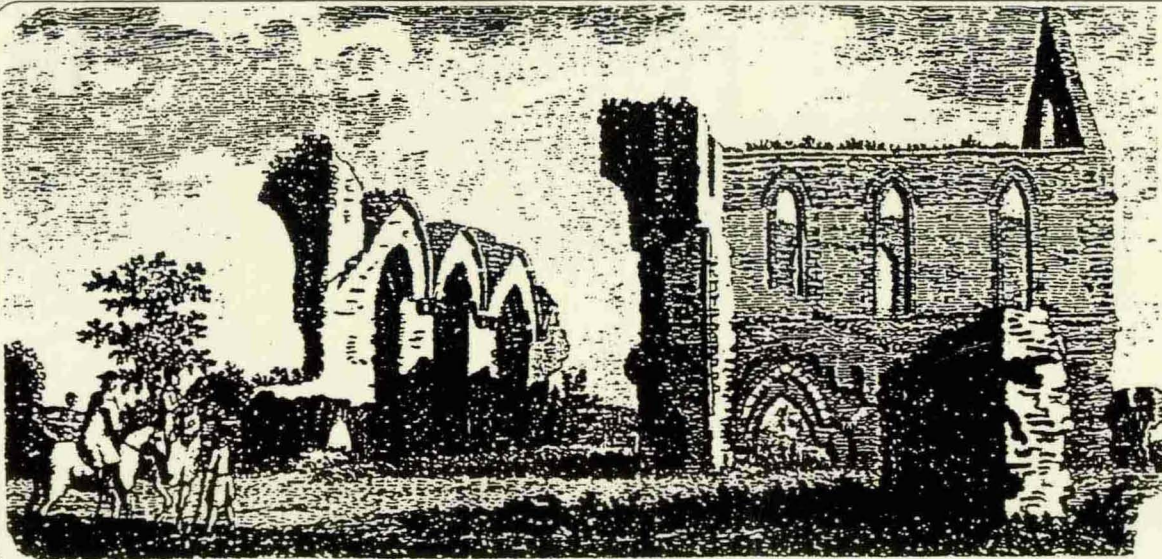


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Send & Ripley History Society

FOUNDED 1975 AS SEND HISTORY SOCIETY

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NEWARK PRIORY

Journal Volume 6 No. 201

July/Aug 2008



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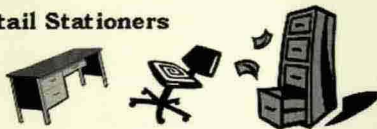
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Cover photo: The Keep House, Send Marsh Road. (Old Mill ?) c1910. From S&RHS *Then and Now*, page 76. See article on page 2.

Editor's Comment

This is the quiet month for the Journal. The holiday season is upon us and our thoughts turn away from the past to matters of the moment; exploring pastures new, school fetes, village festivals and/or the garden and perhaps a barbecue. For me, the best of both worlds was served when I visited Woodchurch in Kent on Saturday 12th July, the birthplace of my father. An offshoot of the local history society – Woodchurch Ancestors Group (WAG) held a bi-annual exhibition of their members work. The theme of the exhibition was *Woodchurch in 1871*. Based upon the census return, ordnance survey maps and photographs, the members had performed the very difficult task of identifying premises and their occupants. They brought to life the village and its inhabitants, showing where they lived and their occupations. They went further by constructing family trees and relating these to the families shown on the census and providing histories of the buildings in which they lived. It was not surprising to learn that the village of Woodchurch in 1871 with its 700 inhabitants was virtually self-supporting. It had a builder (who also made coffins) a butcher who bought meat off the hoof and slaughtered it behind the shop, a baker who bought his flour from the windmill at the top of the hill, a shoe repairer, a doctor, two schools with their headmasters and teachers and two churches with a Rector at the Anglican church and a Minister at the Methodist church. There were several farms and farmhouses in the village (some with Oast-Houses), a village policeman and at least three pubs. In fact everything that was needed was on hand. It was a very informative and enjoyable day particularly for many who discovered relations they were unaware of and for the local inhabitants a greater understanding of the village's history. Perhaps our Society could attempt a similar study based upon the later 1881 or 1891 census returns?

Send Marsh – Remembered

Kyra Somerfield

In the latter days of WWII, Send Marsh could have been described only as a 'hamlet'. Certainly, it did not have its own church and as a resident of this rather scattered settlement it was often difficult to decide whether one owed allegiance to Send or to Ripley. Conveniently, the 436 London Transport 'bus served either direction on a regular basis and in any case, both villages were within convenient walking distance.

From the old A3, London-Portsmouth Road at Send Dip, a minor road turned down past Highlands Farm*, home of Mr and Mrs Dooley. Continuing onwards and down to the marshy area after which the settlement would first have been named - meandering along what must have been chosen as the driest route in centuries past. The ancient Saddler's Arms provided a welcome place of refreshment for travellers and local workers alike - as it does to this day.



Highlands Farm c1910

To me, as a small child, it was the magical place where I went to select my very first pet kitten from its sacking 'nest' among the wooden barrels, eagerly visiting and re-visiting the little creature until at 8 weeks it was allowed to come home with me –I was advised to butter its paws! In my early teens during long summer evenings, I would earn pocket money there by picking black, red and white currants in the pub's spacious garden for the princely sum of 6d a pound -(two and a halfpence a half kilo in today's metric world), with the addition of a jar or two of jam at the end of the season as a bonus!



An undated postcard view of the Manor House showing elm trees just felled.

The splendid, historic, redbrick Manor House still dominates the view across the triangular green. For most of my childhood years this area consisted of rough tussocks of cocksfoot grass with only a small section of it providing land level enough for games but a perfect location for the annual Bonfire Night celebrations. Several ancient elm trees formed a quaint cluster near the 'bus stop corner opposite Send Marsh Stores, which for so many years was the focal point for local shoppers. The welcoming trees were such wonderful places for hide-and-seek games and shelter from summer rains. Climbing up inside their hollow trunks to perch in the top-most rims was a rite of passage for most children in the area. Some time during the early 60's they disappeared. Was this the final coup-de-grace of Dutch Elm disease or the first dire utterances of the Health and Safety brigade I wonder?

During term time, at 8.35am children would gather at the 'bus stop opposite Manor Road and beside the garden fence of Comer Cottage to catch the 436 (Staines service). From Tuckey Grove, Send Road (Send Marsh Road) and Manor Road we would all congregate on the pathway to chat and peer around Two Oaks corner awaiting its arrival. It was, even then, a busy road and we'd watch the passing traffic with especial fascination for the lorries travelling at speed from Hall's Sand Pits along Papercourt Lane. They were relentless and purposeful in their journeys. Probably paid on 'piece work' and engaged in supplying sand for reparations during and after the war and the house-building explosion that was then in progress. Sand piled high by huge dredger grabs, they would speed away to their destinations with curtains of water flowing from the lorry tailgates. Later, clattering conveyer-belts with hopper storage and loading systems were used to reduce this wake and supply dry loads of building sand. The purchasers must have been much happier too!

Children attending Send Schools would climb aboard the double-decker 'bus and, along with workers and early morning shoppers, travel to their appointed stops. For us that would be May's Comer. Although it was only a short journey there was plenty to see. Dairy cows in the fields at Alderton's Farm, a peep through the willows at Goodgrove, the mysterious, almost 'ginger-bread' like house where Mr. (Jim) French lived. Workers cycling to Mr. A W Secrett's farm and at a glance over the hedges, those who'd already reached the fields, were either hand-hoeing vegetables or guiding the pair of horses trailing their tilling equipment in purposeful manner. The one-penny journey seemed over too soon and we'd jump off the 'bus and run up the hill towards Send C of E Primary school.**

Just post war, I clearly remember seeing a couple of white goats grazing the banks near the entrance to Bush Lane and when Sandfields Estate was being built, the former pasture lands for cattle disappearing under new house-building. Much of the labouring work at the time was being done by German Prisoners of War. To the horror of some, I would take them apples and plums to eat - with which they were delighted. Each time I stopped to talk they had learned new English words and phrases and even then I was aware that they seemed as relieved at war's end as we were. They always thanked this little blue-eyed, flaxen-haired girl with gratitude and courtesy!

School days under the tutorage of Mrs Somerfield, Miss Palmer, Miss Rhodes and Miss Perrin were really happy ones for most of us I'm sure. Beset by shortages of every kind - which lasted for a number of post war years also, we nevertheless emerged with a well-rounded education from a friendly environment full of anticipation for the future. I must have liked it or why else would I have gone back to teach there in 1958 some ten years later?

At the end of the school day, up to 44 children would quietly stand in each room. 'Hands together, eyes closed - *O Lord support us all the day long of this troublous life*' after this prayer the children would spill out of class and spread homewards in all directions. The down-Send-hill journey was faster. Penny fare in hand for the 'bus, but the decision was often made to walk back to Send Marsh and save that precious coin - especially if the weather was kind for there were so many interesting things to do. Float sticks on the millstream (opposite Secrett's barn), running beside the watercourse to follow their progress. The entrance to 'Mill House' (also known as the *Old Keep House*. editor) was over a tiny wooden plank bridge. I recall the house was fire damaged some years ago whilst undergoing restoration. The mill itself had long gone. We collected wild flowers to press for the school competition; looked for birds' nests; befriended dogs and leant over the gate to see the cows going in for milking at Alderton's Farm (before the Shiltons bought it). By the time the long, dark holly-hedge boundary of Boughton Hall was reached, the Ripley 'bus would drive by, which sometimes acted as a prompt to speed up lest a worried mother would be found at home possibly waiting for me to do a chore-run to Send Marsh Stores (opposite Corner Cottage), for odd items of shopping, ration book in hand for Mr. or Mrs. Balcombe to take the tokens required for appropriate groceries.



The late forties and early fifties did not seem to bring great changes to the place. Individual houses were built. Light industry too - the green painted 'egg factory' which, I believe, was an early form of battery house production, later to become Ben Turner, Ferguson Tractor dealers. The site of another wonderful 'playground' and source of blackberries, Norcon concrete products flourished as did the sand pits until they were deemed to have been 'worked out' - certainly there was little room for further expansion. Gradually, industry was exchanged for further residential growth. More infilling took place as formerly productive gardens and orchards were sacrificed for the valuable 'crop' of building plots. New estates spread outwards from the original access routes, up and into the coppices and along marshy fields. Small boats nestle on the tranquil sand-pit waters to-day and to see or hear the echoes of those lorries you'll have to watch the film "Hell Drivers" when next it appears on the small screen!

Is Send Marsh still a hamlet? I'll leave you to decide. KJS.

Addendum by Kyra Somerfield:

I was born and brought up at Manor Road, Send Marsh and attended Send Primary School when Miss Perrin was the headmistress and her sister Mrs. Sybil Somerfield was my very first teacher in the infant's class. This was during the latter part of WWII when paper was still so short that slates were used instead. After attending Guildford County Grammar School I studied Education at Brighton and London Universities and returned to Send when appointed as a teacher at the same school and under/with numerous same staff again! I had the 'temerity' to marry Stella Perrin's nephew, Nick and my first teacher thus became my Mother-in-law!

Nick and I have been farming in the Brecon Beacons in Wales for almost 45 years. My father's family were Ripley people but there are no family connections left in the Send and Ripley area now but we maintain our interest in the Villages via the Send and Ripley History Society.

We were both enchanted by the photocopies of the postcards of Send Marsh particularly of The Green showing goats grazing, which may indicate 'commoner's rights' although goats were not normally considered common grazing animals. I established my own small herd here at Bethlehem, Llandeilo and have exported dairy animals around the World. It is now one of the longest established herds in Wales.

* Curiously, neither Nick nor I can remember any active livestock farming on **Highlands Farm**. Our speculation is that the upper part had been sold off to create a nursery (Luffs?) for shrubs and bedding plants also building plots and rented out for grazing. In 1952, Mrs Dooley came out of her house to tell Sybil Somerfield that the King had died, she would then have been in her mid-late 60s, we guess. This was not a good agricultural area and returns postwar from farming were already falling, whereas demand for residential development land was high and comparatively enticing. This form of asset stripping would have achieved a better income! The entrance between the end of the lime-washed wall and the barn led to a footpath which passed a tall, untrimmed old hedge wherein grew several golden bullace trees. Copious golden, round fruit the size of damsons, soft and sweet when ripe could be found each autumn. I would make an annual harvest of these and take them home to make jam.

In the row of houses built opposite the farm lived the Nix family - Mrs Nix (who drove LT buses for years), Gil, Phil and Harold. Next door lived Miss Blackett, daughter of the owner of Blackett's Printing Company. She was a most genteel and elegant lady, often dressed in mauve or Parma violet and seldom seen without fine crochet or kid gloves! She died in the mid 1950s.

On the right side of the road between Highlands and The Saddlers were wet marshy fields, until post war building began.

** When appearing as a guest on the TV programme TFI Friday ('Thank F**k It's Friday' a Chris Evans show), (Don't ask how!) I met and spent the day with Trevor Bailey, inventor of the famous 'Wind Up Radio'. Formely a great swimmer/stunt man, he became involved in the design and building of amenity swimming pools and had actually created one in the grounds of the schoolhouse at Send after it had been sold for conversion to a private house.

'Flying Made it Happen'
Or more visitors to Ripley
Clare McCann



Margaret Field has lent the Society a copy of *Flying Made it Happen* the autobiography of Charles Hughesdon, who lived at Dunsborough House in Ripley. The self-made millionaire was born in St Margarets in 1909 and in the foreword to his book he says his life was dominated by two ruling passions – aeroplanes and elegant women.

He made his money from insurance underwriting, principally insuring airplanes. In 1937 he married Florence Desmond (known as Dessie), who was then a very high profile actress and entertainer. The twin worlds of business and entertainment brought many famous guests to their home in Ripley, which they bought in 1948.

It would be too long a list to mention all the 'celebs' he cites in his book but from the business world he mentions,



Charles in cockpit, Dessie about to swing propellor

among others, Robert Maxwell, Paul Getty, Charles Clore and Lord Forte as well as a number of politicians including the conservative cabinet minister, Jim Prior. However clearly he and Dessie enjoyed entertaining show business personalities. He mentions Deborah Kerr, Joan Crawford, Elizabeth Taylor, Kay Kendall, Evelyn Laye and Yvonne Arnaud, along with John Mills and his wife and Jack Hawkins and his wife. He says he taught Rita Heyworth croquet and Kirk Douglas was a weekend guest.

Margaret Field told us that Richard Greene was also a visitor to Dunsborough and Mr Hughesdon asked Elizabeth, Margaret's daughter, to take him out riding. She was a bit worried about taking out this 'elderly gentleman' and she had to use an upturned bucket to help him get on the horse. However once he got on, he was a good rider and they rode all over Wisley Common and he explained to Elizabeth that he used to film in the area. It was only later she discovered she had been out with the legendary Robin Hood!

Charles Hughesdon, as owner of Dunsborough, was invited to be President of Ripley Cricket Club but declined to actually play. However Michael Wilding, Elizabeth Taylor's husband, was 'quite a competent cricketer and Tyrone Power had the eye of a baseball player and could whack a ball...' Ty marched out to the crease looking every inch the part. The effect was somewhat spoiled when he turned to face the bowler with his bat in the air and slightly behind him and swiped the ball like Babe Ruth'.

Charles Hughesdon had a brief affair with Marlene Dietrich but this did not stop her later being a guest in Ripley. The same was true of Margot Fonteyn with whom he had a much longer relationship. Another high profile visitor was Shirley Bassey, who spent Christmas at Dunsborough in the late 1960s. On Boxing Night she finished a rendition of 'Hey Big Spender' only to be followed by Dessie's impersonation of her and then a duet. Mr Hughesdon describes it as 'riotous and finally after much laughter and Shirley dancing barefoot on the billiard table a few of us finished in the sauna bath about 3 a.m.' Margaret said the housekeeper, Mrs Yallop, told her that the table was in fact wrecked as she did not dance barefoot!

One visitor who was not universally popular – not that this is mentioned in the book – was Zsa Zsa Gabor. According to Margaret, Michael, Charles and Dessie's adopted son, used to go round to see Margaret and her mother rather than stay at home. Sometimes the housekeeper would tip Margaret the wink as to who was staying at the house and she was allowed to go round for autographs as long as she did not go at dinnertime.



Charles at helicopter party with Group Captain Douglas Bader with wife Joan and John Mills with wife Mary. Later both were knighted



Charles and Dessie with Jack Hawkins and wife at helicopter party

In 1959 Charles Hughesdon began another 'love affair' – this time with helicopters! It had its origins in 1956 when he allowed The Royal Aeronautical Society to hold its annual garden party at Dunsborough, and Alan Bristow, of helicopter fame was a regular visitor. Mr Hughesdon describes how 'Harrods put up a large marquee on the lawn. The helicopters landed on the other side of the ha-ha and then the pilots and passengers crossed a small bridge to the lawn...it started low key with fewer than 12 helicopters...the climax of the whole series was in 1973 when 60 or 70 helicopters arrived including one carrying Prince Philip with his sons Prince Andrew and Prince Edward'.

Much of the book is devoted to his business career and to his jet set life style –homes in London and the south of France. From his descriptions he was obviously a risk taker – a keen water skier, pilot, and horseman and he had several lucky escapes with all these pursuits. He had a love of horse racing and owned several successful racehorses.

In 1979 he and Dessie got to know Sir Michael and Lady Havers. Sir Michael was Attorney General and they lunched at Dunsborough, prior to attending the Derby together. It was a meeting that changed Charles Hughesdon's life. Shortly after making their acquaintance, the Havers had a lucky escape when they prolonged an overseas trip and avoided an IRA bomb attack on their home in Wimbledon. Their friendship meant regular weekends at Dunsborough and trips to the south of France and often Charles Hughesdon would fly Sir Michael Havers to Chequers for conferences with Margaret Thatcher.

Both Florence Desmond's health and that of Lord Havers (who had become Lord Chancellor) began to deteriorate and they both died within a relatively short time span. Charles Hughesdon sold Dunsborough in 1994 and moved to Berkshire following his marriage to Lady Havers.



General shot of helicopter party

Poscript

If any member of the Society has a copy of this book or can source one then it would be an excellent addition to the library. So far the Internet has let me down!

Whilst talking to Margaret she mentioned that various famous visitors came into Miss Bush's sweet shop in Ripley, from Mr 'Piano' Henderson, to Petula Clark, Bernard Braden and Barbara Kelly and the Walker Brothers. In more recent times Marc Bolan of T Rex called in and Boy George came to buy thank you cards. Apparently he was staying in Clandon while waiting to face a drugs charge. Margaret said he was very charming and was keen to write personal notes to thank people who had helped him.

So our 'Just Visiting' exhibition has revealed that many of the great and the good (and not so good) have visited Send and Ripley over the centuries.

Letters

Letter from David Porter.

Congratulations on the production of the current 24 page Journal number 200. My thanks too to the very loyal and dedicated team of members who regularly submit most interesting articles to this high quality publication. I consider it a personal privilege to work with you all.

It is however, inevitable that a few errors will arise from time to time and on this occasion I offer the following corrections and comments in respect of articles in Journals 199 and 200.

'Streets Dairy' – Journal 199 p 15.

The fourth paragraph, last line of my article should read 'of the death of Mrs Strudwick' not Mr Strudwick.

Is it not reasonable for me to assume that Mr and Mrs Strudwick took on the tenancy of 59, Send Barns Lane (also my former home) when the house was new in 1937 and Mr Strudwick pre-deceased his wife? Perhaps Mrs Dorothy Jones (née Keene) could advise further on the employment (?) of the Strudwicks. My sincere apologies for my incorrect spelling of the family surname. I should have known better having rented the property for exactly half a century (Sept 1949 – Sept 1999).

I must respectfully advise Dorothy that my mother did not help Mrs Keene indoors (see letters page 19 Journal 200). I do not recall the name of the lady who did but my uncle, Mr Fred Hillman who knew Mrs Keene well, knew her. I believe my uncle Fred delivered groceries to Gosden Hill Farm on his bicycle in his early days with the 'Dedmans' at Send Post Office.

Dorothy is absolutely correct in stating that my father delivered the rent on his bicycle. It was paid in advance and delivered on his way home from his work in Guildford to Gosden Hill Farm every Monday. His bicycle was a B.S.A. purchased new in 1936 and alas, dismantled for scrap some 10 years ago. I still have the bell as a souvenir!

'Visitors to Send and Ripley' – Journal 200 p 4.

To the general public 'British Railways' and 'British Rail' may be just variant names for the nationalised rail transport system but it may interest our readers that 'British Railways' and 'British Rail' were titles used at different periods in the history of that organisation. Thus, Jane Bartlett's article paragraph 4 should begin with 'British Railways' not 'British Rail'. The change in name occurred in 1967 following the end of the steam era.

I was delighted to learn that **Amy Johnson** was a visitor to Ripley. To commemorate her historic solo flight the song *Amy Wonderful Amy* was composed and became immensely popular at the time. It could be heard even at the fairground on mechanical organs.

A copy was in the very extensive repertoire of the **89 Key, Marengi organ**, which formed the centre-piece of **George Irvins Roundabout**, which came to Ripley each year. However, having looked after this instrument from time to time during its final years I can confirm that the repertoire, which lasted for 5 hours did not include the tune 'Amy'! It seems that when the organ was sold for preservation it included only the up to date musical repertoire. Fortunately, back in the showman's yard, lying in a damp shed was the discarded music, tunes long since deemed unfashionable and thus had not been heard in Ripley for many years! The shed yielded a substantial collection of music and this repertoire has now been copied into new organ books.

It is hoped therefore that 'Amy' will be heard again with other long forgotten tunes such as *Papa Piccolino* and *Sing your song Mr Cuckoo*.'

Boughton Hall – A link with steam – Journal 200 p 16/17.

My comments regarding the weight restrictions, penultimate paragraph p 16/17, is correct but the change of railway policies from 1967/8 allowed a relaxation of the weight limit and hence my sighting of locomotive 35028 Clan Line leaving Guildford heading for Clandon with a 'steam special' on Saturday 22nd March 2008!

Industries in the Elements

Jane Bartlett

Our society was invited to take part in the '**Industries in the Elements, Earth, Wind Fire and Water**' exhibition at the Rural Life Centre at Tilford, on the 14th and 15th June. Our display was set up by Clare McCann, and attended by Peter Smithers on the Saturday and by John and Jane Bartlett on the Sunday.

We illustrated the work of C H and Sons, the family blacksmiths at Send, Stansfield's Gingerbeer factory at Ripley, Sand and Gravel extraction, Norcan Pipes and the Tannery, in Send amongst other occupations. Other exhibitors included the Surrey Industrial History Group with a display about the Chilworth Gunpowder works, and the Fernhurst Furnace Preservation Group who invited us all to an open day on the 13th and 14th September when they will show how cannon and cannon balls were made, and will fire them too. The Romana Traveller Family History Society were celebrating their special month..

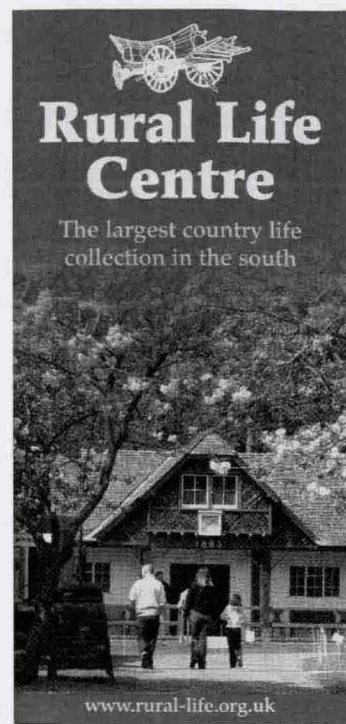
In addition to the permanent displays at the centre, there were many craftsmen working. Pottery was being made, the wheelwright was mending a wagon wheel, woodturning was being demonstrated, and the blacksmith was making intricate iron roses

It was a pleasure to meet several of the visitors to our display who were connected in various ways with Send and/or Ripley, which added much to the enjoyment of the event and to our knowledge. A member of the Gibbs family told me that they still have ties with Ripley as they still own their former site (now occupied by C.R.M Logistics Ltd) and I learnt that the Ripley branch designed irrigation systems and milking parlours as well as selling tractors. (There is a permanent exhibition about the Gibbs firm at the centre). A retired blacksmith from Bisley told us how his father refused to sell their forge to Mr C.H. Sex who wanted it for one of his sons.

The person looking after the sheep at the centre once worked for Methold's garage.

Not only did we have fun but our contribution must have been appreciated as our society has been asked to give a display about our two villages in their exhibition room next year.

If you missed all this you will have a chance to see our exhibit in August at the Ripley Farmers' Market.



Connaught Cars part 7 'The High Speed Road Test' David Porter

When my father was invited to join the small team of Citroen mechanics in the summer of 1960, not only had Benny Benstead laid down the criteria for the engine conversion but also for the road test which would push the car well beyond the limits for which it had been designed.

The ID 19, DS 19 and the Safari estate were all tested by the same methods.

The A3 London – Portsmouth three-lane single carriageway road was notorious for fatal accidents. Three local blackspots being the bend outside the Jovial Sailor at Ripley, the 'S' bends at Wisley Hut Hotel and between Potters Lane and Merrow Lane at the Burpham end. To try and test the Citroen on this road, in the opinion of Connaught's staff, was firmly 'out of the question!' An alternative route was sought, adopted and remained unchanged thereafter. The maximum speeds were 30mph in first gear, 60mph in second, a minimum of 100mph in third and fourth gear was overdrive. The limit for the test run was Newlands Corner. The test route began on the A247 at Burnt Common and on through West Clandon. There was no national speed limit of 70mph in those days and it was only the 30mph limit from Lime Grove through West Clandon village up to the A246 at Clandon cross roads which drivers had to observe.

Clandon cross roads was a simple junction without traffic lights, the approach roads each way being single lane two way carriageways. On crossing this junction the Citroen would be driven quite hard in the direction of Newlands Corner. With the car in third gear the right hand bend would be approached at 50mph, driven into the bend at that speed, the front wheel drive pulling the front of the car into the corner. Benny insisted that the car was accelerated in third gear up the steep hill. The car was turned in the large lay-by opposite the Newlands Corner Hotel.



Connaught Engineering/Continental Cars - sports cars
The AUTOCAR July 8 1949, photocopy provided by Andy Jones

Benny warned the mechanics not to take the sharp bend at the foot of the hill too fast on the return run as this corner was very tight. Some younger drivers tried to dispel this myth. However, they only did this once! Back at Clandon cross roads the 30mph limit was observed until the bend at Lime Grove came into view. Through West Clandon the car would be driven in third gear but now a change down to second gear was the order of the day. Into the bend at full throttle and out of the 30mph limit and by Dedswell reaching 60mph plus! Uphill and a change into third and Green Lane was passed at 100mph, minimum, (anything less was a failure!) and I do not recall any failures. Dad used to say: 'At Green Lane if there is more there (i.e. power), we go for it, usually with a Paris built model'. You don't have much time to decide with the bend to Bunt Common ahead! Speeds of 105-110mph were the norm along the 'Clandon Straight' as it became known. With the left hand bend looming swiftly ahead the brakes were applied as the route ahead was via Burnt Common Lane on the right!

I recall asking Dad – 'Why Burnt Common Lane'? The reply was 'For two reasons – it is easier to turn left back onto the A3 at the Triangle Café and also you can go faster for longer by going straight across the junction at Tythebarn Lane'. I again ask 'but if a car is travelling from Burnt Common in the direction of West Clandon, then what?' – A short silence preceded Dad's reply, with a smile – 'Well you have to go round the corner?' 'Brake harder and thank your lucky stars you're in a Citroen!' He went on – 'Benny done it with a Jaguar and thankfully only one car came round the bend. He had to go behind it and finished up facing Burnt Common, on the wrong side of the road. He came into the garage - white as a sheet!'

It is pleasing to conclude this article by reporting that there was only one serious accident during Connaught Cars reign at Burnt Common. The year? possibly as early as 1959, when a Renault Dauphine left the road and hit a tree near Merrow Lane. Des Arthur was a passenger and a mechanic was driving. There were no incidents on the Citroen conversion test runs, which spanned at least ten years, which speaks volumes for the judgement and skill exercised by the team involved.

Vera Russell - WLA117452
Member of the Women's Land Army
Clare McCann

The Surrey History Centre in Woking have in their possession, two wartime diaries, a photograph album and a letter from Mr A W Secrett all relating to the war service of Vera Russell..

Vera Russell, the subject of this article, was living with other land girls at Tannery House (*Tannery Lane, ed.*) in Send and the two diaries refer to her service during 1944 and 1945. The diaries are small commercial diaries and so each entry is short and written in pencil. She probably had little time to read the papers or listen to



Vera and friend in the onion field at Heath Farm

the radio because she was working so hard, thus most of the entries relate simply to her daily chores and pastimes rather than the wider picture. There is very little comment on the progress of the war itself but this of course could also be due to an awareness of censorship, a lack of space in the diary or just that she preferred to screen out bad news. A typical entry might read, "Moved lettuce boxes all the morning. It turned out lovely - went shopping - finished my jumper off in the evening." or "Lettuce first thing then sweet corn. Did some shopping. Went to Dunsfold. Had a drink. Went to a dance and had a good time."

There are some entries, which refer to local wartime activities, for example, 13th April 1944 "Cabbage pulling first thing then rhubarb. Cycled to Woking. Watched some Americans play baseball." And 6th May "Salute the Soldier. We had a wagon in the procession with vegetables and won 1st prize. We sold them afterwards and made £14-12s-9d for the war effort." She also helped with other fund raising activities and took part in some Red Cross training. There is also the odd mention of soldiers leaving for active service ".Met Ted and George at the Seven Stars - kissed them goodbye"...

Whilst frozen leeks, brussel sprouts, sea kale, lettuces etc dominate the diaries, it is clear that Vera had time for some fun. Many evenings she knitted mittens, darned clothes, and even cut up a pair of old breeches and made them into shorts. She wrote to friends and family or washed her hair but more exciting leisure activities were often logged. For example dances - "a dance with Twink -had a lovely time..."; a snowball fight, trips to the pictures and in both years she managed a holiday to Bournemouth and a trip over to Ryde in the Isle of Wight.

On the 6th January 1944 "Had a grand party thanks to Mrs Doherty. 24 of us played murders, dancing and games." Mrs Doherty gets several positive mentions in the diaries but the most poignant is on January 3rd in the following year, when she notes "Bill Doherty crashed and was killed" and then "Did seakale all day. Felt pretty rotten hearing all about Bill." By January 7th Mrs Doherty was back at work.

The entry for early May 1945 was surprisingly low key "Went to work. Peace was declared. Wrote to Doug. Cut lettuce. Planted Mint" However they did get a five-day holiday, which must have been welcome. On 24th May she noted she had been in the Land Army for two years and she received a new uniform and a two-year armband. Of course the girls could not be demobbed immediately because food was still short and it took time for soldiers returning from active duty to resume employment on the land. In fact in April 1945 she mentions that German prisoners of war filled part of the manpower shortage.

We get a hint of how Vera felt about her employer - there are some occasional entries mentioning 'nanny' (the nick-name for A W Secrett on account of his short pointed beard, ed.) being in a mood or a rotten mood although prudently she avoided stating his name. What has survived is the warm farewell letter that Mr Secrett wrote to her from Heath Farm, when she left in March 1946. He talks of her 'loyal service' her 'example in setting standards of behaviour' and says 'I am sure I must have been trying at times but the quiet endeavour to put things right by you all soon pacified me. Here again I could sense your influence.' And finally he wished her well and enclosed some 'notes in appreciation of your work and example'. This gives a more positive impression of her 'boss' than some of the other wartime recollections the Society have recorded!



Vera at Babbacombe 1939

Comment by the editor

Mr Secrett had a market garden at Ham prior to and subsequently to purchasing Heath Farm, Tannery Lane Send. He had bought the house and several acres of land in Send from Mr S S Boorman just before WWII. Like Boorman he grew strawberries and rhubarb, asparagus and all kinds of root vegetables plus cabbages and lettuces. He did much to improve the productivity of his land, apart from using manures and fertilizers and rotating his crops. He installed an irrigation system served from a diesel engine driven pump, housed in a purpose built brick building. Water was drawn from his newly constructed reservoir near Send Barns farm (photo front page N/L 125). The light sandy soil was excellent for early crops but required plenty of manure and water. His constant objective was to harvest his crops and transport them via West Clandon Station so as to arrive at Covent Garden market before it opened in the early hours of the morning.



A W Secrett at Heath Farm 1945

Normally, work on the land was carried out by a small permanent labour force supplemented by casual workers drawn from travellers (gypsies) itinerant workers from other countries, a small number of students and local labour from nearby villages including Send and Ripley. When the war began the source of labour from abroad ceased and so to avoid a food shortage crisis the government mobilised the Women's Land Army (as it had in WWI). Land girls were at Secrett's and countrywide working on the land to ensure the crops grew, were harvested, and reached the main markets on time. The produce from market gardens such as Secrett's was vital at a time of food shortages.

After the war Mr Secrett generously gave land in Tannery Lane for the building of the British Legion. He retired in 1967 selling his land to Bennetts another market gardener based in Pyreford. In 1968 he sold Heath Farm, which became a private house when the editor and his family moved in on 1st May. Mr Secrett was then 79 years and he moved to Merrow but was for a year or two often seen around Send in his large Austin Somerset saloon.

Although not heard at first hand I understand Mr Secrett was a Greek scholar, a Baptist (minister?) and made a practice of walking around the boundaries of his land often starting at first light.

Typewriter seeks new home!

The society has for disposal a manual 'Royal' typewriter surplus to requirements. It is missing its platen or roller and so may be suitable for spare parts. Anyone interested? Then contact Les Bowerman for more details.

Ronald (Ron) Croucher
1st July 1928 – 12 July 2008

Just before closing this edition of the Journal we received the sad news of the death of Ron Croucher. Ron died on Saturday 12th July peacefully at home just after his 80th birthday, following an illness with cancer. The funeral, a Humanist ceremony, was held on Tuesday 22nd July at Guildford Crematorium and was attended by over 200 friends and relations. Afterwards, the guests were invited to attend a reception at The Jovial Sailor, Ripley. Anne Bowerman attended the funeral and Anne and Les Bowerman attended the reception as friends and representatives of Send and Ripley History Society.

Ron was born at a military hospital in Aldershot and lived in India from 1934-1939, his father being stationed there in the army. He was always a studious boy and in addition to his normal studies became interested in the French and their way of life. He gradually became fluent in the French language visiting the country as often as possible. His French was so good that he was often mistaken for a Frenchman. After his National Service in the RAF he and a partner established themselves as TV and Radio engineers forming their own business in 1955. He also became a keen radio ham (call sign G3XRP) He married Jean Gatfield in 1956. They lived in Stanwell and Addlestone and moved with the family to Send in 1967. Ron retired from the business in 1981 so that he could concentrate on wildlife photography and natural history. He regularly gave slide and audio-visual shows and was a member of the Mid Thames AV Group. His audio-visual presentations earned him an Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society.

Send History Society was formed in 1975 and Ron had joined by mid 1976 creating the Natural History Group. In 1979 he and the late Ted Bartlett, who was also briefly a S&RHS member, formed the Surrey Heath Natural History Society, with Ted as chairman and Ron as Hon. Secretary and Programme secretary, positions Ron held up to his death. That Society is now the West Surrey Natural History Society. This commitment naturally reduced Ron's activities with S&RHS although he continued to help from time to time and the group flourished for some ten years. He was a member until 1990. His illustrated talks on natural history were always a pleasure to attend and drew large audiences.

He was in great demand as an expert and lecturer on wild life and had in recent months given at Ripley Village Hall, a much enjoyed presentation entitled 'Badgers Galore', which raised £1000 for the charity – Friends of Villages Medical Centre.

Our condolences go to his wife Jean, his sons Peter, David and Derek, and five grandchildren, Andrew, Hannah, Steven, Nigel and Zak.

Our thanks to Peter and Derek Croucher for their assistance in preparing this appreciation. An obituary also appeared in the Surrey Advertiser for 25th July 2008. Editor.

Fruit trees at Ockham

The following extract from the Ockham Parish Registers was obtained by member Betty Batten who says - 'The entry is interesting as it states the type of fruit that was grown at that time' and she wonders whether the plants are either still there and/or are still in cultivation locally.

1769 Ockham Parish Register

Note by Rector/Vicar

A young Black Frontinae grape plant against the wall next the first Apricot Tree between that and the near Black Vine. A standard greengage plant near the Mulberry Tree. The two young apple trees planted in the small orchard Michaelmas 1768 are Nonpareil and an Aldonaire vulg. at Hall door. There is a graft of a kind of apple which has taken upon the first tree at the end of the Aspargus Beds. For the trees grafted Fe (b) 16 1770, 6 Cockagu's on Irish Apple the same time grafted ;upon a small Bergh Pear, 2 Medlar grafts and upon the next tree a Catherine Pear, two more Medlar Grafts and two more upon the first Quince tree in the field. The other grafts along the hedge from the corner of the garden to the margin? are the forward apple Golden Pippin, 8 Nonpareils and a Pearmain nearest the gate. In the court? before ;the house a standard Duke Cherry on the N side wall, a white Bonum Magnum, 3 grafts of the same sort. A greengage graft near the little? house windrow three Drip D' Dors plum near the.... Door....red Perdigon? with the first Peach against the S. wall one Perdigon of Rosite in the Oak Bed one next the upper Peach in the Box Border in the Corner.

Answers and comments please on a postcard, typed letter or disc to the editor.

Contributions to the Journal.

The last line of the previous topic has reminded me to request that; contributors who send in copy on a disc, **please do not forget to label the disc as well as any accompanying text**. Failure to do this means that after a while I find myself with a collection of discs that have to be re-loaded into the computer to verify the author and its contents. Usually a disc is kept for about two months until the next issue of the Journal is due to be produced and after this it is disposed of unless I receive a request to return it. It is of course 'greener' to send your article by email. Editor.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The summer programme of outdoor events and visits has been well supported and there will be no meeting in August. The Museum will be open as usual on Saturday mornings from 10.00 until 12.30 pm and for two hours on the third Sunday of the month to coincide with the Antiques Fair. Just inside the Museum door is a bookcase filled with a variety of second-hand books for sale that you may wish to purchase for your holiday reading.

Saturday, 19th August - Come and support the Society's books and bric-a-brac stall at the Ripley Event on Ripley Village Green. Offers of help in manning the stall would be welcomed.

The following meetings will be held in Ripley Village Hall Annexe, starting at 8 pm.

Wednesday, 17th September – “**From the Archives**”, a talk by David Rose, Editor of “The Surrey Advertiser”.

Wednesday, 15th October – An illustrated talk about Shalford by Margaret Dierden.

Wednesday, 19th November – “**The Guildford Guy Riots**”, an illustrated talk by Gavin Morgan.

Wednesday, 15th October - An illustrated talk about Shalford by Margaret Dierden.

For further details of any of our events, please ring me, Anne Bowerman, on 01483 224876.



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parties by arrangement

Contact Les Bowerman on 01483-224876 if
you require further information or wish to
help in the museum.

HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

'Ripley & Send Then and Now; The Changing Scene of Surrey Village Life'	(Reprinted 2006) £10.00
'Guide to The Parish Church of St Mary The Virgin, Send'	£1.25
'Then and Now, A Victorian Walk Around Ripley'	(Reprinted 2004&7) £4.00
'The Straight Furrow', by Fred Dixon	£1.50
'Ripley and Send – Looking Back'	(Reprinted 2007) £9.00
'A Walk About Ripley Village in Surrey'	(Reprinted 2005) £2.00
'Newark Mill Ripley, Surrey'	£3.00
'The Hamlet of Grove Heath Ripley, Surrey'	(Reprinted 2005) £4.00
'Ripley and Send – An Historical Pub Crawl in Words and Pictures'	£6.00
'Two Surrey Village Schools - The story of Send and Ripley Village Schools'	£10.00
'The Parish Church of St Mary Magdalen Ripley, Surrey'	£5.00

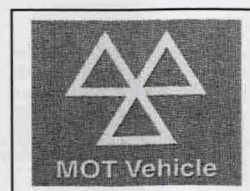
All the publications are available from the Museum on Saturday mornings, or from Ripley Post Office. The reprinted copy of 'Ripley & Send Then and Now' and 'Two Surrey Village Schools' can also be obtained from Send Post Office.



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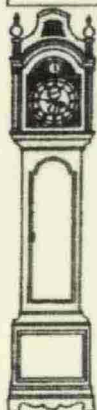


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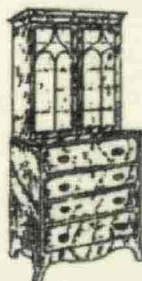
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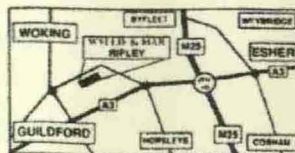
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