

## Churt in Late 19<sup>th</sup> to Early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 ate 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 19<sup>th</sup>, 1860. Edward's date of birth was October 30<sup>th</sup> 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 builders 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 redhearne 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), 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. 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]. 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 how 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 non 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 meets, 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” and 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 11<sup>th</sup> at Pond Cottage where he had lived for 35 years to a day, He had moved to the house on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1870. October 11<sup>th</sup> 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 was 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



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.

### 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

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 his 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 Bafolds (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 well digger 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 her 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 stickymess 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 late 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 5<sup>th</sup>, 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 bottom of Star Hill]

To be continued.