

TATSFIELD

A SHORT HISTORY

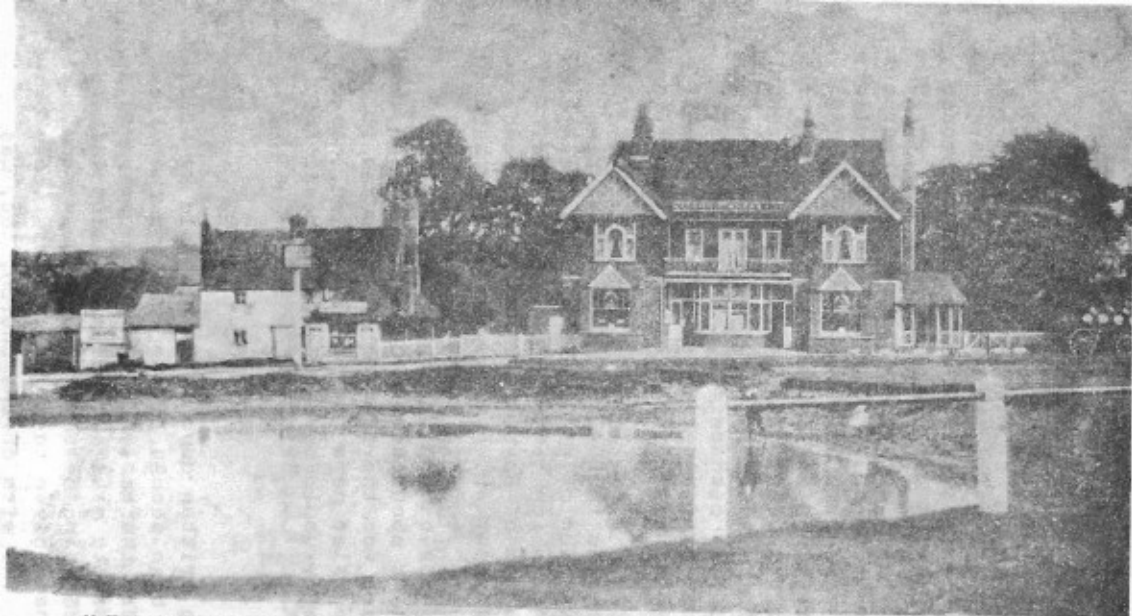
THE LAST OUTPOST

The Celts never liked travelling in valleys and they built a road along the chalk ridge which passed through Tatsfield. This road was certainly in existence in 100 AD and was adopted by the Romans as part of the important highway from London to Lewes. Once the early travellers had come down from the North Downs past Tatsfield, the terrors of the journey had really begun for them, for the road from Titsey to Lewes led them through thick forests full of wild beasts. Tatsfield was the last link with civilisation, and it was perhaps for this reason that half a mile south of Tatsfield the Romans built a small temple to mark the beginning of the dangerous travelling ahead.

In 1066 when the Normans took over this country, King William I took possession of all the lands and Tatsfield was part of the manor which the king gave to his half-brother Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux. None of the land, as described in the Domesday survey, appears to have been arable and the workers seem all to have been herdsmen - about a dozen being slaves and a dozen freemen. From that time on, the land about here seems to have been used for hundreds of years for the rearing of sheep and it is possible that the earlier name for the local inn, now called 'The Old Ship', would have originally been 'The Sheep'.

TATEL'S FIELD

Tatsfield was being written down as Tatelesfeld by 1253, although there had been people living here for centuries before that. Before the early settlers in Surrey could make a home, they had to make a clearing, called a field. Tatsfield means a clearing belonging to a man named Tadel, and Tadel was the name given to a man who made money or who owned a mint. The site of the church, too, was sacred long before the Middle Ages and there had probably been a wooden Saxon church before the Normans constructed their stone building around 1075.



WESTMOOR GREEN.

Moore Photographer, Tatsfield, Surrey

View across the pond to the 'original' Old Ship,
then being used as a Barber's Shop, and the
'new' Old Ship with Brewer's Dray beyond.

LANDED GENTRY

The feudal system of the Normans was slow to disintegrate but by the 16th century there were some very big changes. It was then that men who had made their fortunes in London were looking about for country estates not too far from London, so that they could establish their families as landed gentry. Tatsfield manor then belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury and consisted of three farms and about 40 acres of woodland. It was sold by the archbishop to Thomas de Uvedale and the Uvedales held the estate until 1634 when they sold it to the Greshams, another family which had built up a fortune in the City of London, and whose emblem was a grasshopper.

As a result of rich men moving out to the country, the 17th and 18th centuries were the time when some fine buildings were erected out of town. In Tatsfield, Colegates, which had been built in the 15th century, was altered and enlarged in the 17th century. The house now called the Manor House is basically 17th century, while Tatsfield Court Farm and Westwood Farm in Clacket Lane are both late 18th century. The original house of the lord of the manor of Tatsfield was called Tatsfield Court Lodge and it stood a little way to the north of the church. It was, unfortunately, pulled down by the last Sir John Gresham and the land on which it stood was made into a field.

BYPASSED

In 1770 a local Turnpike Act was passed and, as a result, a new road was constructed which bypassed Tatsfield. This road passes Botley Hill Farm and the little paygate cottage where travellers had to stop to pay their tolls still stands. The famous Brighton Road was not built until 1807. These new roads caused Tatsfield to remain secluded and in 1811 a survey showed that there were then 24 inhabited houses in Tatsfield. In them lived 34 families and, without exception, the people were all employed in agriculture. There were 80 men in the village and 59 women and the chief occupation seems still to have been the caring of sheep.

THE LONDON ALPS

During the Victorian era, Tatsfield became much less secluded. Parties from London had come out into the countryside in wagonettes and indulged in picnics which

they themselves called 'beanfeasts'. Tatsfield was just the right distance away from the capital to make it an ideal place for these early explorers. Then, with the early days of motoring, the steep hills around Tatsfield were very popular for hill-climbing contests.

In 1887 the Downs had been tunnelled and a railway station named Oxted was opened. There were rumours that a railway extension was going to be made to Tatsfield and this encouraged more people to come & build houses and bungalows here. In anticipation of the development, some roads were laid out, but the trains never came and the roads were never completed!

In the 1920s, London people were exhorted to 'come and live in the London Alps' and they were told that if they came to Tatsfield to live 799 feet above sea level, they would find that the air was like champagne, with enervating properties!

When the Second World War came, Tatsfield, with its proximity to Biggin Hill, could have been considered a highly undesirable area, but somehow there was little damage and in the years since then the village has continued to grow until in 1975 it has a population of close on 2,000, and can celebrate a history which has been long and varied.

TATSFIELD '900' CARNIVAL & FETE

Saturday 31 May 1975

PROGRAMME

- 1.45 Carnival Assembly in The Square, Paynesfield Road
2.00 Judging of the Floats by Oxted Round Table
2.00 Official Opening of the Fete by Major Leweson Gower
2.15 Carnival Procession round the Village
2.30 Children's Fancy Dress in the Arena
2.45 Prize Giving
3.00 - 5.00 Teas in the Village Hall
3.15 Judo Display in the Arena
3.30 Maypole Dancing
3.45 Biggin Hill ATC Band
4.00 Children's Races in the Arena

STALLS: Tombola, Books, 'Olde English', Plants, Bottle, Produce & Craft, White Elephant, Candy Floss, etc.

SIDESHOWS: Character Reading, Shooting the Candle, Coconut Shy, Wheel of Fortune, Roll-a-Penny, Goldfish, Skittles, Billiard Score, Darts, Score a Goal, Trial of Strength

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS: Miniature Railway, Pony Rides, Children's Corner

8.00 - 12.00 **CARNIVAL DANCE** in the Village Hall, with choosing and crowning of the Drag Queen at 10.00 pm

VERN D'ANJOU

TWINNED WITH TATSFIELD IN 1975

A FOCAL POINT

Vern d'Anjou is situated in the Loire Valley 10k from Segre and 26k from Angers, the main town of the department of Maine et Loire, at the junction of two main trunk roads. With a population of only 1,314, Vern is nevertheless the focal point of activity for the neighbouring villages and serves the needs of a total population of 4,000. Vern boasts more than 60 trade names, comprising shopkeepers, craftsmen and professionals; thus people come to Vern not only to visit the doctor and pharmacy, but also the notary, vet, garages, tailors, hairdressers, restaurants, carpenters, masons and builders.

Vern itself provides state and private schools for children from nursery age until the second year of middle school and a considerable choice in secondary education is available in nearby towns. More than 150 pupils are transported every day to these various state and Catholic establishments.

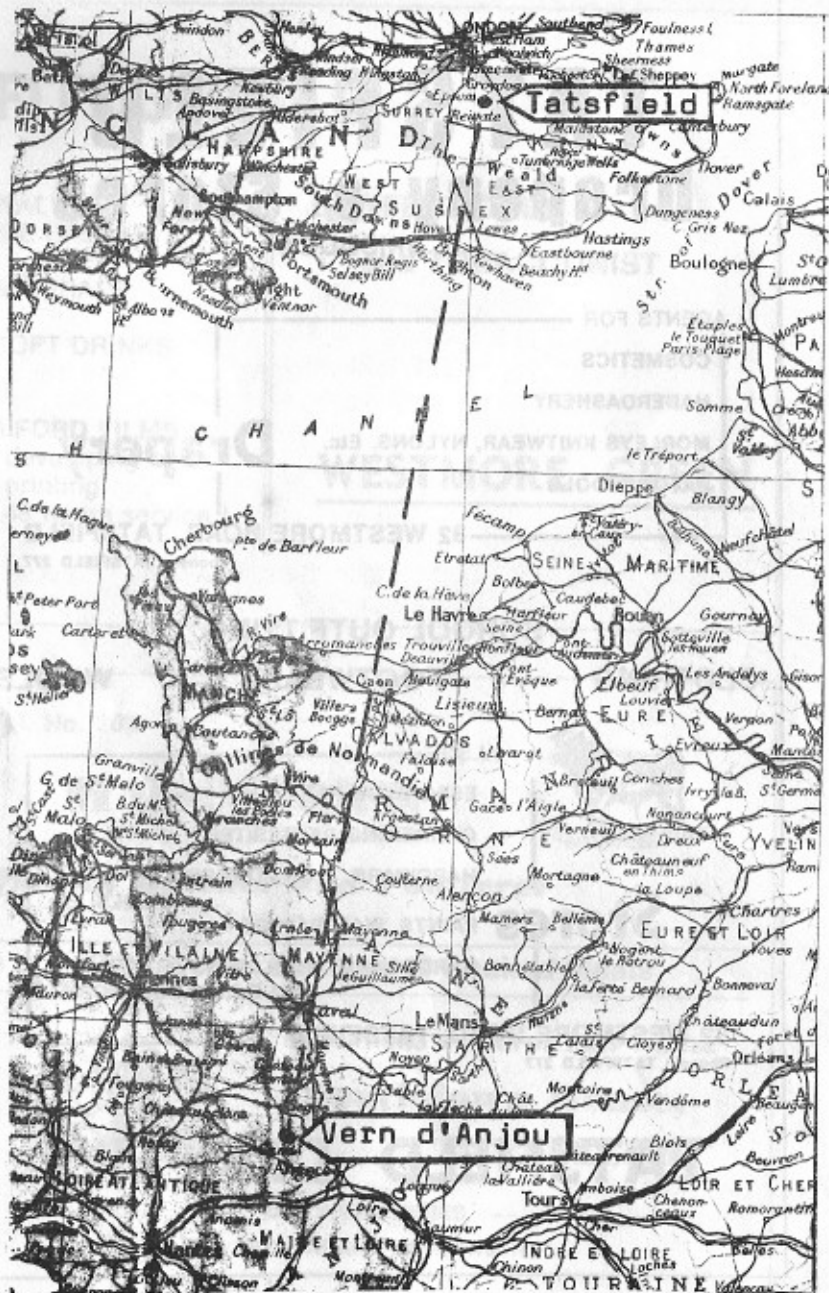
EMPLOYMENT

Vern d'Anjou has remained basically an agricultural area with 127 farms, but the population is dispersed fairly equally between the township and the land. According to the 1968 Census, 509 inhabitants out of 1,314 are under 20 years old and this tendency seems likely to continue. Apart from local employment (75 people work in the building trade alone), the people of Vern work in the slate quarries and factories of neighbouring towns and villages.

In 1866 Vern d'Anjou had a population of 2,294 and flourishing lime kilns and brick works existed. These industries have now ceased and, although the soil still contains unexplored resources, attempts to extract slate a few years ago were unsuccessful.

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The Jeanne d'Arc Club offers boys and girls the opportunity to play football and basketball, with several teams for each sport, and every Sunday lively matches take place on



the sports ground. For music lovers, young and old, the music school offers classes twice a week and there is also an instrumental group to enliven the many local dances and festivities. The Jeanne d'Arc Club has an active amateur dramatic group which stages productions several times a year in the Village Hall. A conscientious Fete Committee organises two grand events each year and, in addition, there is a horse show and an international motor-cycle scramble. The Union is a private club for adults, offering boules - a favourite game in the area. The over-60s get together one afternoon a week for relaxation.

EXPANSION SOUGHT

There is a 50-bed home for the elderly which has recently been renovated and enlarged, and community facilities such as an ambulance service, agricultural co-operative, mothers and domestic help service, driving school, banks and transport services for both passengers and freight. With improved housing standards, both in private ownership and housing estates, and the other facilities described, Vern hopes to attract further development.