm Cottage 2	William Taylor
Outmoor Cottage 1	Mr Bantock	Hiawatha 2	Harry Wheeler	Mayhews Farm	William Weeks
Outmoor Cottage 2	Frank Martin	Pride of Valley	Joseph Marshall	Green Farm	Mr. Birchett
Woodhanger	J Vince	Vine Cottage	James Cover	Crosswater Barn	Mr. Wassell
Oak Cottage	Mr West	Claremont		Crosswater Cottage	Thomas Larby
Beech Cottage	James Marden	Marchants Farm		Crosswater Farm	Joseph Baker
Moor Cottage	Ken West	Hyde Farm	Mr Hawkins	Old Workhouse	Mrs Unwin
Varnholds	Silas Mullard			Croft Cottage	Wilfred Harris
Bookhams Cottage 1		Jumps Road		Forge Cottage 1	Mrs Karn
Bookhams Cottage 2		Michalmas Cottage 1	John Bacchrs	Ford Cottage 2	Andrew Karn
Broom Cottage		Michalmas Cottage 2	Mr Holden	Vicarage	Rev. A W Watson
Mount Pleasant Shop	Mrs Heath	Silverbec Lodge	Mr Pope	Redhearne Cottage	
		Silverbec	Allen Hook	Podmoor	Misses Ditton
Frensham Road		Sandbrow	Mrs Cromton	Old Kiln Cottage 1	George Taylor
Pond Cottage	Mr Macrae	Twyfrod Villa	Henry Matthews	Old Kiln Cottage 2	
Churt House	Disney	Woodlea	Mr Thomas	Larch field	
Inglenook	Miss Wynne	Whitcroft	Mr Allardyce		
Chimney Corner	William Deadman	Rose Cottage	Nancy Wheeler	Hatch Hill	
Wayside 1	Mr Clark	High Jump	Betsy Wheeler	Crossways Inn	George Shrubbs
Wayside 2	Stephen Larby	Fir Lodge 1	Mr Dopson	School House	William Rankine
Wayside 3	Arthur Mitchell	Police	Mr Boxall	Grocery Shop	Charles Carter
Wayside 4	Mrs Hammond	Moorside 1	Mr Smith	Butchery	Charles Marshall
Wayside 5	William Mitchell	Moorside 2	Mrs Deadman	Rosemead	J Ellistone
Wayside 6	Mrs Smith	Pink Cottage	Miss Deadman	Parkhurst Cottage 1	Frederick Cover
Wayside 7	Frederica Martin	Churt Lea	James Allen	Parkhurst Cottage 2	Mrs Smith
Post Office	Thomas Martin	Jumps House	Mr Criddle	Butts Farm	Mr Peppercorn
Beefolds	Bryan Hook	Prairie Cottage	Featherstonehauch	Jubilee Cottage 1	Arthur Chuter
Redhearn	Mrs Stallard	The Ceders	Mr Portice	Jubilee Cottage 2	William Dopson
The Bakery	Joseph Razell	Pride Cottage	Mrs Hammond	Hiilside	Mrs Anson
Cherry Tree Cottage	Will. Matthews			Hitchen Croft	Mr Watridge
		Lampard Lane		Road Farm 1	Stephen Croucher
Whitmoor Vale		Barford House	Col. Findley	Road Farm 2	James Harris
Kitts Farm	Albert Hurchings	Barford Lodge	Mr Randall	Mayhews Cottage 1	Mr Triggs
Barracks 1	William Croucher	Ivy House	Mr Jennings	Mayhews Cottage 2	
Barracks 2	Joseph Lee	Chinton Hanger	Capt. Morris	Hatch Hill Cottage 1	Mr White
Barracks 3	James Wood	Hanger Stables	James Glaysher	Hatch Hill Cottage 2	George Steel
Barracks 4	Ann Glaysher				
Cane's Cottage	Mr Cane	Furze Hills			
Meadow Cottage		Furze Hill	Rev C G Bond		
Spring Cottage		Furze Cottage 1	Mr Paine		
Chandler's Cottage	Mr Chandler	Furze Cottage 2	Mr Stonnard		
Purchase Farm	Charles Deadman	Stream Cottage	Mr Mullard		
Stream Farm	Daniel Crawte	Heath Bugalow	Mr George		
		Yew Tree Cottage	Mrs Harris		
		Copse Cottage	James Croucher		