PLUCKLEY

Pluckley as I remember it can have changed very little for about two hundred years. Almost all of it was owned by the Dering family, now impoverished and reduced to living in Sheerland House while the Mansion, Surrenden Dering, was let to Mr. Winans whose family had amassed a fortune building railways in Russia.

The Dering Estate was administered by my father, A.J.B., and before him by his father Alfred Joe Burrows. Father held the reins firmly in his benevolent and capable hands. He ruled without fear or favour but certain decisions had to be referred to Sir Henry, a morose individual as I remember him, who served in the Boa War. He had a heavy, purlish face and believed himself to be descended from Saxon land-owners.

There was of course the vast Park, the Jacobean faced Mansion built 1638, enormous walled Kitchen Garden, a mile-long Avenue connecting the Mansion and the Church, lodges, cottages, dairies, vast stone-built stables and coach houses which in our time housed Mr. Winans's trotting horses and riding horses. He was said to pay a fixed price of £100 for any horse he bought, saying he then knew that £100 worth was represented by each new acquisition. The stud groom, Stillwell, on great occasions such as a Polo Game (when the tenantry were invited to the Park) donned flamboyant Russian attire and drove a Troika at a tremendous pace, himself standing upright in his glory. Stillwell and Mr. Winans drove in the park in a Trotting Wagon, until Stillwell became too fat to fit into the small seat.

Pluckley was an almost isolated community six miles from Ashford and the only communication was by train from Pluckley Station, 2 miles down the hill from the village. Return fare I think elevenpence. The alternative was the carrier's cart, a slow progress from farm to farm lasting several hours and costing, I think, twopence. The passengers sat on boards, facing one another, at the back of the covered cart. Journeys I believe Tuesdays and Saturdays.

ST NICHOLAS

In the village the Church dominated the scene. An irregular open space was shaded on the east by a vast elm tree. A cobbled lane led past a cluster of dark crowded cottages to the Church gate. The Church itself was well attended, (only working class people went to the evening service) and custom decided that engaged couples should declare their status by attending evening service together and sharing a hymn book. An organ hand-pumped very noisily gave warning when the sermon was drawing to a close. Men and boys formed the choir.

Ness says one of the Choir Men always left before the end of the service to empty the Post Office Pillar Box.

The big square Dering Chapel with a stove, dark blue velvet hangings and upholstery contained many marble memorials to Derings dead and gone. The Dering family could be glimpsed in their splendid isolation through the dark carved screen and their doings and apparel were widely noticed and commented.

The Black Horse (the Dering crest) commanded the village. An impressive, rather beautiful solid building, the west part adapted as a house for the Schoolmaster. In our time the Landlord was Sergeant Rump who conducted a very private and select Drill Class one afternoon a week in the Village School. This was organised for the Derings and their friends the ~~Gushing~~ FOSTLING Murrays of The Moat, Charing, the Sayers family once of Pett Place but now in reduced circumstances. Six girls and no heir. We were allowed to join and Miss Allen or Miss Wallington (the Dering's Governess) played the piano. We had dumb-bells and Indian clubs and performed under the direction of Sergeant Rump, Landlord of the Black Horse, resplendent in white flannels with a gorgeous silk scarf round his waist. He had a red face and a dark moustache waxed to sharp points.

Opposite the Black Horse stood the Butcher, (Homewood) and on the west side the village shop and Post Office. Henry Evenden, Lena's father, owned the shop and his brother (? George) presided over the drapery part, on the right. Groceries were on the left. Boots, pots and pans and

almost all the daily needs of the village could be bought there, though some said they saved money by paying the 11d. rail fare and shopping in Ashford. We used to be able to buy with our weekly penny pocket money four separate quarter yards of baby ribbon for trimming doll's clothes.

Up stone steps (or were they Bethersden marble) to the Baker's shop - here bread and sticky buns were sold and sometimes milk twists a sort of fancy bread and flead cakes (flead was a special sort of lard).

Sweet shop at top of Forge Hill, run by a consumptive called Weeks. We were never allowed to buy there. With most sweets unwrapped I wonder how many were infected.

The Windmill was working in 1909. It stood on the very crest of the Hill, on the Egerton side of the village, in a fine commanding position. It was a great treat to be taken there by Father especially when the Mill was working and the enormous sweeps came flailing round with a rushing sound of irresistible power. We could glimpse huge beams flour-coated wheels and cogs mysteriously rotating and making the whole solid structure quiver. Sacks of grain and flour stood about. The Windmill was approached by a lane from the Egerton Road and by a track from Forge Hill or on foot by steps (of Bethersden marble) and a foot path almost opposite the Black Horse.

The slopes of the Windmill Hill were wonderful for tobogganing in a snowy winter.

The village school was I suppose attended by all the children up to 14 or was it 12.

Then came a dilapidated rambling building called The Rookery where lived the very poor, in tenements, Mrs. Heathfield among them.

Eli Adams the builder had his house and yard near the entrance of The Rectory drive and Tom Cachett, the one-legged cobbler, worked in a wooden hut nearby. In summer he was employed breaking stones for road repairs, sitting crosslegged on a heap of flints by the roadside wearing wire goggles to protect his eyes and cracking flints with a hammer. A

cheerful soul. In hop picking time it was he who stitched up the hop pockets after the pressing.

Down Forge Hill, in a row of very poor cottages built up against the bank, lived the Kettles, a very needy and numerous family. Mrs. Kettle had "buried five". The eldest girl, Vicky, was about my age and we liked her. The parents were hard working and scrupulously clean. Mrs. Kettle always gave threepence when we were sent round to collect for the Hospital and when we thanked her always said "You're welcome".

On the left hand side going down stood The Forge, a wonderful place to watch, bellows, anvil, furnace, horses waiting to be shod. Blackman made our iron hoops which we found very difficult to manage with the skid. I believe he saved 2/6 a week for years and succeeded in buying a pair of cottages, intending to live in one on retirement, his income being the rent of the other. Alas for the Rent Restrictions Act.

The Estate workshop lay at Sheerland. Opposite us the Paint Shop once caught fire in the middle of the night and John Homewood pedalled furiously into Ashford, 6 miles in 20 minutes, to fetch the Fire Brigade. The engine eventually arrived at a gallop, drawn by the cab horses from the Saracen's Head. The fire blazed so fiercely that next day we found lumps of glass molten together with nails embedded.

We, (Ness Lois and I) were roused and dressed and told to wait in the nursery while Nurse and Mother packed clothes and the most important papers from Father's office. The ivy on our house was well hosed to prevent the house catching fire from flying sparks.

The cook is said to have sat rocking to and fro crying "We're doomed, we're doomed".

Each of the cowls of the six kiln coast proudly bore the Dering Black Horse. It was a magnificently solid building of dressed stone (as were all the farm buildings). On the upper floor a great hall which the roundels surrounded. There were the presses over trap doors in the floor from which the pockets were hung on stray-webbing. The dried hops were

shovelled across the floor by huge canvas sweeps with a lovely swishing sound, the floor black and shiny with resin. When the pocket was as full as it would hold, a heavy weight was spun down and then wound down by hand. The weight was released, sprung up and more hops shovelled in and again pressed. When no more hops could be forced in, the stout jute webbing supporting the pocket was wound up, by hand, until the top stood about 12 inches above the floor. Then Tom Cackett would shuffle himself over and with a needle the size of a skewer would sew up the pocket. At last it was released from the webbing and allowed to fall to the storage space below to be stamped by stencil with the Black Horse. Father said in his youth no hop press, but a man trod the hops in the pockets and had more and more hops shovelled on top of him.

The furnaces under the kilns were stoked with coke and sticks of sulphur and the men who tended the fires, the hop dryers, worked day and night to keep the temperature in the kilns even and the fire burning steadily. They dozed on ~~stove bricks~~ STONE BENCHES in a sort of tunnel, lighted I think only by the glow from the fires or perhaps a candle or two. Once in each season a special supper of beef puddings was taken out to them from our house.

The air was sulphurous all the hop season, but we never minded it.

Part of the ground floor of the oast building accommodated the Estate Carpenter's shop. Here worked Baker, the estate carpenter, wearing a brown paper cap exactly like Mr. Chips in Happy Families. His shop was a fascinating place littered with lovely ringlets of shavings and pervaded by the scent of new wood, glue and paint. I think he made the gates and waggons for the Estate and painted them. As a favour he made our tobaggans. We called him "Painter Baker".

The Estate Bricklayer was named Pack, a shortish red-headed man with a family of sons apprenticed to him in turn - we used to call them "Packets". The proper title of a bricklayer's apprentice was "a cad" and we used to say ""There goes Pack and his cad".

Near the main Farm Buildings (again of stone with a rather splendid stone archway) stood the Estate saw mill presided over by the engineer Tom Wise. He wore I think a blue boiler suit and lived in a square stone cottage at Brown Mill Hill. Immense circular saws revolved at alarming speeds and cut up tree trunks into planks of various thicknesses. ~~Yearly~~ NEARBY hop wash was made, a mixture of soft soap and quassia, for spraying hops. I do not remember the ~~last~~ CART Horse stables but they must have been in the range of stone buildings near the arch and the stack yard.

The approach to Sheerland House ran between the Piggeries on the right and the Bull pens on the left and great was the scorn on the faces of cockaded coachmen and grooms as they conducted carriages and pairs bearing aristocratic visitors to Sheerland House.

(The bulls were led out for exercise by the stockmen, a ring in the bull's nose attached to a long pole held nervously by the stockman).

Employment in Pluckley was almost entirely dependent on agriculture. Apart from that, what was there to do? The Postman, the roundsmen from the shops, the roadmen and quite a number of labourers employed at the Brickworks near the Station. Ned Pile, Lottie's son, went for a soldier. Some of the girls went into service, one to Victoria Hotel, St. Leonards, where she was employed all day long standing in front of a stove making toast. She is reported to have had two beautiful hot dinners a day.

Many cottages sent their Sunday dinners to be baked at the Bakers.

For the women there was hop-tying and of course, in its season, hop-picking. There was much pride among the hop-tyers. They would do about a hundred hills and then go home, for fear of being thought greedy. Mrs. Heathfield, wearing a man's cap and a sacking apron, supported herself by shaving hop-poles before they were dipped in the tank of tar. Lottie Pile, daughter of old Ned and mother of yonng Ned used to come washing for us, as did Mrs. Miles, Mrs. Weller, wife of the carrier, used to iron and starch and "get up" Father's stiff collars, using a round iron and polisher. I think she also washed and ironed the best long linen damask

table-cloths.

Mrs. Wise understood (TOOK) dressmaking. She lived in one of the stone cottages beyond our paddock. Her cottage was always warm, shining and spotless and she used to cut us flowers from her garden when we were sent up with the message "Father would like to see Mr. Benton when he is at liberty". (Benton lodged with Mrs. Wise). Mrs. Wise is said to have been the daughter of an Italian count, a friend of Sir Edward Dering. She had large dark eyes and hair parted in the middle and drawn smoothly back to a bun. Later, Miss Ellis established herself at ~~Fri~~ (F/R) Toll and Daisy Wise (Mrs. Wise's grand-daughter) was apprenticed to her. Daisy had red hair and would sometimes be summoned to play with us. Peter teased her un-mercifully because she could not sound her Hs or say "bow and arrow". He would call out (when reprimanded) "My bow and ARROH".

An innovation I remember was the grubbing of the Hop garden opposite Sheerland and the planting of cherry trees. While the cherries were young gooseberry bushes were planted between them and in these bushes I used sometimes to find linnet's nests when I went out with Father before breakfast.

In the paddock between our garden and Mrs. Wise Ness was once knocked down by a donkey and bitten on the arm.

Other Residents in Pluckley

Ted and Willie Maylam at Malmains

Lucy and Mary Maylam at Thorn House

The Evendens at Luckhurst

The Miss Tukes at Rectory Cottage

Colonel and Mrs. Cheesman at Little Chart

He wore a grey frock coat and a grey stove pipe hat and always had one arm (left) across his back. Gertie Cheesman was said to have "gone to the bad".

Luke Langley at Little Chart. He was some sort of Education Inspector and in the course of his duties called at Sheerland to assure himself

that we were receiving ~~i~~nstruction.

Blind Mr. Porter who came round selling tea. He lived near the station.

The Cornes family, Mary Jane and Ada Sarah.

The Small family ? came from Cornwall.

Jean Pentecost (a friendly girl) Vashti Watts

Bourne the shepherd lived at Lodge Gate.

Little Chart had about 8 children, including one mentally deficient.

The Miss Phillips's at Little Chart Forstal

Old Mrs. Cullen (once at Saracens) Ness says she took opium, (so said Miss Pullen of Little Burton)

Mrs. Baldock. Her Father in law had been hanged for sheep stealing (Nees)

Dr. Waite set up practice at ~~Tpt~~ FIR Toll and Mrs. Waite became a friend of Mother's. There son, Derry, was a half-wit.

Belle Ballard told Mother "Daddy has not returned Dr. Waite's call as he considers him an intruder".

The Beaucleres.) He was I think related to the Duke of St. Albans
) at Rose Court and
The Bautelers) Rose Cottage

The Beauclere's had some sort of connection, not altogether respectable, with Eastwell Park, who was Cyril's father?

The Homewoods. He I think was a sort of bailiff. She a mid-wife. John, the son, later chauffeur to the Derings. On the occasion of THE FIRE he bicycled into Ashford in 20 minutes to summon the Fire Brigade.

Tom ~~Skea~~ SKEER and his wife lived in the cottage next the Homewoods. He was a weather prophet and a curer of warts.

(Ness I think we must have watched the fire from the night-nursery window, as I remember Elk, very bravely, ran upstairs and rescued our money boxes from the nursery mantlepiece. Lois and I did admire her courage)

I remember seeing Father and Sir Henry throwing buckets of water on our cow shed roof, opposite, to prevent the thatch catching light. When the alarm was given, the first thing they did was to get the cows out of the shed.

When the fire was out the firemen were given breakfast and Mother said they ate a whole ham.

ROSE

At a children's outdoor party at More Court the Bateler dog fought

LOIS the Beauclere's dog. The NURSES said that the girls laughed and the boys cried. Anthony Dering said "Cyril cried so I had to cry".

Haymaking

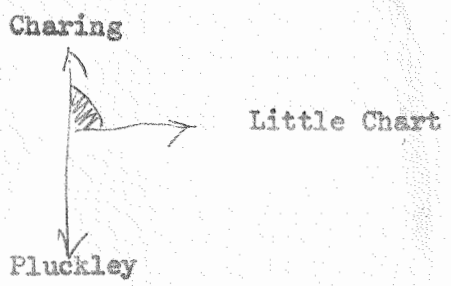
Once a year Mother gave tea to the women who turned the hay - always

NESS the same field, just beyond Bourn's cottage, to the left, over a hill. The hay was stacked in the Stackyard near Sheerland House, and we, plus all the tea, would ride down in an empty hay cart. Once a child got burned by overturning a cup of tea, and mother put on CARRON oil.

Roads

The surface was of flints, broken up small by a roadman sitting crosslegged on a long pile of flints on the verge of the road. He would wear wire goggles to protect his eyes. Tom Cackett often did this work. The flints were roughly levelled, topped with gravel, well watered, then rolled by a steam roller. When the roller was working, a man was always there ready to lead carriage horses past the terrifying monster. Of course white dust coated everything in the summer hence the pleached limes to shelter gardens bordering the roads and the dust coats we wore in summer and light linen rugs to cover our knees.

Where the road from Pluckley to Charing joined the road from Little Chart stood a clump of trees known as The Pincushion.



We were told that in days gone by, near this spot, a violent maniac had lived chained to an oak tree.

Class Distinctions were sharp and were universally recognised.

I remember Mrs. Evenden saying, rather tearfully, to Mother "Though I have married into trade, I am a lady and shall behave as such". The Evendens and Maylams did not come to any of our parties.

Shopping

The village provided most of our day-to-day needs and an expedition to Ashford almost all the rest. James and Kitha supplied most of what Miss Ellis or Mrs. Wise could not make.

Drapers' prices usually ended with eleven pence three farthings. An article would not be marked £1 but 19/11¾ (pronounced mineteen and eleven three). To squeeze the last possible mite of profit, change was not given in the form of a copper farthing but a little paper of pins or something of the sort (about 6 pins). I believe this practice was later made illegal.

Ashford Shops

Waghorn the butcher in Middle Row.

Paine Smith the confectioner. They had a tea room upstairs with marble topped tables. Also a "Ladies".

Headley. Grocer

Goulden and Wind. Lending Library

Bacon's Toy Shop. Had a whole shelf of penny toys.

James & Kitha Drapers. Here I was fitted out to go away to school. I remember a coat and skirt in crushed strawberry colour and a hat to match lined under the brim with black velvet.

Occasionally we went to Rankin at Little Chart for honey.

Pilcher's the Shoe Shop. Pilcher was a dapper little man, rather like a cock sparrow. An open fire in the fitting-room.

Stedmans the Chemists. Two brothers, utterly unlike, one handsome and very well turned out, usually in a good navy blue suit, the other like a caricature of a scientist, I think in a white coat. He wore

spectacles and rather untidy hair surrounded his bald patch.
Almost always there was some rare wild flower on their counter, often an orchid from Wye Down.
Maypole for tea and margarine, then a novelty confectionery Bazaar in Bank Street. Excellent walnut toffee.