

## The Finn Survey of Mersham's Inhabitants

James Finn was born in 1756. His grandfather James, who died in 1780, lived at Finn Farm, Kingsnorth and his father John was also a farmer. James married Mary Sheaffe in 1781. He was the Parish Clerk and Schoolmaster of Mersham from 1791 to 1839. In those days, Parish Clerks were appointed for life and on James' death he was succeeded by one of his sons, William Johnson Finn, who was also a schoolmaster. When he died in 1857, George Finn, a grandson of James took over until his death in 1896.

The original document, a bound, lined notebook, is kept in Canterbury Cathedral Archives (in the papers of Ralph Finn, ref. U121). In it is recorded information and anecdotes about some of Mersham's former inhabitants, most of them already dead or "removed" from the village by the time it was written. Some of the events and deaths recorded date from the end of the 18th and first few years of the 19th centuries but the period covered extends beyond James' death in 1839. The manuscript is written in what seems to be the same handwriting throughout and the name E. Finn 1807 is written on the now rather tattered front cover. Edward, one of James and Mary's many children, was born in 1794 and would therefore have been 13 in 1807, too young to have written about some of the people in the book, but old enough perhaps to have copied out his father's notes and added to them later. A strong sense of nostalgia pervades his comments so they may have been written long after the events recorded. Edward never married; he was a sailor and travelled widely. He died in the East Ashford Union Workhouse in 1873, aged 79.

The pages are divided up into columns headed: "Names, Stature, Profession, habitation, etc." The entries at the beginning of the book are short, but soon change to quite lengthy descriptions. Although some labourers are mentioned at first, most of the inhabitants described are tradesmen, craftsmen or farmers. Despite warning that "gossiping and tale bearing are the first steps we make toward our own destruction", the author is no mean gossip himself, although he uses faults in character or misdeeds to launch into extensive moralising based on strong religious convictions. National events do not impinge greatly, despite the fact that the Finns lived through the Napoleonic Wars. Their effects can, however, be noted in references to the increase in trade due to the proximity of the Brabourne Barracks and its sharp decline after the troops had been transferred when "many of the Traders left and (of) those which remained some became objects of parochial relief." In the description of Mr. Lewis, the shoemaker, there is also a reference to the stirring times through which they had lived.

Although most of the pages are intact, several, which seem to have described members of the Knatchbull family, have at some time been cut out of the manuscript and a few loose pages are damaged and incomplete. In this transcription, place names have been given their modern spelling but the grammar has not been altered. Finn constantly wrote 'statue', meaning stature and this has been altered throughout. I have omitted some of Edward's lengthy moralising passages from this version. I do not exclude the possibility of errors since the document was too fragile to photocopy and had to be transcribed in pencil and typed later. Any editorial comments are in italics.

Houses and inhabitants of the Parish of Mersham commencing:

**Mr. & Mrs. Gorham** Common stature. Lower Street, Farmer (*farm?*) called Wellhouse. Removed to Willesborough.

**Mr. & Mrs. Peddlesden Snr.** Short. Farmer, retired. do. (*Wellhouse?*)

**Mr. & Mrs. Peddlesden Jr.** Stout, tall. do. (*farmer?*) Mrs. P. Smiling countenance rather embecile. Mr. P. very good. Neighbourly both good Christians.

**Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert** Common stature. A house and land Broad Oak. Quiet people.

**William & James Gilbert** Tall Sons of same.

**Mr. & Mrs. Clarke** Stout. South Tower (*South Stour*) House.

**Mr. & Mrs. Kingsnorth.** South Tower. Malsters. Good neighbours.

**Mr. W. Kingsnorth** son of the same. Rather tall. Removed to foreign land.

**Mr. & Mrs. Bishopp** Common size. Farmers, rather curious characters in the days of witchcraft separated some days before death. Mr. B. died at Smarden, buried at Mersham. Mrs. B. buried at the same place. Speechless 8 years. Walkless for more than 20 years of long stature when correct.  
**Thomas & Richard** sons of the same. Thomas committed suicide by hanging himself on the pole of his own waggon.

**Mr. & Mrs. Jordan** Short stature. **A** numerous family. Bakers in the same street. The woman very harmless but the man drunken and dissipate often driving his wife about with the pealer and roasting spitt.

**Mr. & Mrs. Firminger** Short stature. Graziers of .... very good religious christian people.  
**John** their son. Batchelor do. a quiet jocular man.

**Mr. Colegate Snr.** Common size. Occupier of house and small land.

**Mr. & Mrs. Wm Colegate** Son of above. Very short stature. The same dark complexion. The wife's name was Kitty Stead.

**Mr. & Mrs. James Ward** Tall size. A small cottage on waste, labourer.  
**Ann**, daughter of the above. Died at the age of 11 years of scarlet fever.

**Mr. & Mrs. Goodwin.** Rather tall. Enclosure of waste land, quiet people.

**Mr. & Mrs. Sillybourn and Stephen** son of the same Tall stature. Farmers and graziers, Quakers. Man rather singular ways, woman very close and precise in her deportment, at Cheesemans Green.

**Mr. & Mrs. Clover** Common stature. Cottage on Waste the corner of the Wood.  
**Edward** son of the same. do. (*stature*) emigrated to Foreign Land many years ago. Quiet man served his time as Carpenter at Mr. Watts, Brabourne Lees. The year 1810 or so.

**Mr. & Mrs. Parkes** Man stout. Woman slight. Miller. The parties rather gallant.  
**James & Robert** sons tall stature, of the same. Quiet young men died in their pristine age of the same .... **Mary Ann** daughter

**Mr. & Mrs. Bayley** Tall stature. Woodcutter on the Blybee Estate Wood.  
**Thomas** son of the same. Tall. A good scholar and a quiet young man much beloved by his acquaintances. (*Died*) At the age of 20 with over exertion in order to obtain sufficient money to pay for a substitute to serve in the old militia in 1807.

at the Checker Trees Cottages **Smith and Robus**

**Mr. & Mrs. Taylor** Common size. Mr. Hughes Farm corner of the Freight. (*Frith*)  
**Richard** son of the above

**Mr. & Mrs. Sheeaf** Woman tall. Man short. (*Note in margin.* My grandfather and grandmother on the mothers side.) Of the Thatch Cottage on the Frieight. Small land a few sheep and cows. Small portion of arable land and orchard. One dying at 11 o'clock the other at half past 2 o'clock the following morning. Buried at Mersham Church east end opposite the altar side by side at the age of 79 and 84.

**Mrs. Earl** Tall. of the small house the corner of The Common and Lane leading to Mersham. Removed from there.

**Mr. & Mrs. Earl junior and family.** Middle stature.

**Mr. & Mrs. Law** 2 sons. Tall men. Farmers in the Lane. The first Funeral Sermon preached for Mrs. Law at Mersham Church I ever heard by the Rev. Mr. Faulknor, Curate.

**Mr. & Mrs. Friend** Woman short. Man tall. of the Amos or Almshouses. Labourer. The woman acted as midwife - aged.

**Mr. & Mrs. Reinolds** Common stature, of the same house, labourer.

**Mr. & Mrs. Robus(t)** do. of the Rainer Cottage

**Mr. & Mrs. Rainer** Fellmonger, very good and religious people, friendly.

**Mr. & Mrs. Stagg and family** Common stature. Workman to Mr. Wyman, Woolstapler, removed. **Ann Stagg, a daughter.** of a Scarlet Fever aged 9 years, buried at Mersham.

**Mr. & Mrs. James Clarke** Short stature. Carpenter, old age.

**Mr. & Mrs. Wyman** Stout. Common stature. Woolstapler, close but just in their actions. Attentive to their religious duties. **Mary** daughter of the same.

**Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Leeds** Farmers of the ..... Farm, very quiet worthy members.

**Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Harris** W. Stout. M. Tall. Thrasher and labourer.

**Mr. & Mrs. John Harris.** Common Stature. Occupier of small land & woodcutter, good neighbours. **Thomas, Charles & Edward** sons of the same, died in the flower of their days.

**Mr. & Mrs. Charles** Staples Farmer in the Brook land, poor but good disposed people of the Farm Swanton. **Ann** daughter of the same. Short stature. Of an embecile mind

*(Not clear who this describes)* of very gentlemanly appearance quick in his gait and speech

**Mr. & Mrs. Back** of the Farriers Arms, removed to the Bellhouse. .... son of the same died of Scarlet fever aged 5 years.

A Continuent of the Lower Street from the Farriers Arms.

**Mr. & Mrs. Francis Snr.** Stature short. Grocers of the Forstall. **Thomas & John** sons. Stout, of the same, shoemakers, good neighbours and quiet people.

**Ruth Petts** a maiden lady. Small & short. Of the Thatched Cottage whose delight was in the note of the sparrows, refused to have them destroyed as they waked her in the morning. She was very quick in speech and was charmed by a gossip.

**Mr. Edward Birch** Landlord of the Farriers Arms. Tall, slight man. A most quiet inoffensive man, a good neighbour and an attender of the place of prayer.

**Mr. William Prebble** Stout. Common stature. Landlord of the above Arms. Overweighed

by the anxieties attendant his family and affairs, a worthy neighbour. Eldest son of **Mr. George Prebble**, carpenter at the House Formerly occupied by **James Clarke** Snr. Short both.

**Mr. & Mrs. Fox** Merchant of the Bell House removed. Slight figure.

**Mr. & Mrs. Back** Common stature, stout, formerly landlord of the Farriers Arms.

**William** son of the same. Tall, genteel. Steward to Hatch House.

**Thomas** son of the above. Slight. (*died*) Of a consumption at the age of 20.

**Mr. & Mrs. Epps Snr.** W. Tall. M. short. Blacksmith very fond of his pipe and very eccentric and jocular man. Many years Over Seer of the Parish.

**Mr. Richard** son of the same Blacksmith, removed to Smeeth Heath. A very peculiarly gait.

**John** Son of John, a youth. Slight. Buried in the Churchyard by the Coachhouse.

**Mr. & Mrs. Stickells** Stout Tall. Of the Gregory Farm, employed by the Gorham Estate.

**John** son of the same, young. Common stature. Man killed by the falling of a portion of the house of Scotts Hall. (*Parish registers record the name John Stokes as having been killed in this way in 1801.*)

**Mr. & Mrs. Elgar Senior.** Middle stature, somewhat tall. of the Gregory Farm. Carpenter and very worthy just and upright in their dealings. Observers of the Sabbath. The woman as quick in her movements as in her speech although aged. Also a daughter of the same after a few days previous to her intended marriage.

**Mrs. Vernon** at the same house. Daughter of Robert Goddard Esq. of Mersham Court Lodge. Very lady like person of affable manners. (*Died*) Of a deep decline brought on by reverse of fortune caused by her husbands difficulties while within the limits of the Kings Bench prison. **Henry and Charles** sons of the same.

**Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Leeds.** Late years governors of the Work House. Mrs. L. laundress etc. Bricklayer but was a lover of Bachus and an excellent Tradesman. But a Vice was prevalent in him, by abusing his partner and frequently driving her into the open air to seek refuge where she might be able to obtain it. It was often like to an Irish ..... (unreadable) and Tonges because the weapons of defence. Till at last the deadly poison did its work and he was numbered with the Dead. The woman was a highly industrious person quick in her gait and perhaps with the only defence the Feminine have to shield them namely the Tongue. These two warm elements coming into contact ignited and caused these convulsions. A large family had to be provided for and Sir John Barleycorn sometimes must be somewhat deprived his privilege. As to friendship or neighbourly(*ness*) none could be more ready to administer to the assistance than these persons. The only great Evil attending this manner and system of living is the pattern set by ungovernable transactions to the Juvenile Branches of their families. May their Spirits rest in happiness is the sincere wish of him who here gives this description and might look into his own affairs before he ventures to assert that of his fellow creatures. *ibid.*

**Mr. & Mrs. Tickner Senior.** Tall. Of the same house called Brimps. Shepherd to Hatch Estate.

**Robert Goddard, Esq.** tall. **Mary Ann**, daughter of the same imbecility, **Robert Vernon**, grandson. Of the Court Lodge Farm. Quite the gentleman farmer with buckle shoes and striped stockings, all three dying of the Scarlet Fever within a few days of each other.

**Stead Goddard, Esq.** son of Robert Goddard. Rather tall, very light complexion. Father of the said Stead was for many years churchwarden together with John Secker much esteemed and was considered however a just and honest man and possessed of good prosperity. But some years after his Death it dissolved itself as snow before the Sun and but a fraction now remains.

The said Robert (Stead?) Goddard who inherited the Court Lodge some years after the Demise of his father removed. Possessed of an austere and tyrannical character disliked by most of his neighbours and just before quitting his farm the following lines of poetry were posted at the end of his Barn. Stead Goddard is going to leave his Den and has got leave of all the Mersham Men. Oh how applicable is the 73rd Psalm of the 14 Day of the month with the actions of these people: and behold all things have an end and the place thereof shall know it no more.

**Mrs. Nower**, Widow. She was of short stature and supported herself by a walking stick with an ivory top and crook. A constant attendant at Church. The clergyman at that time was a Dr. Cole. Aged, an inmate at the Old House near the Church Gate. Her husband had formerly been a Butcher in Mersham and occupied the Lodge building opposite the old house called The Church House on the left of the gate leading to the Church where some portion of the Building still remains used now as a wood lodge to the use of Court Lodge. Partly supported by her son John Nower of Bull Town Farm, her principal employment being that of spinning for Hatch House. This old lady after the death of her husband still remained in his house in a room called the Long Room over looking the road and the gate, it had one long glazed window opening in the middle, two or three steps up into her room, a Cellar beneath wherein were deposited her wood, few coals, were all that time in use and her sundries spinning wheels and spinning Jenneys, tow and such articles as were required. Such industry was the principle employment of aged females and life seemed to pass off with less difficulties than in the present age. A little keg or barrel of beer used to be sent to her from her son John at Bull Town Farm, West Braboume when the men were sent with her fuel, the brown loaf of home manufacture and of these good things she did not forget her near neighbours who must partake in part with her and when my trouble assailed her through the infirmities of nature she was sure to find a friend to solace her in her affliction.

Such was the character of this worthy old friend whose days were borne out to a long span. She had a daughter who married to a John Tickner of Smeeth who used to come and do for her at times as she was so advanced in years but she dying unexpectedly caused her removal and her son having died some years before she had no one to attend to her. She was thus removed to Bull Town Farm, her granddaughter had married to a Mr. Jones who at the death of her son became the occupier of the Farm. She was ever ready to relieve the necessities of her neighbours as far as she was able, was cheerful in her manners and would unfold many a lively anecdote until the unexpected death of her only daughter created as sudden a change in her deportment. When after leaving Mersham I went to see her but the death of her son and daughter and the absence of her old neighbours and an age and infirmity closely following, her memory had lost its wonderful faculties and all remembrance of former years had vanished away and things appeared to her as if they never had been and at last at a good old age of 90 years she was numbered with the dead. She was buried at Braboume about the year 1806.

**Mr. Stephen Greenhill** who once possessed Court Lodge at Mersham at the time when my poor father was ejected from his house at the Church house gate whose occupancy he held under the tenants of the Farm was obliged to remove to the far end of Mersham. To satisfy these graven minds through flood and storms and to his School and duty has since removed himself. By his own hand destroying himself, this was known by the God of Nature.

the Church House at the Church Gate.

**Mr. & Mrs. Marshall** and a numerous family. Stature common. Size stout. Labourers in various employment, very good neighbours but in other ways a doubtful temperament, removed from Mersham to Ashford from thence to Sevington. Mrs. Marshall died, Mr. John Marshall still lives at the Toll Gate, Willesborough. Some of his sons are living and appear much respected. His wife was sister to Mr. John Tournay, bricklayer.

**Mrs. Friend** Widow. Tall person. Richard her son. Stout rather deformed. Elizabeth her daughter. Common stature. Occupied the room formerly used by the Marshall family. A good neighbour always ready in the time of need. Fond of a little talk with her neighbours but nothing volatile or injurious. A very industrious person whose employment was that of laundress and field occupations. I have often been delighted with her tales. She was cheerful in her manners and a strict observer of the ordinances of the Sabbath and the Sacrament and instituted the same moral principles in her children. She lived to a good age and died venerated. Her son Richard died at Bilsington, had lived with the sister, who married to a Richard Gurr, for some time.

**Mr. & Mrs. James Finn.** Man tall, Woman short. Clerk and schoolmaster occupied the remainder part of the house as school room etc. to which great improvement was made to the apartments by him, he having added two sash windows and an extra door to admit more light. He also improved and beautified by planting trees and bushes, etc. He remained here for some years always ready to serve his landlord at all times, a most quiet neighbour which he in every degree studied to live in peace with all his neighbours whose character will stand the strictest scrutiny and lived here for many years and being near to his school and employment he had so settled himself by improving the house and garden as apparently to secure for him a lasting habitation but in this he was deceived and his former anticipation was now changed and all his past labour was considered in vain. The sun had dimmed his prospects. The evil time was fast approaching and future hopes were blighted. The echo of warning was sending its note. The enemy's feet were heard, the approach soon followed. The person appeared. The die was cast and the summons given. It was the landlord. The voice pronounced - Finn you must quit my cottage at such a day, naming the time. His tenant's reply was - Sir what have I done. I have paid my rent and have ever been ready to serve you upon all occasions and all times by night or by day. True was the response by the just acting landlord - I have nothing against you Finn. You have always paid your rent and I have ever found you and your wife and children to attend to my call in messages, etc. That there was nothing upon that account - but I have had for sometime past great disputes with the parish officers respecting the affairs of the parish and I am resolved to be revenged on them and they must procure you a dwelling. He after this received a note of ejection to quit at a specific time.

He applied to a very able lawyer whom he had known for many years who then was solicitor and auditor for the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury - who had always evinced the greatest affability and kindness to him when in attendance upon him. He sympathised in this matter and directed him the way to proceed. He then withstood the first summons but after the second, perceiving that the intention was fully to be carried out he was compelled by the additional expenses to relinquish any further attempts to maintain his possession and finally after dispossessing his garden of many of its beauties and adornments, he gave up the possession of his humble cot to the overbearing claimant to satisfy his avarice and haughty ambition. When the lofty rule, the poor and humble tremble.

He after this engaged a tenement at the lower part of the same parish belonging to an old lady by the name of Rainer then residing at the town of Hythe in Kent at a much greater distance from his former abode - his school he still retained as it was attached to the church, but his wife who was teacher of the girls school carried this with her, establishing the same system of education in her new habitation as before, but a great inconveniency resulted in the division thus occasioned, the former house being so contiguous with that of the boys school that the facilities of instruction were greatly hindered by this removal and their farther advancement in their education, such as writing and cyphering, were greatly retarded - as at the boys school there was a commodious gallery erected on the side of the school quite distinct from the boys in which the girls were instructed in their copies and figures - these were an object of great consideration and it was no small matter to rectify and this not the only one for a still more formidable barrier had to be contended with as our worthy friend had also the watery elements to encounter, the situation of his house being in a flat locality it was frequently inundated by very serious floods at different seasons of the year and still increased the difficulty of communicating from one school to the other - yet in all these trials to obtain an honest subsistence he persevered to the end he gained by his earthly struggles the good and honest opinions of his neighbours and those with whom he had any transaction.

He was esteemed as the peacemaker and was never heard to express any sentence that might do wrong - refer to the discourse delivered on the day his last remains were conveyed to their final resting place by the Rev. Frederic Lockwood, Minister of the said parish. He remained at this house a few years until it was sold and one James Gilbert became the purchaser of it. From thence he removed to a house in the Back Passage in Mersham Street and rented it under a Charles Haffenden, Esq. surgeon for some years. Lastly two of his sons had by their economy accumulated a little property and purchased a small portion of ground off a George Hughes Esq. at the corner of the Street formerly a plot of garden possessed in former years by a Richard Clarke butcher and grazier and by degrees built at intervals a double cottage in one part he and his wife resided until his death, being the last move they had until conveyed to his final resting place, viz. the grave. And now we may add that all distinctions are at an end - their dust as valuable as the rich and affluent as the tyrant and oppressor.

**Mrs. James Finn**, wife of the former was a good and affectionate wife and a tender and beloved mother, a good housewife, frugality, cleanliness, sobriety and all those Christian graces that adorn the virtuous qualities of an amiable partner. Domestic comforts were much studied and the home rendered such as to ensure a happy asylum for the partner of her life. She was possessed of industrious habits. She was also very assiduous in the instructions of her pupils under her charge was ever useful employment the making up of shirts and other very necessary avocations that might frame their minds of making themselves useful in their families, marking the linen, etc. etc.

**Mr. & Mrs. Grinstead** of the Stock Farm. Common stature the woman. The man short. Mr. Grinstead was killed by the overturning of the stage coach travelling to Folkestone in the evening on its descending the Sandpit Hills just below the corner of Braboume Lees. They were quiet people. After Mr. Grinstead's death she removed to Hatch and was placed in the Gate House as portress for some years from thence she was removed to the cottage by the Church Gate.

Mersham Street

**Mr. Johnson**, weaver. Stature tall, dressed in grey coat, striped stockings, buckle shoes. Resided at a small house at the corner of the Street by the field gate for many years. Quiet man and good neighbour. Was interred at Mersham Church at an advanced age. Was succeeded in the house by a **John & Stephen Dennard** employed by Mr. Richard Clarke Senior, grazier, after that by **Mr. Richard Clarke**, his son, butcher. The Weaver Shop was at the side of the lane leading to Bower.

**Mr. & Mrs. James Clarke**, Grocers and General Dealers. Stature, both were slight and tall.

Residing in a rather low built house adjoining the gate leading to the North Homes field. This house during his residence underwent great improvements by him and rizen and enlarged it greatly for the improvement of his business. Mr. James Clarke was in a large way in business occasioned by the converting of the Rabbit Warren at Brabourne Lees and the building of Barracks for the army which before were encamped at various places in the Kingdom. Mr. Clarke had a family of three children by his first wife, all daughters - viz. Mary, Jane, Eliza; the second wife was a **Charlotte Brett** by whom there were more. Mr. James Clarke carried on his various businesses such as the carpenter joiner, coffin maker, oil merchant, colour merchant, brush, earthenware, grocer, linen draper, hatter, silk mercer, etc. etc. with great spirit. He had also erected a moveable building as a shop which was constructed upon six wheels. This was removed to Brabourne Lees where it remained to the present time converted into a living department. This said structure by its great weight on its journey to its destination caught fire in the axles, caused some alarm. It was drawn to the place by several horses and the new novelty of seeing houses walk caused no small stir amongst the inhabitants. It was constructed at the Lower Street which no doubt many are now living to vouch for the authenticity of it. It was also used by its builder for some time until it was sold to a woman by the name of Marrers. After this Mrs. Marrers sold it to a Henry Bart who rented it to one Corporal Leach and it was used as a drinking room. Mrs. Marrers had then by her industry accumulated some money and she had erected another upon a large scale and carried on a much larger business for some years until after the Walchereen Exhibition (*Walcheren Island expedition 1809*) the troops were withdrawn and business assumed a different aspect and affairs began to dwindle away and those who had not made a provision were now necessitated to live upon the little they had obtained in a short time. The Government disposed of the Barrack materials by auction. Many of the Traders left and those which remained some became objects of parochial relief. The same person had established a like building at Ruckinge for the use of excavators at the time the canal was in operation that was then in operation through the Romney Marsh. This lasted some little time when he after disposed of it to one Richard Friend formerly shopman to him at Brabourne Lees. It was gay then when all these works were in full operation and one would be induced to have imagined that our friend was amassing a comfortable subsistence, but some unforeseen events must have overtaken him as in a short time preceeding it he had to be declared an insolvent in the Bankrupt accounts. For by the information furnished me by one of his neighbours, a Mr. John Vincer, mason, that the person who conducted the case for him was a gentleman of St. Stephens near Canterbury by the name of George Baker, Esq. , Barrister at Law, son of John Baker, Esq., then a Member of Parliament for the City of Canterbury. This was Mr. Baker's first brief practising in the Court.

Mrs. Clarke was a very quiet kind feeling woman and inoffensive, but there appeared to be a void in domestic happiness some little imbecility at times and cares to familiar to hear in her affairs with the world. She was visited with a speedy sickness which terminated in her dissolution - and her husband in a few months again married to a Charlotte Brett, servant to his wife. After leaving Mersham he went to London and resided until his death in some small concern situated in Judge Street New Road. He when at Mersham had a piece of music viz. Basse (Bass Viol) supposed to have been of the date of 1668 or 1669 presented to his Uncle John Clarke otherwise called The Old Grocer - by the Knatchbull family for to be employed upon sacred occasions. He was a good musician and principal conductor of the choir at Church by which he was then esteemed skilful to which was added several vocal and instrumental performers to the then selected choir of Mersham Church and it gave great encouragement to the juvenile portions of the inhabitants of the parish the more anxious desire to enter the sanctuary of public worship than otherwise would have done. The minister though a very worthy prelate was far advanced in years and his doctrine to those of his parishioners who had arrived to years equal to himself was quite agreeable and pleasant to them yet to the younger minds there were with them of a sombre character then. This added gave no disadvantage to the pastor but was in great measure of uniting both the minister's discourse and that



of Psalmody in perfect unison with each other. Thus were our village churches filled and although all would not be benefitted yet we may surmise that all would not be found to be destitute of the value of the benefits of instructions. From this sort of sabbath meetings we have observed a kind of interwoven friendship carried on by which the intercourse of neighbouring parishes became to be so intimately connected. The assembly of this sacred harmoniac unity so blended itself that the attendance at the house of prayer was not a labour but of pleasure. The youth did endeavour to learn some kind of instruction to vie with his companion to accompany the chorial anthems. These parties did have their regular weekly meetings at their several churches and select what psalms or hymns might be most appropriate to the service of the following sabbath - and was to receive an additional strength to their party and at other times to render their services to their neighbouring parishes. This in my younger days I have been a great observer and I have found as much reverence to be paid to the divine dispenser of all good things as in the preaching and doctrine delivered. David in his beautiful psalms has so delineated the glory belonging to God and expressed himself in these strong terms of congratulations: Sing unto God with the voice of thanksgiving with harps, etc. etc. so that we may rest assured that the Almighty is as much delighted with our services upon instruments praise as upon any other worship we may offer provided it be with that reverential worship with the spirit and in truth. And the book of Revelation has also portrayed in the Vision given by St. John as to bear me out by the foregoing revealed will of God and that sang with their harps before the throne of the Lamb. etc. etc.

Our worthy neighbour was in his manner somewhat ingenious an examiner of the different topics of discussion. A jest would not always escape him, he had the tricks of boyhood. The youthful pastimes were not all forgotten or put aside. Thus they sometimes began with fresh energy. He was lively and gay. The sports of youth were renewed. He appears to have given a great impulse to the exercise of fireworks and rockets. He felt as much delight as the youth himself and really these were the times in which these events were celebrated – Popish Plots were then so much abhorred and the dreaded tyrant Napoleon - or Bony - was the Terror of all little Boys and Girls that were need in wonder that the time should be so much venerated.- a Mr. Luxford succeeded him in the shop.

**Mrs. James Clarke** (*added in pencil Mrs. Lansworthy*) was sister to Mr. Parks, miller of Mersham and died at the house the corner of the Burgate Field by the wicket gate.

Mr. **Robert Clarke**, brother to the same. Stature tall and very stout. The first wife was slight and somewhat tall. Second wife rather stout and of moderate size. Was brought up to the trade as a butcher but relinquished this and entered on that of a carpenter until his death which unfortunately ended in suicide by hanging himself. He had married the second wife and there were some children. There were but two by the first wife, Robert and Edwin, the youngest dying a young man at Canterbury. Robert still living. Mr. Robert Clarke resided in one of the houses on the right hand of the gate commonly called by the name of Burgate Field rented under a Edward Hughes, Esq. He was a person possessed rather of a sullen demeanour not exactly of that pleasing deportment which generally intitles a person to be more venerated and respected by those of his immediate acquaintances not that it would be just to add anything to detorate his character and we are not all given to a smiling countenance. His second wife's name was Hogben, a daughter of the Mr. Hogben, farmer at Sevington. They lastly occupied the appartments adjoining the grocers shop. He was used to play on the bassoon at the Church.

Mr. **John Clarke Senior**, formerly called the Old Grocer. Mrs. John Clarke wife of the same died about the year of 1805. Stature short wiggged gentleman, buckled shoes. He removed to Hatch and resided in a small cottage at the comer of the road until his death upon some little property allowed him from the Family. He was when a young man employed at the building of this present House also

at the taking down of the old one which was then in the Stable Yard. A Mr. John Knatchbull then inhabited the old one. Creation was granted in 1641 - Baron.

These were very just in their affairs and good neighbours. He was also a great reader and was well versed in Scripture tenets and was a constant attendant at Church. Was also a leading man in the Society of the Psalm Singers with his Pitch Pipe, a sort of wooden instrument. He was likewise one of the company of ringers both on the church bells as on the hand bells. He had also held the office of Churchwarden. His James was likewise one of the company of ringers and certain days were strictly commemorated and the flowing bowl at Christmas was not neglected. Gifts and fines throughout the year were then brought into requisition. Ale Sop and the Grog were on those days liberally distributed and vocal and instrumental harmony were the hilarity of the day. He was employed latter years at Hatch as Carpenter and after was pensioned off through age and infirmity.

**Mr. & Mrs. Potten**, tailor and barber. Stature short man. Woman of moderate size, very engaging. The Barbers sign being that of a pole seems somewhat a strange hieroglyphical representation but its design is to point out more clearly his various occupations in former times. But very - few medical men were to be found in villages and it was found necessary to have recourse to the letting of blood. The Barber applied himself to be instructed in this art. The pole was intertwined with a sort of coloured tape and this was twisted round the pole and when the patient was under this operation and being let blood the tape was bound around the arm and the pole grasped firmly by the hand. He had 2 sons Arthur and Richard. Arthur was employed as rider out by some firm in London.

Very good quiet people. His business was that of tailor and barber by the passage of the wicket gate. He possessed a small portion of meadow land, kept a cow and a few sheep a short distance from the Bower Farm where he employed his leisure hours. He was very industrious and by his various avocations obtained a comfortable subsistence, rather of a gentlemanly gait and very intelligent. He was one of the kind of indulgent husbands as we seldom find nowadays. There appears only in a few instances a refractory one and we find no stringent law enacted in that time to prevent and inflict any punishment upon the lawless husband as is now in force and therefore we must allow that a uniformity of behaviour was in existence at the time mentioned. Our worthy friend attended to his own affairs if some of his neighbours should not. If they propagated a tale he allowed them to finish it and the sparks which had kindled - some went out. He lived to a good old age and lived respected and went to his grave in peace.

**Mrs. Potten** was a very ladylike person. Her demeanor was what might be considered at that time rather engaging. This house and property formerly belonged to her husband but he rather being in declining circumstances was necessitated to part with or having to mortgage upon it. Mr. Haffenden purchased it and converted the one end of it to his profession. And this worthy lady became useful to him when his attendance was required at the shop which was twice a week Mondays and Fridays and there were no want of busy people at that time who made themselves acquainted with other persons affairs by multiplying and propagating rumours amongst their neighbours to the injury of their fellow creatures. This kind of gossip was very prevalent such as parodies or rhyming. I remember a long list of verses distributed relating to this same lady intimating a very familiar intercourse with the Doctor - but her husband being a quiet inoffensive kind of man was not moved to envy by these rumours but quietly let them pass off where as many might have taken the accounts in a different view so that our worthy friend let not the idle talk disturb his peace and in a short time this visionary imagination made its exit and was gathered to his last home. It would be much more pleasant to speak well of our neighbours than to endeavour to destroy the peace of any family. There is many who are oppressive in their affairs with mankind, of such it would be unnatural to speak in high terms of commendation. This much have I said of these parties and I hope of not giving offence to the feelings of any who may scan the account here given. I believe they never gave offence to their neighbours. This same person

on a time flattered me to my poor old mother when I visited her that I was the then handsomest in the family. NB the rest must have been rather void of their share of this much envied treasure I said.

Another Potten, a son of theirs had made some transgression in his employment. On his part he appears to have appropriated or embezzled a portion of the same. This affair became public and he quitted England which caused great grief to the old Gentleman as he had anticipated he would be a prop and comfort to him in his old days. An advancement of money to his son at times had in great measure brought his finances to a lower scale together with infirmities and complaints to which he was subject brought him to that bourne from whence no traveller returns. He was buried in the churchyard at Mersham. His widow lived some years after this in a house at the back of the Street the property of Charles Haffenden Esq., surgeon, whose medical establishment for operations was attached to the end of the house. For some years afterwards the business was taken from thence to Aldington as being more convenient to his patients as his residence at Ashford so that it was so situated as to be nearly of equal distances for the immediate accommodation of accidents, etc. etc. Mrs. Potten. The multiplying tales of the gossips of the merry and lively village of the far famed Mersham. The notes of the villagers was no less melodious than the chime and ding dong of the church bells no doubt a crack at times might be observable in the different tones. We were once favoured with a few lines relating to the beauty and cheerfulness of this church and village its various past times - when the young ladies of the neighbourhood used to practise the art of running for a prize viz. such an article as such at that period named a smock, an appellation rather vulgar in these days. These females were sometimes encouraged in their speed by some very coarse expressions, etc. But many of these games have passed away and ladies are become more refined in their manners. The amusements are somewhat renewed in regard to cricket - trap - and men using their agility have become the ruling passion of the time. But a more uniformity account is now given as which tends more to selfish purposes than in the days we may esteem as ignorance - the selfish spirit has become predominant. The neighbourly unity has been separated, ties of friendship annihilated. Self has become the standard of the times. The welcoming the neighbour in his prosperity is ceased. The sympathising in the affliction of our neighbour is but little regarded. The Christian feeling is become insensible and the good qualities that formerly existed have departed. NB No longer pipe, no longer dance.

**Mr. & Mrs. Broadfoot**, tailor. Stature - man tall and stout, woman short. Mr. Broadfoot was from the Highlands and his conversation was not at all unpleasant. These people occupied the same house as the Pottens did formally before removing to the house behind. Mr. Broadfoot was a very quiet neighbour, a just and industrious man always to be seen at his business sober and no interference with his neighbours. He was not as is too often observable in tailors to be off his shopboard by keeping the Saint Mondays and by his great attention to his business he had accumulated some portion of property by which he was enabled to purchase the house in which he lived. He was a regular attender at Church and highly respected. He first married to Mrs. Champ, a widow, but no children. This woman formerly lived as cook and housekeeper in the establishment of Sir Peter Laurie at Dover. She dying, he next married to a Jane Martyn by whom there were some children. I believe his latter years were spent more in accordance with his own feelings than his former marriage - unfortunately his first wife although a very generous benefactor and did at all times administer to the wants of her fellow creatures, yet in all these good qualities which are so essential to our own well being while travelling this weary pilgrimage she was unfortunately given to slander or surmise from a jealous disposition many evil reports of her neighbours and thereby propagate rumours of a false character which tended to ignite the small spark into a fanning flame and well may the words of the Apostle St. James be fully exemplified - The tongue is an unruly member full of deadly poison. It often was one continued scene of commotion and disquietude until at last she was affected with a most lamentable malady a cancer having thus formed on the tongue which virulence increased as the years rolled on to an alarming extent and in this suffering she continued until the messenger of Death

called her away and she was also numbered with those travellers who never return. But many days before her death she requested those with whom she formerly had these controversies to forgive her as she did those who had in any measure offended her. She was sorry and truly penitent for the slander and false accusation of an imagined brain had conjured up to the great injury of her fellow creatures. At her last we trust she fell into the arms of her Saviour and that a blissful resurrection will attend her at that day. We only point out the danger issuing from this unguarded member whereby we all of us are subject more or in less degree - that gossiping and tale bearing are the first steps we make toward our own destruction - receive no tales of this description - no not even from your greatest and intimate acquaintance - but receive and encourage all good actions of your neighbours. We now leave this subject of our neighbour and our prayers shall be that she may be saved. This person was a good friend to me and my own family and it behoves every one to be grateful to those from whom they receive assistance - Gratitude is one of the noblest gifts of Nature and gratitude to God one of the highest. It speaks forth the feelings of the heart and rejoiceth therein. She was buried on the brow near the females porch on the left entrance of the Church. Mersham.

**Mr. & Mrs. Luxford**, grocer. Succeeded Mr. James Clark and carried on business for some years. Quiet neighbours - only some little misunderstanding at times with a close neighbor which occasioned some small difference - a sort of gossip before spoken of. Both are now numbered with the dead.

**Mr. Laventon** and two sons, gardeners at Hatch House. Lived at the house on the right hand of the Street under the tenancy of Ed. Hughes Esq. Quiet with their neighbours and removed from thence to some other part.

**Capt. Lacey** and family was Barrack Master in the year of 1808-9. Occupied part of the same house at the time of the Brabourne Barracks was erecting - removed from thence to some other part.

**Mrs. Vincer Snr.** The mother of Mr. John Vincer Snr. Occupied a small cottage adjoining the Grocer's Shop. Her employment was that of spinning. She lived to a great age and her faculties underwent but little change till the last. I believe considered a just neighbour. She was interred at Mersham on the south eastern side.

**Mrs. Sarah Vincer**, daughter to the above and sister to Mr. John Vincer Snr. She lived as servant to a family for many years. She afterward removed to Ashford and resided with some of her relations but circumstances different from what she had been accustomed to weighed heavily on her mind and partly destroyed her reasoning which brought her to an untimely grave by destroying herself while at Ashford.

**Mr. Richard Clarke Snr.** Stature common size. Grazier, etc. This old gentleman was one of the old school, a businesslike person. Very jocular and pleasant and an excellent master and kept a good larder and was in truth a man much respected - and was not at a loss to entertain with an innocent mirth - he had living with him an old lady whose name was Sergison for many years who was possessed of some little property. She sold the life interest of the same to this Mr. Richard Clark for her support and she resided in his house as one of his family until her death which event did not take place until she had arrived at the advanced age of 105 - and he frequently remarked that this was he considered not a profitable speculation but he possessing a generous spirit did not let it in the least degree prevent him from enjoying the companionship of this aged pensioner - and his neighbours used often to accost him about the stocks etc. whether high or low - and his reply was that he did not think she would ever die - but at last the final summons arrived and the old lady paid the debt of Nature and her lease was then run out and his dividend cancelled forever with her. On the day of her death a neighbour meeting him thus applied to, what so neighbour you have lost your old friend at last. His reply was in a friendly and jocular manner, yes neighbour, I starved at last. This his friend

knew was quite to the reverse as he always kept a bountiful table. Mrs. Clarke died about the year 1804 and was buried at Mersham and her dissolution was caused by the dropsy.

**Mr. R. Clarke** This worthy man a few years after the death of Mrs. Sergison he died at a good old but at not so advanced age as his inmate about the age of 79 or so he died in the year 1809 and he was buried at the lower part of the Churchyard by the pathway as was also Mrs. Sergison. This was at the time that the Brabourne Lees Barracks was occupied by a large force of Military and at that period freemasonry was very strictly adhered to by most of the soldiers and they used to hold their Lodges very frequently and it was suggested that in their craft they required a human frame or bones to complete their secret pass or movements. In order to obtain the like articles the rumours then spread and the always ready gossips of villages still multiplied the affair that the burial ground of Mersham Church had been desecrated as a spade or shovel had been discovered near to the grave in which had recently been deposited our worthy friend Mr. Clarke. To quell this absurd imagination it was deemed necessary to examine the ground but no disturbance to the remains had been effected. It was not at all likely at such a time when so many soldiers were being buried daily that they would go so far to fetch a body, either for desecration or for any other purpose, as in their Hospitals they could have obtained one with much less trouble and expense. However, it was a great uneasiness to the Party whose charge the interred were in a great measure under his care although a public thoroughfare went through the ground the supposition was whether there were any complicated or concocted measures with the Sexton and the parties so employed - but it appeared that some individuals had been drinking to a late hour of the previous night and that in their frolic had taken a spade on passing through it on their return home from the Public House called the Farriers Arms. It was much frequented by the soldiers at the time being away from their Barracks. However, in time it died away and we believed our worthy friend's bones will be found resting in the spot where they were at the first deposited.

**Miss Sally Price** resided in the house formerly inhabited by Mr. Richard Clarke Snr, grazier and butcher, and after this by **Mrs. Edward Back**, widow of the so-called Doctor Back by his skill in the art of drugs used in the cure of certain maladies and diseases amongst cattle, etc. formerly of the Bell House but removed from this to Willesborough where I think she died at an advanced age. This Miss Price who was generally called Sally Price was sister to a Mr. Terry, Farmer of Quarrington, but removed from thence after the death of her brother and lived upon her little property she had - keeping one female servant to attend upon her. She was afflicted many years so that she could not lie down but took her rest on her couch or easy chair. She was truly a good charitable and pious person. She died at this house at a moderate age and was buried in the burial ground at Mersham much regretted.

**Mr. & Mrs. Welch**, Baker & Miller occupied the next house a yard between it had a large projecting window. The Bakehouse on the left of the door a small space of ground before the house adorned with wallflowers and stocks or Gilly flowers with a variety of exotics. This was a peculiar pride attached to the understanding of the industrious housewife in the village of our once esteemed Hamlet and there are numerous young men and lasses as well as flowers to adorn our Rustic Sports together with the Peal of the Bells added another cheerful vivacity to enliven the scene. These were worthy people and brought up a large family. They were quiet neighbours and laboured hard in their business. Mr. Welch rented the small Mill contiguous to the public house The Farriers Arms called by the name of the Old Mill, property belonging to the Court Lodge Farm. Here he was frequently engaged and that of his baking was carried on at his house in the Street. He died about the year of 1806-7 and was buried on a Saturday at Mersham on a very rough wet day, a circumstance I well remember for on this very day - smuggling had not then lessened its profitable and lucrative employments - about midday of this Saturday there were seated sheltering and resting from the storm and toil of labour four sturdy formidable looking smugglers with several kegs of spirits

in the open day. This would now be considered a novelty and most probably an inspection of the Revenue Officers. But the profession then was of dread and intimidation not easily dispersed. The last I remember of these what are termed lawless intruders were on the road coming from Bilsington to the Broad Oak about 9 o'clock in the morning. There were 30 pair loaded with tubs and tobacco and tea. They had a road expressly(?) to themselves - on the side - and at different distances - short post - to prevent waggons encroaching on their boundaries.

Of this person I do well remember a circumstance that may not be inconsiderate to mention in our little chronicle in as concise a manner as I am able and as I am not a person who is easily led astray or give credence to every flying tale - either what relates to the affairs of this state or that which is to come - but as the account has been furnished by one on whom can be placed the most implicit reliance - I will here state the account as verbatim as I can. This person of whom I am able to refer is this Mr. Welch and a man much respected and whose mind was much occupied in his profession. He had been unwell for some time and unable to attend to his concerns and was expected daily his dissolution. A neighbour of his was going past his Mill called the Old Mill House at some distance, that is two small meadows on his way to the Well House, a Mr. Gorhams, his attention was directed to a person which he positively asserted to be this very person Mr. Welch just upon entering the door of his Mill. Knowing at the same time that his death was hourly expected made him more positive to his identity of him and described his garments as to the very ones he used to wear. Sometimes he wore a long light coloured coat, at other times a white frock or gaberdine. This was about the hour of eleven o'clock in the forenoon. He was then on his walk to the Well house in the field leading to the Broad Oak - after this he returned home to his house which was the Church House by the Church gate about two hours after he first set out when a reply was made to him by his wife. Father you have been wanted. They have sent for you to toll the bell as soon as you can for poor Mr. Welch. This at first somewhat surprised him although knowing that he had been ill so long - but still having seen him but so short a time before - confounded him and his wife what he had seen and the manner and then he did so and he then concluded then himself that his mind must have then been absorbed in his worldly concerns. For he was so satisfied as to his figure and dress that he could not be deceived - and as he was not a drinking man and his mind was not impaired in any way and he dwelt as to the reality of this vision if such a thing ever is in existence or suffered so to be by the Director of the Universe or of the human frame that he eventually saw that of his intimate friend - this much we have mentioned as to visionary affairs if so what as to that spirit that never dies if the wandering should not cease after our dissolution here - we believe our acquaintance to have been a good neighbour and a good moral man.

The person who we copy this from was not a man known to ever have invented any trumped up tale in order to decoy or deceive his fellow creatures and we have full authority to justify the truth of this assertion in the simple manner by which he affirmed it. For he was a man who had placed for many years his full reliance upon the power of him who is all sufficient and with him nothing is impossible. The Widow Welch buried at Wye at the age of ... years also her son Richard a pupil as well as the other part of the family at Mersham under the tuition of my poor old father James Finn, a good neighbour was this old widow, a quiet tongue with a wise head, was not known by a noisy voice or a fools news, etc. also Mrs. Catt a daughter of the widow Welch buried by her in the Churchyard at Wye.

Mr. Welch was interred I think on the east side of the church but I think no tablet placed to his memory by his widow. With her two elder sons carried on the business some years after the death of her husband. The two, Thomas and John, were advancing in years so they were sufficient to conduct the business. The younger ones were sent to school at Mersham. Thomas I believe married and conducted some business at Hythe. John remained some time at Mersham to conduct the affairs and after this removed to Boughton Aluph. The remaining part of the family still dwelt with their mother until they branched out into the world, viz. George, Charles, Henry, Richard and a daughter Ann who

married to a person in the name of Catt and lived at the town of Wye - keeping a small toy shop. There was another daughter married to a person by the name of Elanor but she died and some of the sons also died. Mrs. Welch removed from Mersham after disposing of her business and was inducted into the Alms House at Wye where where she ended her days in peace at the last attended by her daughter and now her pilgrimage is at an end. There was a son Richard who was interred at Wye by the side of his mother, had been afflicted many years.

Continued in Part 4