

Book 8

“Once upon a time”

Wembury Memories

By Peter Lugar

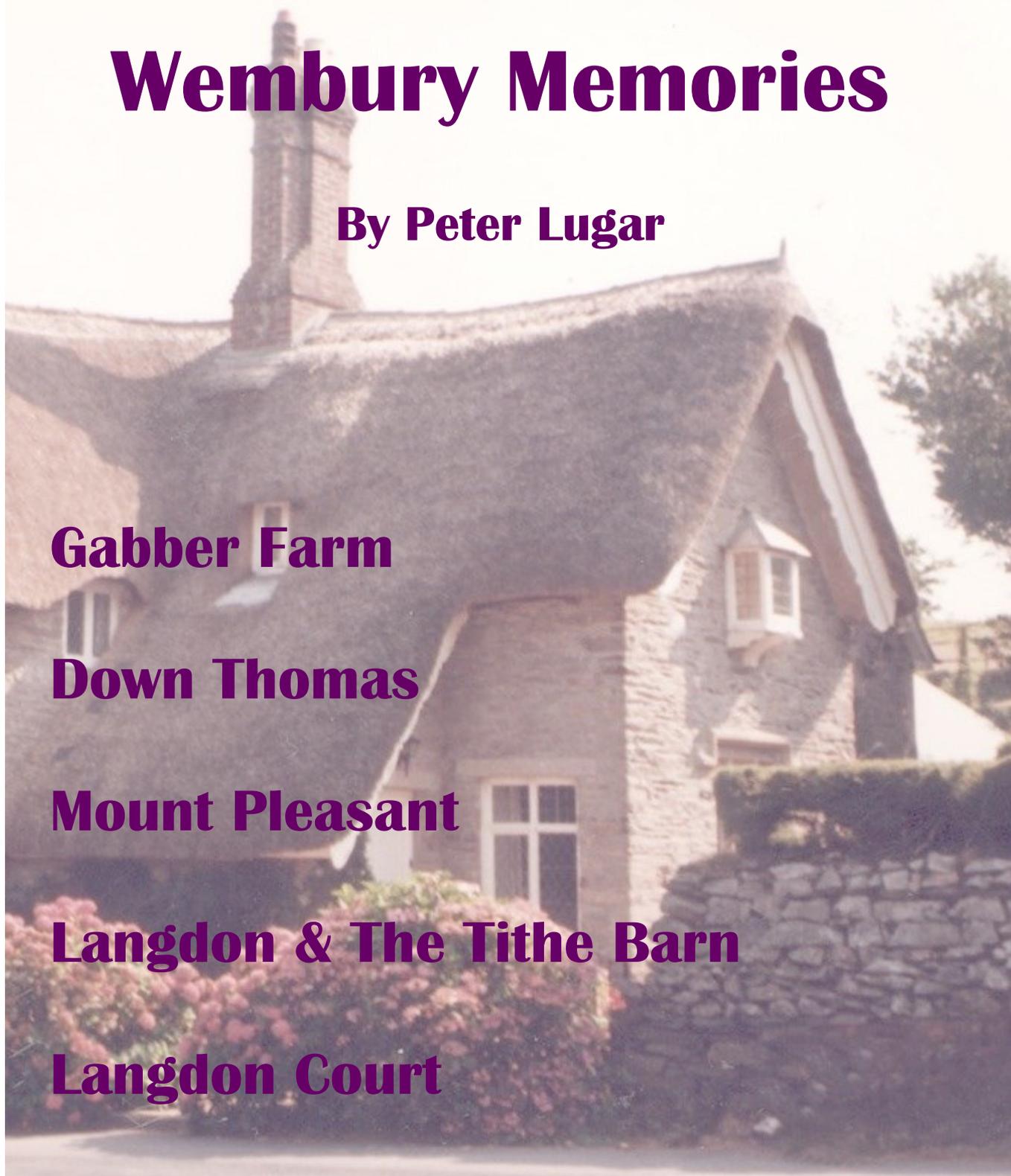
Gabber Farm

Down Thomas

Mount Pleasant

Langdon & The Tithe Barn

Langdon Court



WEMBURY MEMORIES

Foreword

These books, which now number ten, started about five years ago when I decided that photographs which were scattered all over the house should be brought together in one place. I then decided that each photograph should have a little written account of the scene or event. After filling one quite large photograph album I decided that the system needed to be more flexible where pages could be added and the categories altered as the system expanded. The A4 clip folders and punched pockets proved to be absolutely ideal for this purpose. As more and more memories came flooding back the written work was beginning to far outstrip the photographic work. I also realised that there were now very few of us left in Wembury who had been born here and grew up in the village in the 1940s and 1950s and that really a record needed to be made of what life was like in those days just after the war when we were going through our 'austere period'.

Quite a lot of the photographs were in my parents' collection and I have accumulated a lot more. Some have been lent to me to copy by friends, some have come from the internet. I have augmented these with quite a lot of new photographs. The 'Memories' are now interspersed with 'Snippets of History' and in some places my own observations and ideas. I don't think that I would have attempted this project without my 'I Mac' computer which has proved to be a godsend, although I always had it in mind to write an account of what it was like to be an eight year old in Wembury right in the middle of the twentieth century.

Peter Lugar

November 2005

**“Once upon a time when the bird shit lime
and the monkey chewed tobacco**”

**These books are dedicated to Elsie,
and many others like her, who have
gone before us in this place.**

(The story of Elsie may be found in books 2 and 9)

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WEDDING - HENRY LUGAR AND BERYL STEER

SATURDAY 11TH APRIL 1936

My parents were married at Plymstock, at St Mary's and All Saints' Church on Saturday 11th April in 1936, the day before Easter Sunday. He was 24 and she was 18, her 19th birthday fell on the 25th April, a fortnight later.

They spent their early-married life at Gabber Farm where my father had been farming since assuming ownership in 1933.

My elder brother James, and I (Peter), the first two of their five children, were born whilst they were at Gabber.



GABBER FARM - FARMHOUSE - LATE 1930s

The out of focus photograph below, of the farmhouse at Gabber Farm, was taken in the late 1930s by my mother, Beryl Lugar. The slate hung front was later changed to pebble dash by the MacBeans, the next owners.



GABBER FARMHOUSE -2007

This photograph was taken in July 2007. The slate hung front has now gone and the windows have been changed, but the house is still very recognisable from the photograph of the 1930s even though much of the front is obscured by the concrete block wall.



GABBER FARM - LINHAY - LATE 1930s

The photograph on the left was taken in the late 1930s and shows my mother, Beryl Lugar outside the front of Gabber Farmhouse with some of the terriers. Shown clearly is the lean to or “linhay” on the side of the farmhouse. This contained, towards the back, the dairy, and in the front part, the wash house which is evidenced by the large single chimney for the boiling copper. Note the milking buckets, jug and cream scalders drying in the sun!



The photograph on the right was taken in 2007 from a position further back than the late 1930s photograph. The linhay has gone and has been replaced by a full height extension to the farmhouse, with a front porch. The down pipe for the guttering is in the same position as in the earlier photograph.

GABBER FARM - HENRY WITH JUDY - LATE 1930s

The photograph below, (subject slightly obscured by shadow) was taken in the late 1930s by my mother, Beryl Lugar, and shows my father, Henry, with Judy the bull bitch on the old granite trough at Gabber Farm. The backs of the cottages on Gabber Hill can be seen on the other side of the wall.



GABBER FARM – 2007

This comparison photograph was taken a good bit further back than the one of the late 1930s showing my father with Judy the bull bitch on the granite trough. The granite trough is no longer there and the only real reference point in the photograph now is the chimney with two pots, which is the same one as in the top centre of the 1930s photograph.



GABBER FARM - CALVES - LATE 1930s

The photograph taken in the late 1930s shows calves feeding in the yard at Gabber Farm with the cottages on Gabber Hill clearly visible in the background. The young man in the photograph is Thomas Lane who worked for my father. My father also employed another man, Gerald Smith who lived in one of the cottages on Gabber Hill. They were paid £1.2s.6d (*one pound, two shillings and sixpence*) per week, which equates to £1.13 in today's money. He was shocked and stunned when the Ministry of Agriculture ruled that the minimum wage for farm workers should be £1.7s.6d, (*one pound, seven shillings and sixpence*).per week (£1.38), a rise of 5/- (*five shillings*) (25p), wondering where the extra money was going to come from!



GABBER FARM – COMPARISON VIEW - 2007

Easily recognisable from the photograph of the late 1930s, the buttress bears the same lime seepage marks as in the earlier photograph. The corrugated iron lean-to to the right of the buttress is no longer there, the stone wall has been replaced by a longer one of concrete block construction, and the cottages on Gabber Hill are almost obscured by the trees which have grown up behind.



GABBER FARM - LATE 1930s

The photograph on the left taken in the late 1930s shows my mother, Beryl Lugar, outside the front of Gabber Farmhouse with one of the terriers.



The photograph on the right was taken in July 2007 from about the same position as the 1930s photograph.

BERYL, NORAH AND ISOBEL – LATE 1930s

The two photographs below show, on the left, Norah Ward and Isobel Anstiss outside the front of the farmhouse, and on the right Beryl and Isobel, the dog I think was Isobel's. They were friends of Beryl's from before her marriage when she was a Ranger in the Plymstock Guides. Isobel was the Guide Leader and lived at "Goodamoor" at Sparkwell, she later married Sid Sandover, a Sparkwell farmer, she became Jim's Godmother in 1939. Norah became my Godmother (Peter's) in 1942.



GABBER FARM - HARVEST - LATE 1930s

This slightly out of focus photograph taken in the late 1930s shows some of the workers having a well-earned break from the harvest at Gabber. My mother, Beryl Lugar, is in the centre of the photograph, occupied in the serious business of giving out the food!

Traditionally there was always a cooked lunch at the farmhouse, but tea was taken out on the fields. This usually comprised of hot home-made pasties, sandwiches, and home-made cakes, all carried out to the field in huge baskets, and to wash it down, hot sweet tea! Every farm seemed to have the huge black kettles from which the tea, already made up in them, with the milk and sugar, was dispensed into white china cups (no cardboard or plastic in those days!).



This photograph was taken in the late 1930s during the harvest at Gabber. My father, Henry Lugar, is on the extreme left of the photograph, I have not been able to put names to the other faces.

GABBER IN WARTIME

HENRY LUGAR IN HOME GUARD UNIFORM - EARLY 1940s

Starting at the beginning of the Second World War as the Local Defence Volunteers and later to become the Home Guard, this photograph on the left shows my father, Henry Lugar, in Home Guard uniform in the early 1940s. He eventually rose to the rank of Sergeant. The photograph was taken in the yard at Gabber Farm by my mother, Beryl Lugar.



GABBER HILL - EARLY 1940s

The photograph on the right shows my brother James Lugar on his tricycle with his best friend Charlie Smith standing behind. Charlie lived in one of the cottages on Gabber Hill and his father, Gerald, was a labourer on the farm. The photographer is unknown but is thought to have been one of the servicemen who were billeted at Gabber Farm during the war.

BY DIRECTION OF THE EXECUTORS OF MR. W. T. HOCKADAY, Deceased.

Particulars, Plan and Conditions of Sale

WEMBURY, SOUTH DEVON

Within 6 miles of Plymouth and 3 miles of Plymstock.

**Gabber Farm, Two Cottages,
Accommodation Lands, and
Woodlands adjoining the River
Yealm, containing in all about
216 ACRES**

The Above will be offered for SALE BY AUCTION at
THE LAW CHAMBERS, PRINCESS SQUARE, PLYMOUTH
on THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26th, 1933, at 4 p.m.

For further particulars apply to:—

Solicitors :

MESSRS. SHELLY & JOHNS,
Princess House, Princess Square,
PLYMOUTH.

Auctioneers :

MESSRS. VINER, CAREW & Co., F.A.I.,
Prudential Buildings,
PLYMOUTH.

LOT 1

(Coloured Blue on Plan)

THE VERY DESIRABLE DAIRYING, STOCK REARING AND CORN FARM

KNOWN AS

“GABBER”

situate in the Village of Gabber and close to the Village of Down Thomas in the Parish of Wembury, extending to an area of about

106 a. 2 r. 24 p.

about five and a half miles from the centre of Plymouth.

The comfortable farm house is substantially built of stone with slated roof, and the courtyard is approached through an archway.

It contains :—

5 Good Bedrooms, W.C., two Sitting Rooms, Dairy, Kitchen with range, Back Kitchen, Separator House, Coal House, Good Garden.

THE FARM BUILDINGS for the most part built of stone with slated roof are very compact and comprise :—

Calves' House with small loft over, two Calving Houses, Large Calves' House, tie 7, Cow House, tie 12, with loft over, Cow House, tie 8, with loft over. Stabling for four with bran over, Bullocks' House, Root House, Implement House, two Cart Sheds with loft over, Piggeries.

THE LANDS comprise sound pasture and fertile arable.

SCHEDULE

| Ord. No. | Description. | Decimal Acreage. | Total Area. |
|----------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 89 | Lower Yolland | Arable 4.883 | |
| 90 | Five Acres | ” 5.644 | |
| 93 | New Park | ” 3.636 | |
| 128 | Field alone | ” 6.224 | |
| 129 | Lime Park | ” 6.367 | |
| 130 | Bute Park | ” 4.598 | |
| 170A | Great Yolland | ” 4.918 | |
| 363 | Gabber Head | Pasture 6.483 | |
| 361 | Baker's Kitchen | Arable 4.575 | |
| 360A | Lower Gabber | ” 5.551 | |
| 359A | Higher Gabber | ” 3.386 | |
| 358 | Graze's Field | ” 3.491 | |
| 357 | Lower Gabber | ” 5.088 | |
| 355 | Do. | Pasture 3.807 | |
| 354A | Gabber Hill | ” 8.032 | |
| 169 | Quillet | Arable .887 | |
| 168 | Baker's Gabber | Pasture 1.740 | |
| 165 | Gabber Hill | ” 2.139 | |
| Pt. 167A | House and Buildings | Buildings .856 | |
| | | — | 82.305 |
| 92 | Yolland Plantation | Wood — | 4.018 |
| 356 | White Hills | Arable 8.835 | |
| 401 | Smoke Park | ” 11.493 | |
| | | — | 20.328 |
| | | TOTAL | A. 106.651 |

Let to Mr. W. T. Lane on a Yearly Lady-day Tenancy at the rental of £204 per annum, subject to an abatement of £20 per annum recently agreed, Tenant paying rates.

Apportioned Outgoings : Commuted Tithe Rent Charge £16 3s. 9d. Gabber Cottages are supplied with water from roadside tap, piped from a well or tank on this Lot. (See Conditions of Sale as to Water Rights.)

This Lot is sold subject to a right of way along the Lane marked "A" and "B" in favour of the cottage adjoining.

This Lot is sold with the benefit of rights of way over the roadways 402, 442A Pt. and 364A.

LOT 2

(Coloured Red on Plan)

A CAPITAL COTTAGE AND GARDEN

Situate in the Village of Down Thomas, and extending to an area of about

5 Perches

being Ord. No. Pt. 124A (.032 acres).

The Cottage is erected in stone and thatch and contains :—

Living Room, Kitchen, two Bedrooms. Outside : Wood House and E.C. Excellent Garden.

In the occupation of Mr. J. H. Dare on a monthly tenancy at a rental of 15s. per month, Tenant paying rates.

This Lot is sold with a benefit of a right of way as now enjoyed over the pathway on the three Cottages adjoining.

LOT 3

(Coloured Yellow on Plan)

The conveniently situated Enclosure of Arable Land

having a valuable frontage to the Knighton Road and ripe for development, together with a large part of the well-known

WEMBURY WOOD

covered with well-grown oak, beech and other trees and extending down to Cofflete Creek. The whole area is about

63 a. 2 r. 23 p.

SCHEDULE

| <i>No. on Plan.</i> | <i>Description.</i> | <i>Decimal Acreage.</i> | <i>Total Area.</i> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 229 | Road Field | Pasture 24.306 | |
| Pt. 203A | Part Wembury Wood | — 39.341 | |
| | | | <u>63.647</u> |
| | | TOTAL | <u>A. 63.647</u> |

The Whole is in hand and possession will be given on completion of the purchase.

Apportioned Outgoings : Commuted Tithe Rent Charge £3 5s. 9½d.

The purchaser of this Lot shall covenant to erect and maintain a substantial fence along the Eastern boundary where indicated by a dotted line on the plan, between the points marked "C" and "D".

This Lot is sold with the benefit of a right of way for all purposes along the roadways, Ordnance Nos. 262A and 265A.

LOT 4

(Coloured Red on Plan)

Five Valuable Enclosures of Arable Land

with long frontage to the main road to Knighton Village, and a return frontage to an accommodation road at side, together with a considerable area of the well-known

WEMBURY WOOD

covered with well-grown oak, beech and other trees, and extending down to Cofflete Creek. The whole area is about

46 a. 0 r. 2 p.

SCHEDULE

| No. on Plan. | Description. | Decimal Acreage. | Total Area. |
|--|---------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <i>Let to Mr. M. J. S. and Mrs. M. Sherwill.</i> | | | |
| 231A | Furzeland | Arable | 6.724 |
| 263A | Little Furze Park | " | 2.376 |
| 255 | Big Furze Park | " | 8.287 |
| 254 | North Ditch | " | 4.087 |
| 256 | Jenys Park | " | 3.797 |
| | | | <hr/> |
| | <i>In Hand.</i> | | 25.271 |
| Pt. 203A | Part Wembury Wood | — | 20.744 |
| | | | <hr/> |
| | | TOTAL | A. 46.015 |

The Arable Land is let to Mr. and Mrs. Sherwill on a Lady-day tenancy at a rental of £32 10s. 0d.

The Woods are in hand and possession will be given on completion of purchase.

Apportioned Outgoings : Commuted Tithe Rent Charge, £2 2s. 10d.

This Lot will be sold subject to two rights of way over Ord. Nos. 255 and 263A, as at present enjoyed in favour of the Keeper's Cottage in Wembury Wood.

A right of way along the roadways, Ord. Nos. 262A and 265A is reserved in favour of the purchaser of this Lot.

LOT 5

(Coloured Green on Plan)

A Picturesque Stone Built and Slated COTTAGE AND GARDEN

(ONE OF A BLOCK OF FOUR)

situate in main street of Knighton Village and numbered 5, being Ord. No. Pt. 301 (.046 acres).

The Cottage contains :—

Two Bedrooms, Kitchen and small Washhouse. Stone outbuildings at side of house. Small Garden and E.C. at side.

Let to Mrs. E. Cobley on a monthly tenancy at a rental of 17s. 4d. per month, Tenant paying rates.

A right of way as at present enjoyed is reserved across the adjoining property to the Wood Shed, Earth Closet and Garden included in this Lot in favour of the purchaser of this Lot.

Memorandum



IT IS HEREBY DECLARED that
of
is the Purchaser of Lot _____ of the property described in the within particulars
of Sale of property and land at Wembury, South Devon, advertised to be sold by auction
by Messrs. Viner, Carew and Co., on the 26th day of October, 1933, subject to the Conditions
of Sale contained therein, at the price of £ _____ and has paid the sum
of £ _____ to Messrs. Viner, Carew and Co. as a deposit and in part
payment of the purchase money. And the Vendors and Purchaser hereby agree to complete
the sale and purchase in accordance with the said Conditions.

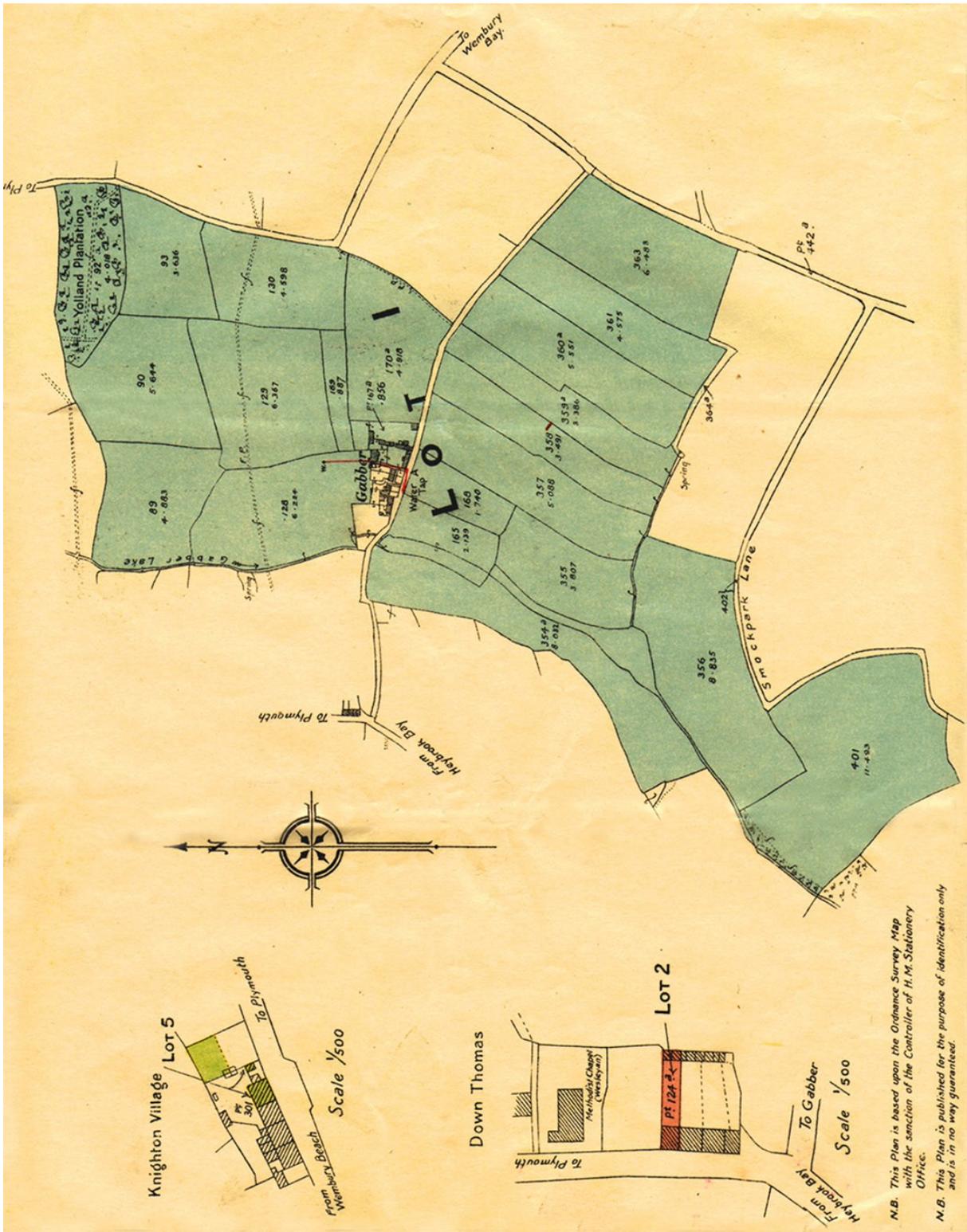
DATED the _____ day of _____, 1933.

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----|----|---|---|---|
| Purchase Money | .. | .. | £ | : | : |
| Auction Fees | .. | .. | £ | : | : |
| Contract Fees | .. | .. | £ | : | : |
| | | | £ | : | : |
| Deposit | .. | .. | £ | : | : |
| Auction and Contract Fees | .. | .. | £ | : | : |
| | | | £ | : | : |

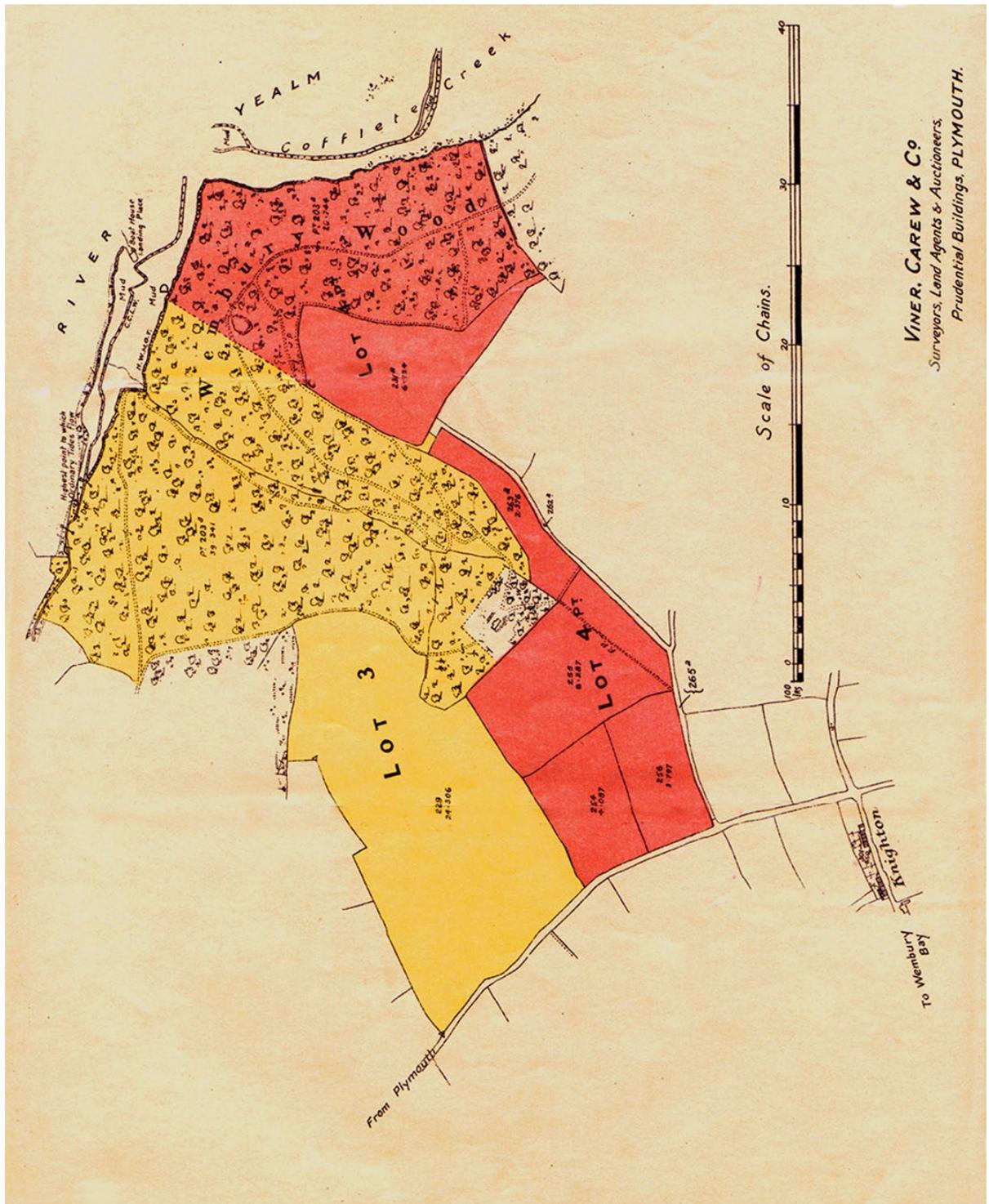
As Agents for the Vendors

WE HEREBY CONFIRM the said Sale, and acknowledge the receipt of the said deposit.

Abstract to be sent to :



N.B. This Plan is based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.
 N.B. This Plan is published for the purpose of identification only and is in no way guaranteed.



GABBER FARM - LIVESTOCK - LATE 1930s

These photographs of livestock at Gabber Farm were taken by my mother, Beryl Lugar, in the late 1930s.



HORSES AT LANGDON

This photograph taken by my mother in the late 1930s or early 1940s shows a mare and foal grazing in the field on the corner opposite Langdon Lodge. I am not sure as to whether the horses belonged to us or to Lewis Andrews, as it was his field.

The field is bordered by the road going around to the right towards Gabber and Wembury Point, and to the left going towards Down Thomas and Staddiscombe.

In the centre of the photograph can clearly be seen Langdon Lodge which at that time was occupied by the Bramwell Family.

The road going up past the lodge passes the Tithe Barn, (which can be made out above the lodge to the right), Langdon Barton, and on to Wembury Village, and the Beach.



THRESHING

In the 1950s, my Father had the threshing contract for the area and had a Ransomes threshing machine and a Fisher Humphries baler, which had to be towed behind tractors to wherever they were required. When they were on the move it was a bit like the circus leaving town, as some of the workforce walked with the machines to warn traffic ahead and to open gates as required, and sometimes to manhandle the machines when obstacles were encountered.

They were both quite substantial pieces of equipment and were belt driven from the tractors. Overall it was quite a manpower intensive operation, and when it was set up and working flat out it was quite a production line. The thresher would thresh the corn, the corn would come out of one end straight into sacks, the straw would come out of the other end and be fed straight into the baler, the bales as they came out of the baler would be made into a rick, and the chaff, that didn't get blown away on the wind, was bagged up for horse fodder! Later on, when less and less horses were around, the chaff, apart from a very little that was taken home by those who kept chickens, was burnt.

The sheaves would be brought to the thresher by tractor and trailer. There would be men there to operate the the grab on the shear legs which hoisted the them up and dropped them on top. Up on top of the machine there were two men cutting the twine on the sheaves and dropping them into the hopper. There were men on the ground at the front of the machine to feed the straw into the baler, and more at the back end to take away the full sacks of corn on the sack trolley to an awaiting trailer, and put new sacks on for filling. There were four ports on the back of the machine for the filling of sacks, each one had a sort of slide operated valve to shut it off whilst sacks were being changed. There were other men removing the bales as they came out of the baler and building the rick.

Alas, the photograph below is not of our machine, but of one exactly like it, but I felt that it was right to include it as does give some idea of the amount of work that was involved.



Threshing was always quite a sociable event, and it provided casual work for a lot of people from the village. I remember that even the Coleman brothers from the forge got themselves involved. People who were home on leave from the forces, helped out (National Service was still going on at that time). A lot of retired people helped, and also a lot of the older teenagers as well. The work usually went on until it got too dark to do any

more, so some people helped in the evenings, having worked all day at their normal jobs. A lot of people from the other farms in the area also helped knowing that it would be reciprocated when it was their turn.

George Coleman was usually on top of the machine feeding the sheaves into the hopper, a very responsible job which he took very seriously. On one occasion his companion fed his hat into the hopper for a bit of a laugh, but George did not see the funny side of it. The hat was even more battered than usual when it came out at the other end with the straw and chaff! Stan Channing from Hollacombe was another character who always had his dog 'Towser' with him, he used to have us children in fits of laughter with his antics.

There was usually a break for lunch and depending on the distance from the farmhouse, the men either went back to the house for a cooked lunch, or hot home-made pasties were brought out to the field, usually with apple pie and Devonshire clotted cream to follow. Tea was always taken out on the field and I remember the huge black kettles that used to hold the hot sweet tea, every farmhouse seemed to have them! Along with the tea there were usually sandwiches and home-made cakes. I remember that when they were threshing on Lewis Andrew's fields above the beach at Wembury Point some of them used to go into the sea to cool off during the break, it was very hot and very dusty work.

At the end of each contract everybody used to repair to the Jubilee Inn or the New Inn, where plenty of beer drinking was done and my father would pay all of the workers.

My Father's first threshing machine was a barn thresher which, with a certain amount of ingenuity and help, I believe from the local policeman, was fitted with road wheels so that it could be taken from farm to farm.

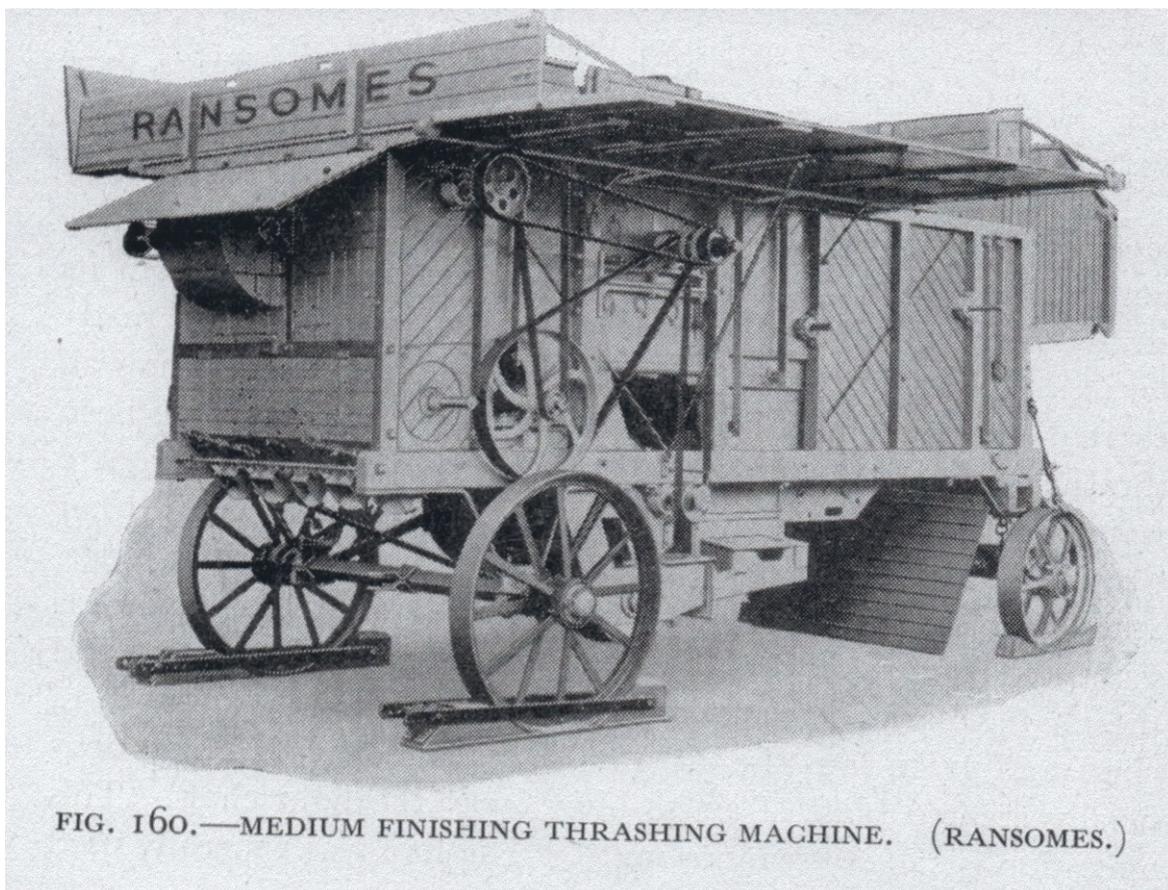
The photograph below is of the Fisher Humphries Baler as owned by my father.



My father bought the threshing machine from a farm in Hatherleigh, North Devon, just north of Dartmoor, on the Okehampton/Great Torrington Road. He went up by train to look at it and took my older brother Jim with him. With the threshing machine went a Fordson Major tractor with a winch on the back, and drive wheel on the side for operating the thresher. When he collected the thresher he went up again on the train with a friend

(Wilf Tope), and he drove the tractor towing the thresher back to Wembury, with Wilf helping out. One can only imagine what it must have been like moving a thing like that three quarters of the way across the county, through all the narrow roads and lanes that were there then. The thresher was about the size of the average furniture lorry, and coupled to the tractor the speed could be no more than 15 to 20 mph flat out! Imagine the chaos that would ensue on the roads today. There were only a couple of incidents during the trip, one was when they were near Kelly College just outside of Tavistock, where the thresher got itself unhitched from the tractor, I am not quite sure what happened, I think that the towing pin sheared off. My father realised that something was wrong when the burden all of a sudden got lighter, and the thresher began to overtake them! Wilf had to jump from the tractor to the thresher and apply the hand brake! Anyway they were able to rectify the situation and carry on. By the time they got to Crownhill it was getting dark, and as there were no lights on the thresher, they decided that the best course of action would be to park it overnight, with the tractor, go home, and come back the following morning and continue. They parked it on some very convenient Army land outside of Seaton Barracks at Crownhill. The following day when they went back, the Army were not too impressed as they hadn't asked permission, but I think Dad talked them around in his usual good natured way. However it was noticed that shortly afterwards bollards appeared surrounding the land to prevent a reoccurrence.

During the winter months the thresher used to be garaged in a large nissen hut at the old 'Ack Ack' camp between Gabber and Wembury Point. Before this it had to be thoroughly cleaned out as the last thing needed was for rats or mice to build nests in it. Then during the winter the mechanics would be checked out, all the linkages in the chain drives checked for loose pins, gear trains cleaned of chaff build up, oiling and lubrication carried out where necessary.



THE NEW INN - DOWN THOMAS

The photograph below was taken in the early 1900s.

In the late 1950s the pub was renamed the Mussel Inn. This was brought about because during renovations, a large quantity of what was thought to be mussel shells were found in the roof space acting as a form of insulation.

Whoever found them couldn't have been very knowledgeable regarding shellfish, as it later turned out that these were actually limpet shells. By this time there was no turning back on the renaming of the pub, and anyway the Mussel Inn has a much nicer sound to it than the Limpet Inn!

My elder brother and I started our lives at Gabber Farm, and well remember the pub as being the New Inn. I am not generally in favour of changing the names of pubs as their original names usually have some kind of historical significance.

I think that in this case, the "New Inn" was precisely that, in that when it opened it was the new inn for Down Thomas. Knighton already had its Ale House, which was colloquially referred to as "The Old Inn" when the "New Inn" came into being. Any confusion was eventually sorted out when in 1810 the "Old Inn" was officially named "The Jubilee Inn" in honour of King George III's Golden Jubilee. There was also a beer house at Gabber and all of these establishments are recorded in the Trade directory for 1850. John Taylor is listed as victualler of the New Inn, Down Thomas, and Edward Wilson of the Beerhouse, Gabber, Richard Gregory as victualler of the Jubilee Inn, Knighton. There is also listed, for the same year, John Natt as Cider Seller. Taking into consideration the number of people living in the Parish at that time, it would seem that they were well very catered for as regards Licensed Victualling !

In 1889 Servington Hurrell is listed as Landlord of the New Inn, in 1914 Frank Wells, in 1926, Herbert Dobson, and in 1939 Edward Willcox.



THE MUSSELL INN - DOWN THOMAS

This photograph was taken on 30th May 2007. Not a particularly bright day for the time of year.

Easily recognisable from the earlier photograph of the “New Inn” from the 1900s, the outside has been rendered, probably as a means of damp proofing, but nonetheless, rather a pity. I am sure that in these days of modern treatments for dampness, the render could easily be removed to reveal once again, the natural stonework, which could be directly painted on to, and which would add to the character of the building.

The doorway on the left of the 1900s photograph is now a window, but the other doorway with its little porch has survived, and is now the main entrance into the public rooms.



THE STAR GARAGE – DOWN THOMAS

The very first bus service in Wembury was started by James William (Bill) Newton who hailed from Nottingham. In 1919 he came to Wembury as chauffeur to Dr Clay at Wembury House. When Dr Clay died in December 1921, Bill found himself out of a job and with nowhere to live. He managed to rent two rooms behind Mr Avery's shoe shop in which he set up home with his wife and four children.

At that time there was no bus service in Wembury, people had to walk to the Elburton Hotel to pick up the GWR bus which ran between Kingsbridge and Plymouth. In 1922 he managed to get enough money together to buy second hand Model "T" Ford open sided bus, with accommodation for fourteen passengers. With this he started a regular bus service between Wembury Elburton and Plymouth. This ran on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

In 1924 he was forced off the Wembury route by the much bigger Devon Motor Transport Co Ltd. He then opened a new route into Plymouth from Down Thomas via Staddiscombe and Elburton. The business expanded into private hire and in the summer, services to Bovisand Beach. Soon another bus had to be purchased, and in 1925 Bill built his first garage on a piece of land that he had bought at down Thomas. He built the garage himself as he did the wooden bungalow behind, into which he moved with his wife, and by now, six children!

The business continued to expand but in 1943, due to declining health, Bill sold the company to Mr Tom Hart, but continued to run it until Tom was demobilised from War Service.

It then became The Heybrook Bay Motor Services, with a new garage in Down Thomas. Bill continued to run the Star Garage doing motor repairs and selling petrol.

Heybrook Bay Motor Services ran successfully until the late 1950s, then due to Tom Hart's declining health the business was sold, and on the 1st January 1959 the last independent bus service into Plymouth was taken over by Plymouth Joint Services.



THE STAR GARAGE – DOWN THOMAS

The bungalow, in the course of construction, which Bill Newton built himself behind the Star Garage. Here he is seen with his sons, Albert, Harold and John, his wife Bertha and Shep the dog. Chicken and pigs were kept in the garden and together with flowers and blackcurrants these were sold locally. He also traded in second hand furniture and household items to bring in extra income while the bus service was being built up.



The Star garage in Down Thomas in 1950 when it was being run by John and Arthur Newton. There is a Vauxhall car in the garage and a three wheeled Morgan in the gap to the right of the garage.



DOWN THOMAS – ANCIENT AND MODERN

There is over 100 years between the two photographs below. Not a lot of change seems to have taken place. The old Methodist Chapel on the left is now a private residence. The cottages have lost their thatched roofs. In the later photograph the Silver Jubilee Hall dating from 1938 can just be seen, in the distance.



DOWN THOMAS – ANCIENT AND MODERN

There is over 100 years separating the two photographs below. Not a lot of change seems to have taken place. Apart from the cottages gaining glass conservatories, and the nearest one having a different window arrangement in the end wall. The trees now block out the fronts of the cottages on Bovisand Lane, the modern road markings and electric posts, add to the street scene. No longer safe for chickens to wander in the road as in the upper photograph.



DOWN THOMAS – ANCIENT AND MODERN

In the photograph below the gable in the top left of the picture is that of the Mussell Inn, shown in the lower photograph. And the cottage on the extreme right is the same one as in the lower photograph sporting a television aerial.



DOWN THOMAS - ANCIENT AND MODERN

The cottage at the end of the first range is where the Avery family carried out their shoemaking business, hence the sign with the shoe hanging on the end of the linhay. In the lower photograph, the linhay has been built up to the full height of the rest of the cottages in the range, and is a separate dwelling.



MORE ANCIENT & MODERN 1917- 2020

Down Thomas - Cottage in Renny Road – 1920s & 2020

When compared with the bottom photograph, of a 100 years later, it is amazing what little change there has been, especially when one considers the amount of changes that have taken place elsewhere in the Parish.

In the later years the cottage has acquired the usual UPVC windows and doors, and also shutters, which do not seem to serve any useful purpose, and are totally unnecessary on the north elevation anyway

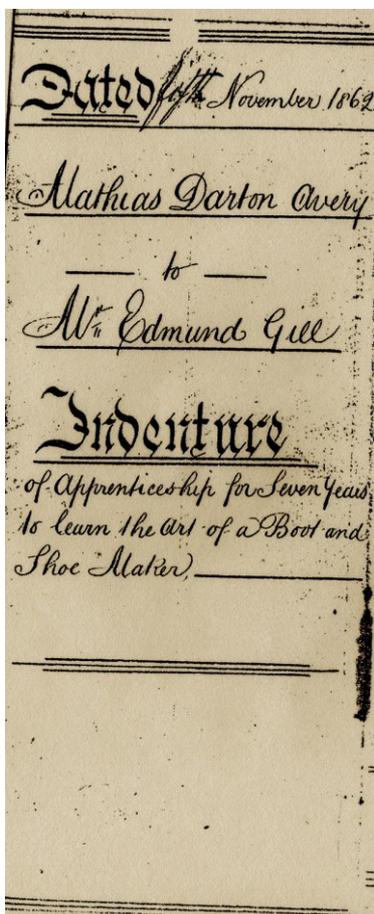
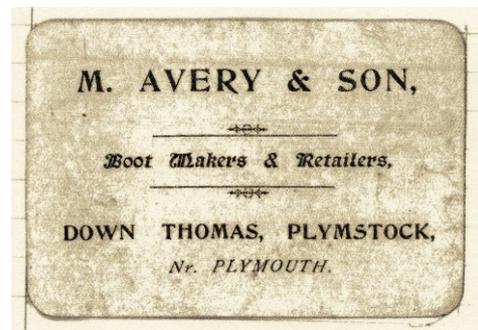


MATHIAS DARTON AVERY – BOOT AND SHOE MAKER
OF DOWN THOMAS

In November 1862 Mathias Darton Avery, son of Thomas Avery of Down Thomas was apprenticed to Edmund Gill of York Street in Plymouth “*Boot and Shoe Maker to learn his art and with him after the manner of an Apprentice to serve from the date hereof for and during unto the full end and term of SEVEN YEARS.*” We know that Mathias successfully completed the apprenticeship as he set up in business in Down Thomas as a Shoe Maker, which he eventually passed onto his son William Henry Darton Avery.



The photograph shows the cottage in Bovisand Lane, Down Thomas, from where the Averys ran their business as Boot and Shoe Makers. The sign is clearly visible on the end of the linhay under which stands Mathias Avery wearing his work apron, the woman in the doorway, presumably, is his wife.



Reading the Indenture, the apprenticeship was certainly something not to be taken lightly, especially where it states that: -

“the said Mathias Darton Avery shall, and will well and faithfully serve the said Edmund Gill for and during the said Term, and that he, the said Mathias Darton Avery shall not at any time during the said Term spoil, destroy, waste, embezzle, spend, lend, or improperly make away with any of the stock, monies, or property of the said Edmund Gill.”

It further states that: -

“he shall not haunt Taverns, Inns or Alehouses, or play at Cards Dice or other Tables, or any unlawful games or contract Matrimony, or from the service or employ of his Master absent himself without his consent first obtained, but shall from time to time, and at all times during the said term, conduct himself with all Diligence, Honesty, Sobriety and Temperance.”

Mathias’s father, Thomas had to pay Edmund Gill the sum of £15, which he was allowed to pay in three yearly instalments of £5 from the commencement of the apprenticeship. This was no mean amount for a labourer in 1862, and was probably equivalent to six months pay.

Below – Extract from the Indenture of Mathias Darton Avery drawn up on 5th November 1862. It is interesting to see that whereas Mathias could write his own name, his father couldn't, and had to put his mark. The witnesses were Edmund Gill, his new Master, and Revd Richard Lane, Incumbent, later to become the first Vicar of Wembury. It also states that the first of the three yearly instalments of £5 had been paid

Mathias Darton Avery

Signed sealed and delivered by
 the said Mathias Darton Avery
 Thomas Avery and Edmund Gill
 in the presence of _____

The Mark of Thomas Avery

Edmund Gill

Witness Richard Lane

Received the day and year above written from the before
 named Thomas Avery the sum of Five Pounds being that
 part of the consideration money mentioned to be by him unto
 me paid _____ £ 5

Witness, Richard Lane

Edmund Gill

Received fourth day of November 1863 £5 being that second
 part of the consideration money mentioned to be by him unto
 me paid
 Mathias Avery

Joseph Ann Gill
 Care of half of E Gill



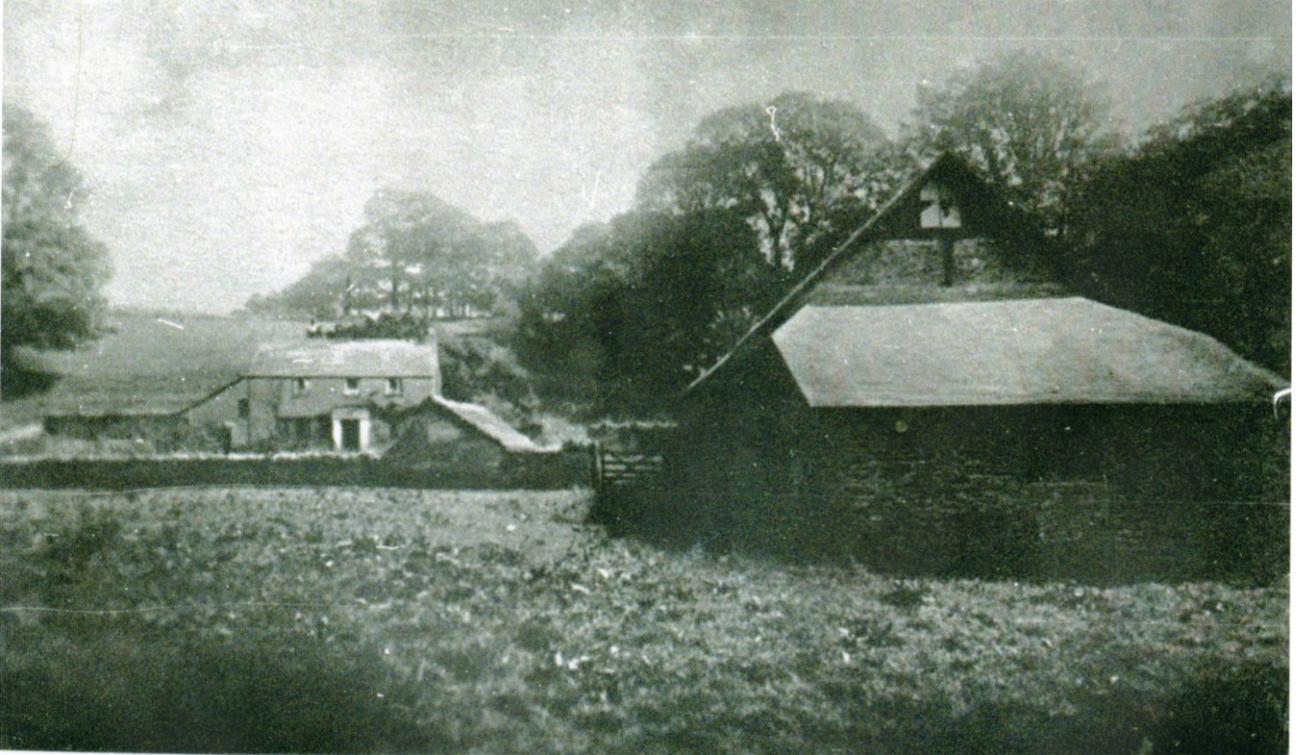
Avery sign from about 1914



A photograph of the Avery family thought to have been taken during the First World War, judging by the two young men in military uniforms.

FORD FARM - 1927 AND 2009

The two photographs below were taken more than 80 years apart, the top one in 1927 and the bottom one in 2009. The large barn on the right is now a residence and the linhay on the left hand side of the farmhouse has been extended to the full height of the house, continuing the roof line. The sycamore in the lower photograph prevents this from being clearly seen.



FORD COTTAGE

The photograph below dates from 1928, and is from a sales catalogue for the cottage and other properties that had been purchased from the Langdon Estate in the previous year

The remains of the cottage can still be seen at Ford where they back on to the road at the right angle bend at the very bottom of the hill.

When we were children in the 1940s and 1950s the cottage was occupied by Billy Milden and his wife. He was retired, and had been for some years, after a lifetime of working for the Langdon Estate. His wife was virtually housebound, and I believe, was confined to a wheelchair.

The cottage was originally a gamekeepers cottage and was quite substantial in size. I do not know whether Billy was employed in that capacity by the estate or not. It belonged to Bob Stansell who had bought it in the early 1950s, with Billy as a standing tenant, along with the rest of the Church Walk Wood which he made into the holiday camp, known locally as "The Chalets".

In the late 1950s the cottage was condemned as being unfit for human habitation, there was no electricity or sanitation. The water supply was from the stream that ran past the cottage, which would be on the right hand side looking at the photograph. The lavatory was outdoors of the "bucket and chuck it" type, and many people believe that this was a contributory factor in Billy being able to grow the biggest and best rhubarb in the area, something which he usually swept the board with at the annual Garden Show!

Billy and his wife were rehoused by the local council, at Plympton St Maurice in one of the old peoples' bungalows there. She was absolutely thrilled to bits with it, she thought that she had died and gone to heaven! It was the first time in her life that she had not had to go outside to get water, or to use the lavatory. To have a bathroom, and light at the flick of a switch was something that she had only ever dreamt of. She died in the mid 1960s, and Billy soldiered on until about 1976.

Regrettably the cottage, which was already in a sorry state of repair, just fell into complete ruin. Parts had to be demolished to make the ruin safe and the lower part of the outer walls, which is all that now remains, were incorporated into the flat roofed storage facility, which now occupies the site.

It is a great shame as I remember it as a very pretty cottage with a lovely garden, and with the stream wending its way to the beach. I do not think that its demolition would have been allowed today, as like "Aberdulais", at Watergate, it could have been rescued.



FORD COTTAGE 1950s

This very grainy photograph, enlarged from a snapshot, is of Ford Cottage and was taken in the 1950s, from the orchard. Billy Milden and his wife had lived there for many years.

They were both well into old age when we were children, and Mrs Milden was confined to a wheelchair.

Billy was a keen gardener and neat rows of plantings can be just made out in front of the cottage.

The corrugated iron roofed structure in the foreground is one of the three pumping stations that were a part of the village irrigation and water system. The building is mostly underground and contained, even in the 1950s the overshot waterwheel and hydraulic ram which pumped the water to the top of Knighton Hill. There was another identical pumping station at the Spirewell end of Park Wood near Langdon Court and a third later one was built at the other end of the orchard.



CYCILE CALMADY - "FORD"

This charcoal drawing of Ford looking towards the back of Ford Cottage as seen when approaching from the direction of Langdon, was drawn in June 1846 by Cycile Calmady, it measures 7¹/₄" x 5¹/₂"

Cycile was the fourth daughter of Charles Calmady and his wife Emily, and was born in 1824

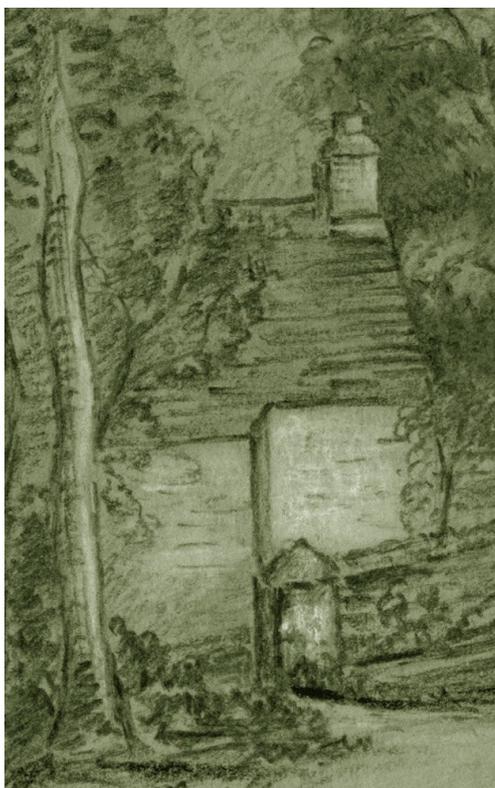
Sadly only the ground floor of the cottage remains, this has been fitted with a flat roof, and is used as a storage shed

One of the gateposts can be seen at the end of road. There were, at one time, a pair of gates at this point indicating that this was the entrance to the estate proper!



FORD COTTAGE – 2009

Sadly this is all that now remains of Ford Cottage. This is the back of the building all of the windows were at the front facing south down the valley. It is the right-hand corner that can be seen in Cycile Calmady's drawing of June 1846 (detail shown below).



Detail from Cycile Calmady's drawing Entitled 'Ford' of June 1846 showing the abutment with the chimney above easily recognisable in the 2009 photograph.

FORD VALLEY – 1938

This photograph was taken in 1938 from one of the high fields on the eastern side of the valley looking north. Ford Cottage can clearly be seen in the mid ground, with Ford Farm over to the right.



FORD VALLEY 1960

This photograph looking across Ford Valley towards Mount Pleasant on the hill in the distance, was taken by Kenneth O'Connor in April 1960.

On the floor of the valley over to the right, can be seen the shippen at Ford Farm which has now been made into a dwelling.

In the centre, is Ford Cottage, a former gamekeeper's cottage, which regrettably is now reduced to a single storey building with a flat corrugated iron roof, and is used for storage.

Over to the left is the outdoor lavatory and garden shed roofed in corrugated iron. The 1970s house erected by the Stansells now occupies this area

The area, in the right foreground, bounded by the fence and gorse bushes was Ford Orchard. At the bottom of the slope, in the orchard, was a small wooden dwelling which in the 1940s and 50s was occupied by the Jude family.



LANGDON LODGE - 1960

This photograph of Langdon Lodge was taken by Kenneth O'Connor in April 1960.

Taken from the roadway to the west of the tithe barn it shows the whole extent of the cottage with the older thatched portion giving onto the roadway, and the newer Victorian extension going out at the back.

Further on at the road junction it can be seen that the corner opposite the junction has not been 'rounded' as we know it today, but is still a rather tight right angle.

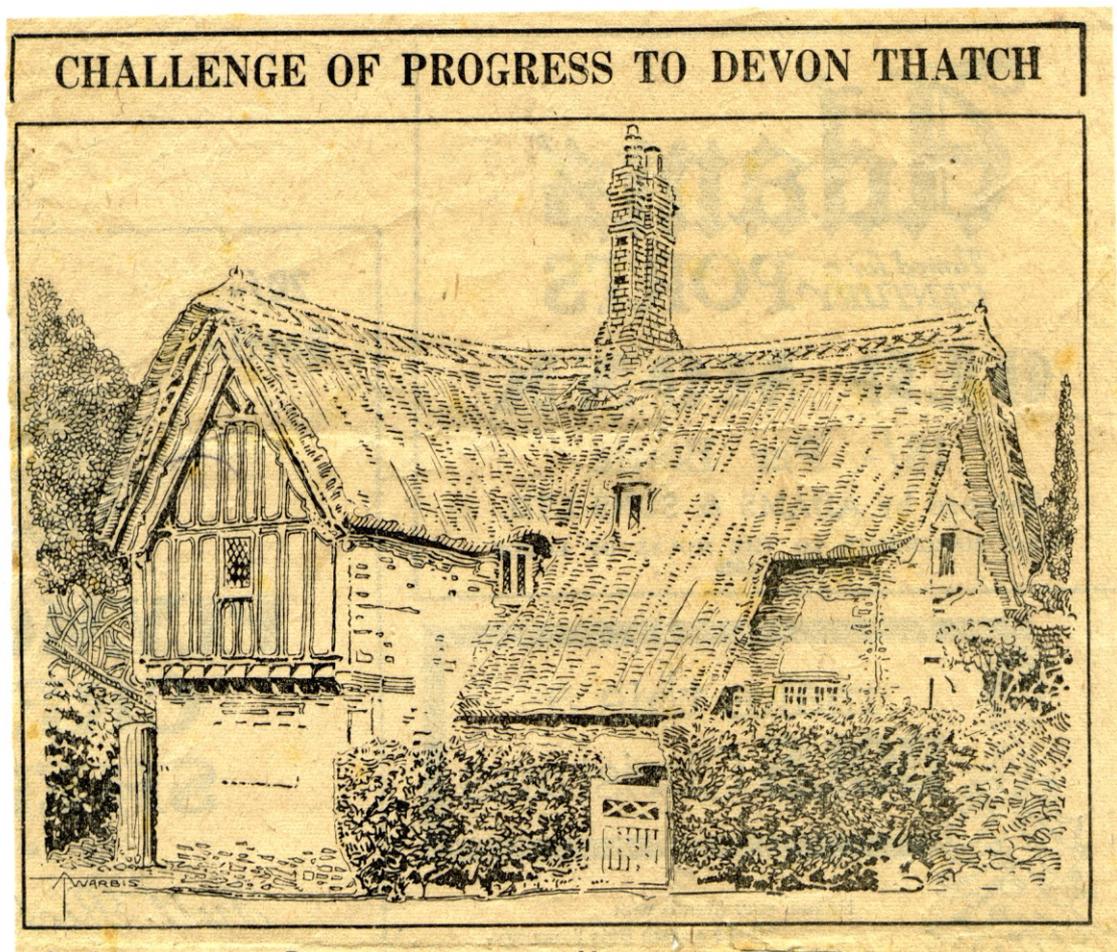


This photograph shows same scene taken on 22nd March 2020, some 60 years later, showing how the hedges have been allowed to grow unchecked into full sized trees.

The bank was not really meant to support this extent of growth, and it will only be a matter of time before gravity comes into play!

LANGDON LODGE - 1950s

This article about thatching appeared in the South Devon Times in 1958. It is interesting to note that the cost of re-thatching the cottage at that time was estimated to be about £200, and that £7 or £8 should be set aside each year for 25 to 30 years to cover the cost next time! There was also an additional expense in that the roof would need re-ridging at 6 or 7 year intervals, at a cost of about £20 to £30!



Coming upon a Devon thatched cottage that looks like a poem, such as this one near Langdon Court, often suggests the thought: "What a pity the craft of thatching is dying out."

Admirers of it can be reassured; it is not. Devon, it was recently estimated, has 110 thatchers. And they are being kept busy.

How much does it cost to fit a house with a thatched roof? An estimate was given a few years back that for one 43 feet long and 20 feet deep, the first bill would be about £200. The roof lasts 25 to 30

years; so one would need to put by £7 or £8 a year for the next time, with an additional amount to cover re-ridging every sixth or seventh year at a cost of £20 or £30.

But, then—the warmth, the comfort, the beauty! Small wonder that the real danger to thatched cottages comes not from people's preference, but from modern threshing machines and combine harvesters. These are yearly making the "wheaten reed" more difficult to get, and may yet, by the remorseless stride of "progress," make the Devon thatched cottage a thing of memory.

It should be also noted that even back then there were worries about modern harvesting methods making the wheaten reed more difficult to come by, and that thatching could die out altogether.

LANGDON LODGE – 1927 and 1986

The top photograph of Langdon Lodge dates from 1927 when it was taken for inclusion in the sales catalogue for the sale of the house and estate on the death of Richard Cory.

The lower photograph was taken by Michael Arnold in 1986 as part of a series of photographs for inclusion in the local footpath guide. Not a lot has changed except for the chimney of the house gaining chimney pots and the corner pillar of the Langdon Court Gateway losing its finial.



LANGDON LODGE - 1995

This photograph was taken in August 1995 and shows the lodge at its best, when it is bathed in afternoon sunshine.

It is the only thatched cottage left in the parish and for many years was the lodge house to Langdon Court (or Hall as it was).

In the 1950s it was owned by the Bramwells. Mr Bramwell, (Ginger) had a dental practice in Plymouth, and in the 1930s and 1940s was our family dentist. Once after a very strenuous effort in trying to remove one of my father's teeth, he recommended that in future he should consult a horse doctor!

The Bramwells lived in the lodge from way before the Second World War right through to the 1970s, when Mrs Bramwell remained there alone, in Widowhood.

In the early 1940s Mrs Bramwell often used to ring my mother at Gabber Farm to let her know that my older brother, Jim, had just gone past the cottage at 'tremendous speed' on his pony, a lovely little grey called 'Gypsy'.



LANGDON LODGE IN THE SNOW - 1980s

This photograph of Langdon Lodge was taken in the early 1980s after a particularly heavy fall of snow. Very Dickensian! all that is needed now is a coach and horses and a robin! Lighting not awfully good, but then, what do you expect from an Instamatic?



LANGDON LODGE – JUNE 2019

This, the most recent of my photographs, shows the cottage looking as timeless as ever.



MOUNT PLEASANT

The photograph below of Mount Pleasant Farm House was taken in August 1995. I have always thought the name to be most appropriate, it is a very pretty house, and the views out over the valley to seawards are lovely. There used to be a chimney on the left hand side of the house, which matched the one on the right, it was removed in the 1970s, which was rather a pity as it has spoiled the symmetry of the building.



Before the house was built there was, at one time, a folly to the north west of where the house is sited. This was in the form of a hexagonal tower in two stages, with windows in each face of each stage, and an embattled top. This afforded marvellous views out over the surrounding countryside, right up to the moors, and out to sea, hence the name “Mount Pleasant”. The Calmady family had this built as part of the extensive pleasure grounds of the nearby Langdon Hall.

The photograph below is of a picture in Plymouth Art Gallery, by an unknown artist, which dates from about 1705-1707. About that time Langdon Hall was extensively remodelled and the gardens created under Shilston Calmady. The house and gardens are shown in great detail, as are many other landmark features such as the Tithe Barn, and Wembury Church on the extreme left. Dominating the scene is the folly at Mount Pleasant.



Painting of Langdon Hall and Gardens 1705-1707 - Artist unknown

My first memories of Mount Pleasant go back to 1945 when we were at Old Barton Farm. My mother had gone into hospital to have my younger brother, Thomas, and I used to be dropped off there daily, by my father, for Mrs Body to look after me.

Most of the day was spent in the kitchen which was in the lincay to the left-hand side of the house, and which ran for its full width. It was a long narrow room very comfortable and homely. I was given a very responsible job to do, putting the cutlery into the right sections in the drawer, after it had been washed and dried at each mealtime. I remember having to stand on a chair to be able to look out of the window that faced out onto the road. I was allowed out into the garden contained within the high walls to the left of the house, but not into the farmyard. On the far side of the garden against the road were the old kennels, a throw-back to the days when the tenant of Mount Pleasant was also the Kennel Master to the Squire. I remember the old kennels being badly damaged by fire in the 1950s.

George, Mrs Body's son, who at that time was in his 20s, was always out on the farm working so I didn't see much of him, except for mealtimes. George was a bit of a character in the village he was never seen without his Wellington boots, in fact it was said that he even attended dances at the Village Hall wearing them. Tragically George died, aged 40, in 1960

Mr Body Senior, Harry, had died in 1941.

Dorah, the daughter, was in the house all the time as she was wheelchair bound. I don't know what it was that caused her to be crippled in that way, but whatever it was, it came on very suddenly, as she was very fit and healthy as a teenager. Ironically it had been arranged that she should go to Germany to see a specialist there, and that there was some hope of her making a recovery. This was in the late 1930s, and of course events that took place in 1939 rather put paid to that plan. Dorah eventually married in the 1960s, and went to live in Plymstock, she died in 1976.

There was another daughter who had married and moved away, to Bristol. Her married name was Lippett, and she had a daughter Elizabeth (Liz), who many years later used to stay at Mount Pleasant during the summer, and usually joined in with our gang on the beach.

The photograph below is Mount Pleasant as seen from the high fields to the north of Langdon Court.



LAUNDRY COTTAGE – 1927 AND 2007

Laundry Cottage, as its name suggests was exactly that. It housed the laundry for Langdon Court up to the time that the estate was broken up in 1927. The photograph below dates from that time when it was taken for inclusion in the sales catalogue for the sale of the house and estate on the death of Richard Cory.



This photograph was taken in 2007 from a slightly different angle to the one taken in 1927. The house and buildings are essentially the same although in the 1927 photograph there seems to be an additional outbuilding on the slope behind to the right of the picture.



LANGDON BARTON

The photographs below of the farm house at Langdon Barton were taken in August 1995 .

My first memories of Langdon Barton were in the late 1940s when my father used to take his threshing machine there to thresh corn for Lewis Andrews. We, that is my older brother Jim and I, used to go around to most of the farms with my father when he was threshing. On one occasion we were sent back to the farmhouse for something, I can't remember what it was now, but Mrs Andrews was busy doing something else so we had to wait. She put us into the dining room, (the one with the French windows) where there was an old fashioned radiogramme which played 78 rpm (only) records. She very trustingly left us alone with this valuable piece of equipment to amuse ourselves until she was able to deal with us. Well of course we had never come across something quite as technical as this, apart from the wind-up gramophone at Wembury School! We did treat it with great respect, and must have exhausted all of the Andrews's record collection before we were reluctantly sent on our way with whatever it was we had been sent there for! I expect that the old radiogramme has long gone, but it always comes to my mind whenever I pass by the farm.

The Andrews family have farmed at Langdon Barton for over 100 years now (2005). When Lewis Andrew's parents first went there it was part of the Langdon Estate. They saw the transition from horse power to tractors. At one time there were 20 horses at the farm, 12 shires and 8 colts. In 1927 after the death of Richard Cory, the Langdon Estate was split up and sold. John Andrews bought the farm buildings and 200 acres for £5,650. In 1965 the farm was valued at £43,700. I daren't think what its value might be now! Before the war, 7 local men were employed on the farm and there were 3 farm cottages. The farm was livestock and arable. Dairy cattle, pigs and sheep were kept; barley, wheat, potatoes and swedes were grown (swedes mainly for the animals). Mrs Andrews used to sell milk, butter, cream and pork in Plymouth Market, travelling in and out by pony and trap. Pork was cured and salted, and cider was made on the farm, and kept in 50 gallon casks. This was very beneficial to the farm hands, especially at harvest time.

Electricity came to the farm in 1936, mains water not until 1948. Up until then the pump in the yard was used, but this sometimes used to run dry, when this happened water had to be got from the well at Raneleigh.



For a while, during the nineteenth century, Langdon Barton also served as the Vicarage. We are told that the Minister Richard Lane, who later became the first Vicar, lived there in those days before there was a vicarage. Whether he lived in as a lodger, or had his own apartments is not known.

The Tithe Barn rebuilt in 1706 by Josias Calmady, was the oldest part of the complex, and was sold off separately in the 1980s, and converted into a dwelling. In the 1950s, when it was still used as a barn, it was a wonderful place for playing. The doors which led out onto the road were usually closed. We used to have to climb up over the wall to the west of the barn and sneak along and try and get in through the large doors at the west end. Once inside it was paradise for young boys especially if it was only partially filled, the great high roof and the arrow slits (as we thought they were) in the walls, made one feel if one had been transported to Nottingham Castle and Robin Hood Country! We were always looking for the secret tunnels which we were told went from there to Langdon Court and even one to the Church, which would have been a feat of engineering, had it existed! We normally took candles and matches with us for this purpose, but usually just ended up traversing the tunnel that went around the building at ground level. I sometimes look back on what could have happened, a bunch of kids armed with candles and matches, in a huge barn which was usually at least half full of hay, it doesn't bear thinking about! Our visits usually ended by Gordon Axworthy hearing us in there making a noise, and coming along and heaving us out, threatening to tell our various fathers, he knew all our names!



LANGDON BARTON – 1927 AND 2020

The top photograph dates from 1927 when it was taken for inclusion in the sales catalogue for the sale of Landgon Court and the estate on the death of Richard Cory.



The photograph below, taken almost 100 years later, shows how little change there has been outwardly. The telegraph post has given way to an electric post, sited slightly further back, and the farmhouse has gained an extra window upstairs! Part of the farmyard wall has been cut back, and these days sheep are not encouraged to roam at will in the roadway!



LANGDON BARTON - OUTBUILDINGS - 2005

This photograph was taken in September 2005, and shows some of the outbuildings at Langdon Barton where pieces of worked granite have been re-used in their construction. These would have been taken from the original Elizabethan Wembury House which it seems was systematically cannibalised over many years to provide stone for many building projects in the village.



This photograph shows the old shippen at Langdon Barton where a quite substantial piece of worked granite has been re-used as a door lintel.



LANGDON BARTON - CONVERSION OF FARM BUILDINGS – 2007

This next series of photographs, taken in April 2007, show the farm buildings at Langdon Barton in the process of being converted into residential accommodation.



LANGDON BARTON - CONVERSION OF FARM BUILDINGS – 2007



TITHE BARN AT LANGDON - 1995

This photograph of the Tithe Barn was taken in August 1995 some time after it had been converted into residential accommodation.

Back in the early 1950s when it was still being used as a barn, we used to love going there, it was the perfect place to play. Not knowing what its true purpose was we always called it “the haunted house” especially when older children had regaled us with stories about strange things happening there at night, and other instances of skulduggery. When there was not a lot of hay or straw in the building it was like some great baronial hall, and lent itself perfectly to games involving Knights of the Round Table or Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham, especially with the arrow slits in the walls, which is what we thought they were, and not for ventilating the building as was their true purpose. The great beams going across the barn were just huge tree trunks roughly hewn into a square cross section, they must have been about two feet six inches thick, and the span about thirty feet. It was also great fun when it was stacked high with bales, climbing to top of the stack, it must have been about thirty or forty feet high. We usually went there armed with candles and matches to investigate the tunnel which ran right around the outside of the building at ground floor level, and from which we were told that there was a secret tunnel going out to the Mewstone (if this had been the case it would have been a feat of engineering worthy of the Channel Tunnel). I think it was in fact part of the ventilating system to ensure an air supply to that part of the building which was virtually underground. Very often Gordon Axworthy who worked for Lewis Andrews used to come and drive us out having heard us all making a racket! He would bellow in one end of the tunnel and we would come running out of the other end, by which time he was there ready to greet us. He didn't know our names but he knew whose children we were, and as each child emerged he would say “Farmer Lugar's boy,.... Farmer Lugar's boy,.... Farmer Booth's maid,.... Farmer Booth's boy,.... Farmer Clifton's maid,.... Farmer Lugar's maid”, and so on. There were usually hoards of other children as well, who he didn't know the parents of such as Nina Densum, Gerald Full, David Haines, Edward Milden, Geraldine Thomas, etc., etc. He always threatened to get right on the phone to our parents, but never ever did.

It is very nice to see that in its conversion to a house the integrity of the building has been maintained. The only noticeable addition from the road is the chimney.



TITHE BARN AT LANGDON – 1857 AND 2006 - “OLD JOSIAS”

This picture below of the Tithe Barn was painted in 1857 by Gertrude the youngest of the five daughters of Charles Biggs Calmady of Langdon Court. The painting which is a water colour, measures 10.75 inches by 7.5 inches, it is entitled “The Old Josias” by G. E. C. (Gertrude Elizabeth Calmady) and is dated June 20th 1857. “The Old Josias” was a family name for the tithe Barn which had been built by Josias Calmady in the 17th century.



The photograph below was taken on 11th January 2006. It has not changed a lot outwardly from 1857, when it was painted by Gertrude Calmady. It has now long ceased to be used for its original intended purpose, and is now converted to residential use.



LANGDON COURT SALE - NEWSPAPER CUTTING - 1959

This photograph, with the caption, appeared in the Western Evening Herald in 1959, just before Plymouth Hospitals put the house up for sale by auction.

It would seem that somebody got a bit confused between the Tithe Barn and Langdon Court, although how anybody could confuse a building quite as forbidding looking as the Tithe Barn with a convalescent home for children is a bit beyond me!



HISTORIC WEMBURY MANSION TO BE AUCTIONED

16th-CENTURY LANGDON COURT

LANGDON COURT, Wembury, the 16th century mansion that was turned into a children's convalescent home after World War II, is to be auctioned next month. Plymouth Special Hospitals Management Committee has no use for it, says a spokesman.

Situated about two miles from the River Yealm yachting centre and six miles from Plymouth, the property includes 54 acres of gardens, park, and woodlands.

The house itself, which is excellently maintained, contains seven reception-rooms, a fine palm court, seven principal bedrooms, four bathrooms, ample staff quarters, and well-equipped offices, with central heating in the chief rooms and corridors.

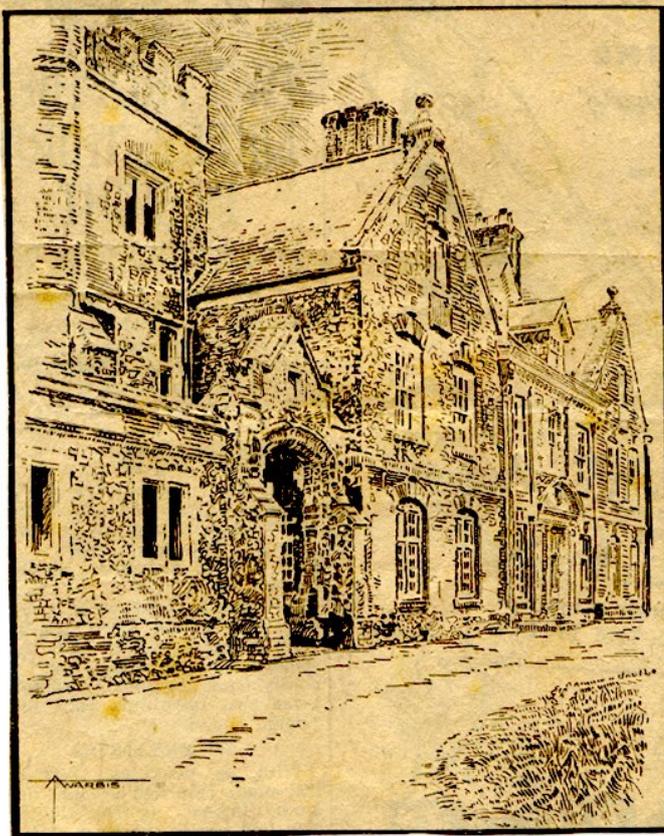
Built originally in 1577, it had a new front set between the wings in the first decade of the 18th century. Windows built in 1707 still remain.

More modernisation was done during Victorian times, and after the last war it was adapted as a home for 32 children.

Besides the installation of television, a donkey and cart were provided to take the youngsters to the seaside. The future of the old building was under discussion as long ago as June last year.

Messrs. Woolland, Son, and Manico are the auctioneers.

'BASE' FOR THE DONKEY CART



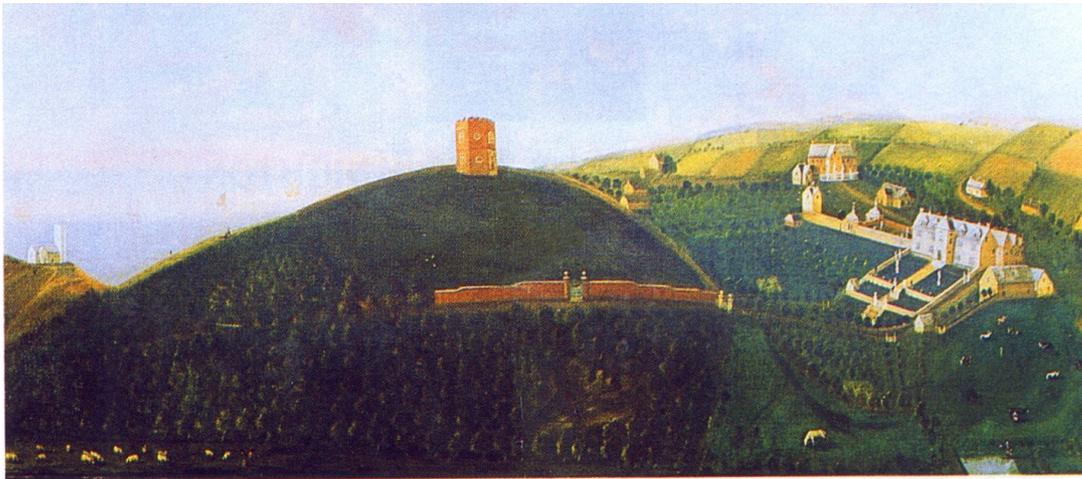
England's "stately homes," built originally for the great families of the past, have been put to many uses in our generation. None could have been more generally liked than the purpose served by Langdon Court, Wembury, since the war, when it came under the Health Service as a convalescent home for children.

Built originally as an Elizabethan mansion in 1577, a new front was set between the wings in the first decade of the 18th century, and, as evidence that England still has her peaceful corners, the windows built in 1707 still remain. In Victorian times Langdon Court

was further modernised, and after World War II, more work was done to make the place an ideal home for 32 children. Imagination was shown in that, for beside installing television, a donkey and cart were provided to take the youngsters to the seaside. The donkey is still there, though the future destiny of this fine old mansion is now under discussion. Whatever that destiny comes to be, while the mansion stands it will hereafter look back to a happy period when children convalescent there rode out in their little donkey cart from a place that was once exclusive for the grand carriages.

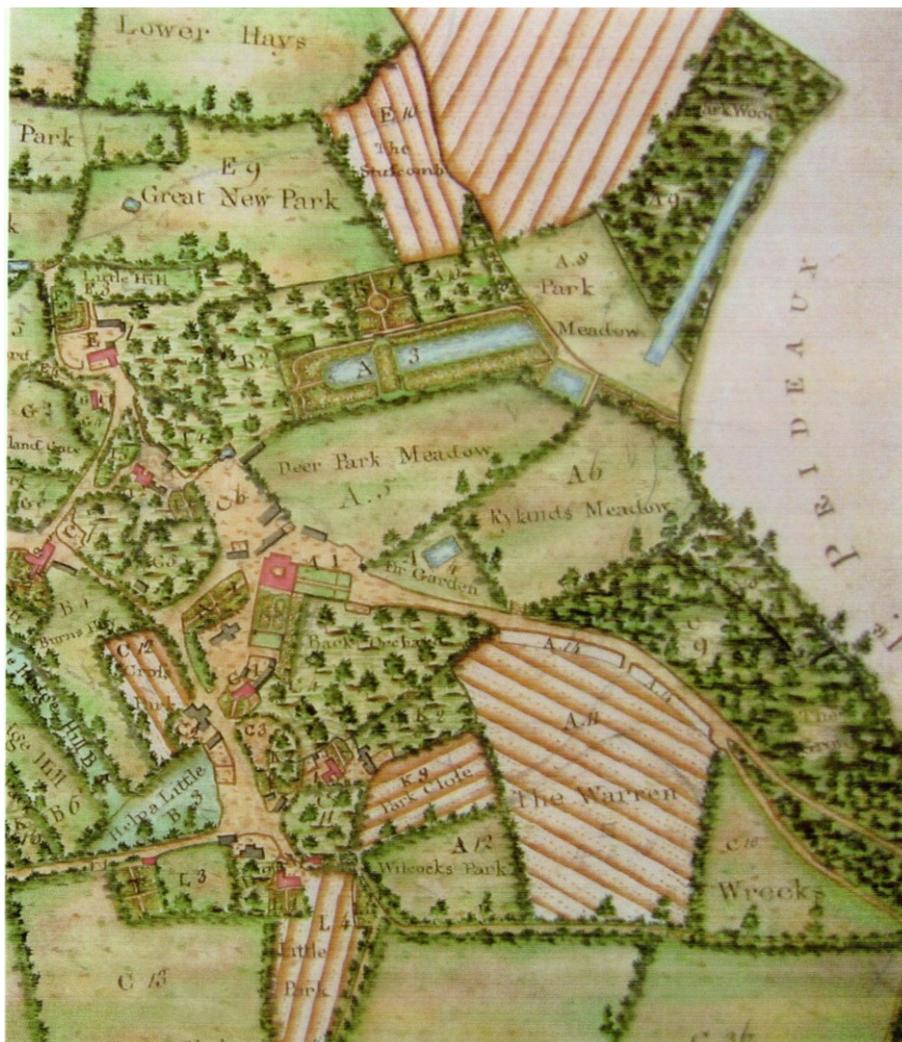
18TH CENTURY LANGDON

The upper illustration, artist unknown, dates from 1705 -1707 and shows Langdon Hall and gardens in great detail, also the tithe barn. The church can be seen on the extreme left of the picture and in the centre at Mount Pleasant is a pleasure tower. The painting hangs in Plymouth City Art Gallery.



Painting of Langdon Hall and Gardens 1705-1707 - Artist unknown

The lower illustration is an estate map of 1789.



LANGDON HALL - WEST FRONT 1853

This Picture is dated 1853, the artist is unknown, but the mature style of the work would indicate that it could well have been by Laura Calmady, daughter of Charles Biggs Calmady

It is a water colour and is 10" X 7". There is quite a lot of foxing, a very neat worm hole towards the right side, and some water damage in the top left-hand corner.

The area where the two people are on the left is now occupied by the archway going in to the tower, and the single storied service wing which goes away to the north, and which was added Richard Cory in 1876.



LANGDON HALL FROM THE NORTH - 1852

This Picture is dated 1852, the artist is believed to be by one of the daughters of Charles Biggs Calmady all five of whom were in residence at the time.

Laura, Cycile and Gertrude were the ones who seemed to enjoy drawing and painting the most. The mature execution of the picture rather suggests to me that it was probably Laura, who was the eldest of the three, and would have been 32 years old 1852.

It is a water colour and is 10" X 7" and is in very good condition. It predates the tower and the single storied service extension to the north side (which was added by the Corys in 1876)

Actually the tower was already substantially built, the right hand one of the three gables, the one with the bell cote, was just extended upwards and finished with a flat roof and crenelated parapet. The present archway comes off the corner where the cutaway is, and then the wall is continued to the north for the single storied service wing. The blocked window can still be made out behind the archway.



LANGDON COURT FROM THE NORTH - PHOTOGRAPH

The photograph is thought to have been taken in the 1870s, certainly not as early as the painting of the same view.

The garden wall extends up the north side of the house terminating in a pair of gateposts at the west end. whereas today it is only the east side that is enclosed by the garden wall. The creeper seems to have taken a greater hold, with a newer piece in the angle between what is now the kitchen and the tower.

The dormers on the west side have flat roofs whereas now they are pitched, and the roof itself doesn't look to be in a very good condition.

The tower, which was added in 1877 was made by extending the right-hand gable of the three on the north side straight upwards and terminating it with a castellated parapet. What would seem to be an octagonal stair turret is in actual fact a chimney! This can be clearly seen in the lower photograph of 1939, taken from a more easterly angle..



LANGDON COURT SOUTH FRONT - PHOTOGRAPH

This photograph is undated, but was taken after the tower was built, as the little turret can be seen above the roof. The four great yew trees are very small; they look very much bigger than that in Gertrude Calmady's painting of 1853. The dormers are flat roofed whereas now they are pitched. It is obviously a lovely summer's day judging by the number of windows open.

The lower photograph of 2007 is provided for comparison purposes.



LANGDON COURT SOUTH FRONT - 1853

This picture looking towards the south west corner of the house was painted by Gertrude Calmady in 1853.

It measures 10" X 7" and is entitled "View From Dartmoor Terrace" and is dated September 1853. It is initialled G. E. C. (Gertrude Elizabeth Calmady).

It would seem that the high terrace on the south side of the house was referred to, in the family, as "Dartmoor Terrace". The yew trees in the picture look more established than they do in the much later photograph. There were, at one time, many more of the large planters shown on the left of the picture, at least eight in this garden. Regrettably only two have managed to survive, and find their way into the 21st century!



LANGDON COURT VIEW SOUTH - 1853

This picture looking towards south from one of the upstairs windows of the house, is believed to have been painted by Gertrude Calmady.

It measures 8.1/4" X 7" and is dated 12th September 1853. It is un-named but the style would suggest that of Gertrude who painted the view from the top terrace ("Dartmoor Terrace") looking towards the south west corner of the house, also in September 1853.



LANGDON HALL PRINT - 1830

This print, artist unknown, is entitled “Langdon Hall, Devonshire 1830” and actually measures 5” X 3½”. It has been enlarged here for ease of viewing.

The view is from the south west, (somewhere between the Tithe Barn and Langdon Lodge, I would think).

A certain degree of artistic licence has been employed as it looks more like it is set in the Scottish Highlands rather than the gently rolling hills of Devon.



LANGDON HALL PRINT - 1800s

This print, artist unknown, is entitled “Langdon Hall” it is un-dated and measures 8” X 5”.

The view is from the south west, and is very similar to the 1830 print, and I would imagine dates from about the same time.

Unlike the 1830s print the surrounding area is not quite so undulating, and looks more like the gently rolling hills of Devon should look!



LANGDON HALL BY LAURA CALMADY – 1847

This pen and ink drawing is by Laura Calmady and is dated 31st July 1847. The original measures 7³/₄" x 5¹/₄".

I think that this must have been a flight of fancy on the part of Laura, as she has given the 17th century east front of the house an Italianate/Classical treatment.

The granite framed windows are gone and are replaced by sash windows in what looks like segmental circular bays. The heavily studded front door has also gone and is replaced by a pillared portico with a Venetian style window above.

It makes the whole front rather like that of a Victorian seaside villa, thank goodness that it just remained as a drawing!



“THE LANGDON COURT” - PRINT

This print, artist unknown, and undated, is believed to be of the nineteenth century. It is entitled “The Langdon Court, South Devon”. The only other clue is “Kell Bros, Litho, London EC”. This is in fact, only two thirds of the print, the right hand section, which showed more parkland, was too badly damaged to be able to do anything with.

This part was actually split right down the centre but with the aid of my computer, I was able to put it back together and remove the join.

A certain amount artistic licence has been employed as we all know that the house does not sit on the edge of a vast flat meadow, but that the land falls away on the east and north sides, and builds up on the south and west sides.



LANGDON COURT FROM MOUNT PLEASANT - 1960

This photograph was taken by Kenneth O'Connor in 1960. The view is of Langdon Court as seen from Mount Pleasant looking across towards Raneleigh. The house, sitting serenely on its mound, looks very much as it does in the nineteenth century print by Kell Bros, Litho, of London.

At this time the house had only recently been made into a hotel after being sold by the Plymouth Hospitals who had no further use for it as a children's convalescent home. The old summerhouse is still intact on what was the croquet lawn. This is where the donkey lived during the house's period as a children's hospital. The lawn would need major work if it were ever to be used for croquet again! There is no sign of the tennis court (lawn not tarmac), which was sited to the right of the croquet lawn at a slightly lower level.

Mount Pleasant at that time belonged to the Bodys, Mrs Body was a widow, her husband, Harry had died in 1941. The farm was run by her son George. George and Ken O'Connor had been friends for much of their lives. Sadly George died very suddenly later in the same year, aged only 40.

Historically the tenant at Mount Pleasant was also Kennel Master to the squire, and there were quite substantial kennels at Mount Pleasant. They are still there, on the road as one passes the farmhouse going towards Langdon. I remember them being quite badly damaged by fire in the early 1950s.



LANGDON COURT - SOUTH AND WEST FRONTS 1927

These photographs of the south front (top) and the west front (bottom) of the house date from 1927 when they were taken for inclusion in the catalogue for the sale of the house and estate on the death of Richard Cory

The house and parkland was sold to Mrs Kenyon-Slaney, it is not known how much she paid for it but the reserve price at the auction was £3,000. Her son was the Member of Parliament for Tavistock in the mid 1930s, Wembury at that time was part of the Tavistock Constituency.



HOUNDS MEET AT LANGDON 1938

The photographs are of the meet of the hounds at Langdon in 1938. Mrs Kenyon-Slaney, at that time the owner of Langdon Court is in centre of the top photograph. She was the last person to live in Langdon Court as a private resident.

Up until the breaking up of the estate in 1927, the Langdon Hounds lived at Mount Pleasant in the specially built kennels there. The tenant of Mount Pleasant was also Kennel Master to the Squire, this was a condition of his tenancy.



LANGDON COURT

This photograph was taken as part of a sales brochure when the house was put up for sale as a going concern, as a hotel, in 1989.

My earliest recollection of the house goes back to the end of the war. It must have been in the early part of 1945, and I remember walking from Gabber Farm with my mother. She was pushing the pushchair, which was probably mine but I had elected to walk. I do not know what the occasion was but I think that the house was still occupied by the Eagle Oil Company. It was something outdoors, a Fete of some description, it could very well have been for VE Day, I particular remember the bright colours of the flowers in the garden, and white canvas of some tents that were there.

During their time there they had had a big wooden hut extension built on to the east front presumably for extra office space, it was painted grey, with a black felt roof, and extended as far out as the low garden wall, and covered just about all of the area between the two small grass squares in the photograph. The car park was not in existence; the slope upwards from the pleasure ground came almost to the front garden wall save for a wide path (wide enough for a carriage in earlier days). The path came round from the north side and turned into the carriage drive on the south side. Either side of the path were grass verges, small shrubs, and plenty of daffodils in the spring.



By the time I was going to Wembury School, the house had been taken over by the Plymouth Hospitals for use as a convalescent home for children. There was a donkey and donkey cart provided for the children. The donkey lived in the old summerhouse on the pleasure ground. It was intended that the he would carry cartloads of children around the estate, or even through Church Walk Woods down as far as the beach. Whoever thought of this had no idea of the terrain involved, or the stamina of one small donkey. This coupled with fact that he wasn't consulted, probably in the large part, accounted for the obstinacy on the part of the donkey.

We were always warned that we could be caught by the Matron if we went anywhere near the house, the consequences of this were always dire, but non-specific. I rather think now that the Matron probably had a lot more to do with her time than be constantly on the lookout for young boys (and girls) about to breach the defences!

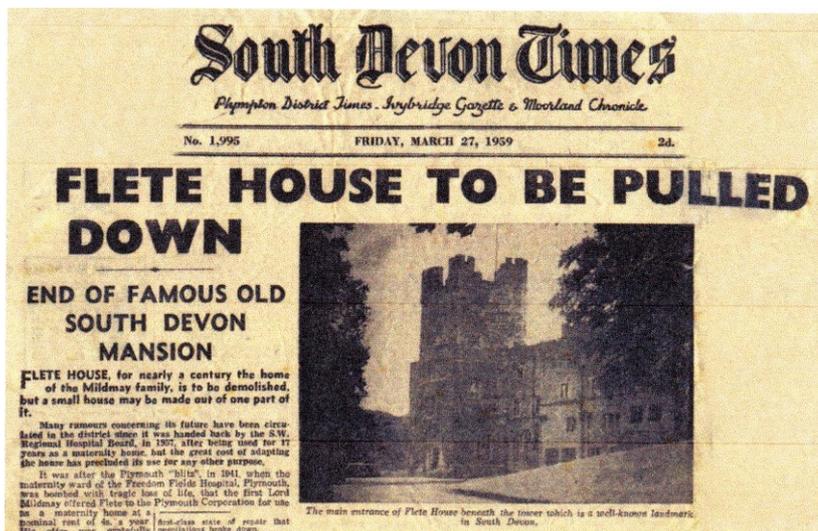
We used to get into the woods down at Ford which were all part of the estate, and go though at the marshy bit at the bottom of the field below the house, out of view of the ever-watchful Matron, and play in the fish pond which was next to the old walled vegetable garden. Sometimes we would go into the other Park Wood where there was a large boating lake. It was actually called the Long Pond, and was 725 feet long, by 45 feet wide, and even had a little jetty protruding out into the middle of it, and a wide grass promenade down one side. Sadly all of these features are now all silted up and probably most people are not aware of them ever having been there. Another fun place was the old quarry where the finely grained shillet was quarried to build the house. At one end was a sheer cliff about 30 feet high and the other end, a graduated slope where one was able to get into the quarry itself. The bottom was invariably filled with water and we used to have a great time throwing stones, or lumps of wood from the top the cliff into the waters below. It was even funnier if one managed to drench others who had gone in at the other end. In the middle of the field was a clump of Douglas pines; we used play games throwing the fir cones at each other pretending that they were hand grenades (the war hadn't been over all that long, and war themes often featured in our play). A day out playing at Langdon usually ended in one or more of the company falling into one of the ponds, regardless of the time of year and Wellington boots getting filled with water was quite a regular occurrence.

In 1958 Plymouth Hospitals decided that they had no further use for the house and that it would be sold. It was slightly worrying as it was at the time when a great many old houses were being demolished as being too expensive to run. This was, of course, before the days of such buildings being listed. Flete House, which had been leased to South West Regional Hospital Board as a maternity home vacated at the same time, and there were rumours, firstly that it was to be demolished, and then, almost as bad, that it was to be dismantled and shipped off to America to be rebuilt there.

I was aghast; the thought of Langdon Court being demolished or shipped off to America was too awful to comprehend. I went up there with an old brownie box camera and took some photographs of it, just in case something like this did happen. The results were not outstanding but at least, I would have a record of it.

I got friendly with the caretaker and his wife who had been left by Plymouth Hospitals to look after the house until it was sold. They said that they were never worried about being there on their own in the big empty house, in spite of stories of ghosts that had gone around. They felt that those few years of having been a home to children had given the place a nice feeling. I felt the very much the same way when I went inside for the first time, and seeing the lovely staircase with the stained glass window depicting Sir Walter Raleigh smoking his pipe, and the lovely black and white marble floor. Everywhere else was brown lino and institution cream paint. The palm court had been used as a dining hall by the children, and some of the institutionalised furniture was still around. The drawing room and dining room on the east side of the house had been wards, as had all of the other large rooms on the ground floor. The lovely carved chimneypiece that is now in the drawing room was, back then, in the dining room. The drawing room had a white marble chimneypiece more in keeping with the formal panelling and Adam style ceiling.

In 1960 the house was auctioned at the Duke of Cornwall Hotel, and was bought, with about 54 acres of garden, park, and woodland by the people who owned the Glenholt Country Club. They got it for about £9,000; I know that it was definitely under £10,000. It was now time for the dear old place to start earning its own



living. In July 1959, after many months of refurbishment, and wrangling with Plympton Licensing Committee over what sort of licence should be granted, the house opened its doors as 'The Langdon Court Hotel'. No accommodation was available and the only rooms open were the main bar (the old dining room) renamed 'The Courtenay Lounge Bar' and the lounge (the old drawing room) renamed 'The Langdon Lounge'. There was no restaurant. The rest of the house was in darkness. The lounge was furnished in large comfortable sofas and armchairs and low occasional tables I seem to remember red as being the predominant colour. The walls were painted a light mushroom fawn colour and the panelling picked out in white, there were nice wall brackets and silk lampshades and a fitted carpet with a regency pattern, it was all quite classy. The carved chimneypiece from the old dining room had been moved into this room. In the bar one of the double doors had been permanently blocked off, the room had been decorated in imitation oak panelling, there was a plywood fronted bar all made up to look like dark oak, and banquette seating all around the sides of the room. A fireplace had been built of natural stone in the form of two pilasters going almost to ceiling height, with a copper hood over the fire basket, and above, a clock in the form of a ship's wheel with the letters of the words 'LANGDON COURT' replacing the numerals. Not terribly in keeping with a lovely Elizabethan house but fitted in quite well with the ambience of the rest of the room! There was a turkey patterned fitted carpet, and small round formica topped (wood-grained pattern) tables. All in all, typical bar furnishings of the period. A bit later on the old palm court opened up as an overflow to the bar,

We had heard rumours that the new owners wanted to bring caravans into the park and make it into a holiday camp come country club and that the house would in effect be a clubhouse. Later on when the principal bedrooms on the east side were knocked into one and became a ballroom, we thought that this must be the thin end of the wedge, as without those bedrooms the house was hardly viable as a hotel. Sure enough about the same time, an application was put before the local authorities for, not caravans, but 'cabanas' which would be holiday cabins, I think 70 of them initially. They were to be permanent buildings, which would be built in the park and woods and would be 'sympathetic' to the environment. This was turned down on the grounds of being a totally inappropriate development for the area. We were all rather relieved by that, but the owners were quite adamant that they could not operate by just relying on the house alone to generate revenue, and didn't know what the future would bring. At about this time the same people bought the old Palace Theatre in Plymouth and immediately made it into a Bingo Hall. There were great trumpeting about them keeping the theatre alive, and that the Bingo was only to generate enough money to enable them to bring some decent shows to the theatre.

Well, of course, that never happened and the next thing we knew was that the Circle Bar was sold off as a separate entity to become a tacky nightclub. I think that a fate similar to this would have befallen the house had the holiday camp idea got off the ground.

When the house was sold in 1964 though, Plympton Rural District Council had given outline planning permission for three motel blocks, of six units each, to be built on the high ground to the south of the house just outside the walled Jacobean garden. This complex would have had its own entrance opposite the Tithe Barn. Luckily the new owners did not follow up this option.

In 1964 the house was sold to Mr and Mrs Milner who came from Looe. It was the Milners who made the house into a fully functioning hotel with lettable rooms and facilities for functions. By the time they sold it on in 1969 it had achieved an AA/RAC 2 star rating. They decided to sell on account of Mrs Milner's declining health



David and Joan Wagstaff became the new owners in 1969. During their tenure they closed down the ballroom and converted it back into four bedrooms using the opportunity of having a clear space to include en-suite bathrooms as well. By the time the Barnes/Cox partnership bought the house in 1979 Mr Wagstaff had sold all of the parkland and woodlands, even the walled vegetable garden and the stables had gone. The estate was now down to about 7 acres, a far cry from Squire Cory's time when it was in the region of 2,000 acres!

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CHRISTIE & CO

This advertisement appeared in a catering trade magazine in 1989. The house wasn't actually sold until more than ten years later.

In 2001 Mark and Ruth Jones bought the house and set about a much-needed refurbishment. This involved removing all the 'Gin Palace' tat, and calming down the colour schemes so the architecture and proportions of the rooms could speak for themselves. Also a lot of work has taken place outside, bringing the gardens back up to a high standard, clearing overgrown areas, and establishing new features like the semi circle of yews on the south side outside the Jacobean garden, and clearing the slope to the east of the car park and creating more new features in the area of the old croquet lawn and tennis court.

In 2007 the house changed hands yet again, Geoffrey and Emma Ede from Kent are now the owners and so another chapter of the history of the lovely old house is being written.

2009 marks the 50th anniversary of the house being sold to become a hotel, and in those 50 years has had more owners than in the previous 500.

LANGDON COURT 2007

This aerial photograph of the house, from the south taken in 2007 shows the complexity of the roof and chimney arrangements.

The house is roughly square (82 feet) except for the single storied extension off the north west corner. This extension was added in 1877 by Richard Cory, and at the same time the tower was formed by altering the northwest gable by extending it upwards to form the sides of the tower. The little turret is not the termination of a winding stair, as it would suggest, but a chimney.



LANGDON COURT - 1959

This photograph was taken in 1959 just after the house had been vacated and sold by the Plymouth Hospitals. It was bought by Glenholt Ltd who ran a country club and static caravan site near Roborough. We rather feared that they would want to make Langdon into the same sort of thing. Fortunately planning permission wasn't forthcoming for the scheme they had in mind, although outline planning permission was given for three motel type blocks, providing accommodation for sixty, to be built south of the house just outside the walled garden where the Rose Garden used to be. Thank goodness none of that came to fruition.

In the photograph can be seen the wooden single storied extension that was added to the east front of the house by The Eagle Oil Company during their wartime occupancy of the house.



LANGDON COURT - 1959

The photographs below are of the old drawing room and dining room after the house had been vacated by Plymouth Hospitals in 1958.

The upper photograph was the Drawing Room in the grand old days, but is now the hotel dining room.

The lower photograph was the Dining Room and is now the hotel main bar. The fireplace in this room was moved across to the other room in the 1960 refurbishments, as the Adam style fireplace in that room was considered to be too badly damaged for repair.



LANGDON COURT – 2001

These photographs were taken after Mark and Ruth Jones assumed ownership in 2001, and carried a complete refurbishment of the building. They should be compared with the earlier photographs of the same rooms taken in 1959.



LANGDON COURT – 2006 – FIREPLACES ETC.

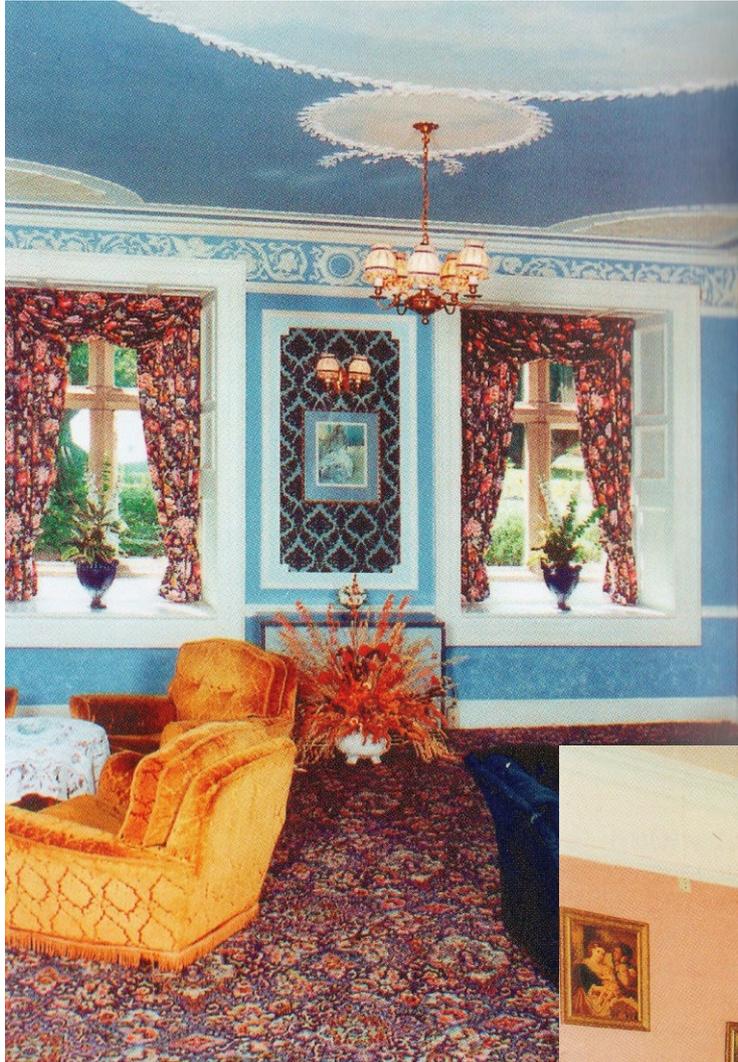
The top photograph shows a doorway in the entrance hall, beautifully proportioned with a deep architrave, and a classical pediment. The lower photograph shows the granite fireplace in the entrance hall and also part of the black and white marble floor.



The two photographs below show where fireplaces have been opened up in two of the bedrooms and made into a feature of the room.



LANGDON COURT – 1980s – “GIN PALACE CHIC”



The photographs on this page illustrate some of the over fussy decoration schemes of the 1980/90s. The left photograph especially, of the so called “Wedgwood Room”, where the curtains, carpet, wallpaper, furnishings and general paint scheme all seem to be fighting each other. It is all far too “busy”, not a very restful environment for one wishing to have a relaxing holiday.

The photograph (right) of the entrance hall is not quite as bad, as it seems to have kept to a more restricted palette. However, the over fussy curtains and Austrian blinds are totally out of place, and to cover the lovely black and white marble floor with fitted carpet was a sin.

In this sort of place less is more. As regards colour, decorating schemes need to be kept restrained in order to show the architecture and the lovely proportions of the rooms to their best advantage.



LANGDON COURT - SOUTH FRONT

I took this photograph with an old 'box brownie' camera from the top of the rose garden in 1958. I regret that it is slightly out of focus due to a bit of camera 'wobble'.

This was just after the house had been vacated by Plymouth Hospitals, who had used it as a children's convalescent home since the end of the war in 1945.

The camera was the only one in working order that we had at home at the time. Photography as a hobby was only followed by a few people back then. Even thirteen years after the end of the war, things were still not back to normal. Photography was quite an expensive hobby, camera film was costly, only monochrome was readily available, and development costs prohibitive. A lot of people developed their own photographs at home, which for a keen photographer was the cheaper option. Most people only used a camera when they went on holiday, and it was really only the professional photographers who had flash equipment.

This particular camera had to be held at waist level and one had to look down into the viewfinder. When the desired picture came into view, the shutter lever on the side of the camera, had to be depressed without wobbling it, or one ended up with a fuzzy picture! It was all very hit and miss, and I regret that I only managed to achieve partial success!



LANGDON COURT - SOUTH FRONT - 1995

I took this photograph in August 1995, the scene is little changed from my earlier photograph of 1958. In the thirty three intervening years, the yew trees have grown so much that they almost obscure the front of the house. The sapling in the mid foreground is a newcomer.

The 'Brownie Box' has now given way to something a little more sophisticated, a Yashica Zoomtec 70, but any improvement in the photographic quality is entirely due to the camera, not its operator!

The house has been a hotel since 1960, and has had a variety of owners, more in the last forty years than in the previous four hundred! At the time of this photograph it was in the hands of the Barnes/Cox partnership, who had owned it since 1979.



LANGDON COURT - SOUTH FRONT - 1995

Another view of the south front taken in August 1995, but from a different angle. Much more of the architectural features of the house can be seen from this position. the key stones over the windows for instance, and the broken segmental pediment over each of the doorways. The down pipes are also worthy of note being of square section, made of lead, and with their hopper heads emblazoned with the Calmady coat of arms. Under the second floor window in the west gable there is a sundial which has the Calmady coat of arms in the gnomon, there is a matching one under the window in the east gable. On the west front of the house there are two more sundials under the gable windows.



LANGDON COURT - DOORWAY DETAIL - SOUTH FRONT

This photograph was taken in August 1995 and shows the detail of one of the doorways on the south side of the house.

There is a keystone in the form of a grotesque in the centre of the architrave, with a scrolled corbel on each side, each terminating in an acanthus leaf, and the whole supporting a broken segmental pediment, the breaks each being neatly terminated by a boss with a stylised leaf design



Here is another example of a "Grotesque" from above the central upstairs window on the west side of the house

LANGDON COURT - KEYSTONE GROTESQUE - SOUTH FRONT

This photograph taken in August 1995, shows a keystone in the form of a grotesque over a doorway on the south side of the house.



LANGDON COURT - DOORWAY DETAIL - EAST FRONT

This photograph taken in August 1995, shows details of the main doorway on the east side of the house.

It is a square headed doorway set in a round headed arch, the arch has a keystone in the form of a grotesque, and the tympanum has a depiction of the Calmady coat of arms, with the date 1856, this refers to Vincent Pollexfen Calmady, the last of the Calmadys, who sold the estate to Richard Cory in 1876. He died in 1896 and was interred in a rather impressive tomb in the graveyard at Wembury church where he is proclaimed to be 'The Last of the Calmadys'.

Either side of the doorway is inscribed the date 1668. This was during the time that the house was occupied by Josias Calmady. At the time of the civil war the house was occupied by Sir Shilston Calmady, who declared for Cromwell in the Civil War, and was killed at the battle of Forde Abbey, near Axminster in 1645. The house then passed onto his brother Edward Calmady, and when he died in 1655, it then passed onto Josias, who was yet another brother.

When Edward died in 1683 the house passed onto another Josias Calmady, who was a grandson of Sir Shilston. This was the great Josias Calmady who set about improving the house and laying out the gardens as we would recognise them today. He also rebuilt the great tithe barn, on the road to the south of the house, and had the park landscaped.



LANGDON COURT - 1961

These photographs were taken early one Sunday morning in the winter of 1961. The little girl is my youngest sister, Nichola, who was ten years old at the time, and the dog is the Lugar dog, "Nipper".



The photographs were converted from coloured slides which accounts for the 'grainy' finish.



LANGDON COURT - SOUTH FRONT - 2003

This photograph was taken in 2003 as part of an advertisement which appeared in 'Devon Brides', a supplement to 'Devon Life' of March 2004.

Since 2001 the house has been in the ownership of Mark and Ruth Jones who are in the process of refurbishing the whole place inside and out. The principal public rooms have all been de-cluttered and now have the restrained elegance of nice country house, rather than the 'gin palace chic' that was in place before. The bedrooms are losing their bland 1970s motel uniformity and are being renovated as and when time permits, each one individually decorated and furnished. Many features such as blocked fireplaces are being opened up to give the rooms character. The bathrooms are also being given similar treatment.

The old rose garden has been much improved by the cropping of the four great yew trees which now opens the view from the top of the garden to the house. The circular beds have been replanted, and more clearly defined to complement the circular pond and the yew trees. The gravel paths have been relaid to give a most pleasing effect overall.





Langdon Court Hotel



LANGDON COURT - SOUTH FRONT CARRIAGEWAY

This is another one of the photographs that I took in 1958 with a 'brownie box' camera, just after the house had been vacated by the Plymouth Hospitals. It was taken from the west end of the carriage drive, and remains totally unaltered.



When the Corys, and before them the Calmadys, lived in the house, the south door was the carriage door, because the carriage could, at this point, get closest, thereby causing less inconvenience to their passengers, especially in inclement weather. The mews block was below the house to the north west, and the carriage would come up, when summoned, drive around the east front and into the carriage drive from the east, stopping at the south door. The passenger or passengers would embark, the carriage would then move on westwards through the other set of gateposts, and then onwards to its destination.

This lower photograph taken some 55 years later, in July 2013, is included for comparison, and shows that the only real difference is the television aerial!



LANGDON COURT - WEST FRONT

This photograph of the west side of the house, which to all intents and purposes is the back, is another one of the series that I took in 1958 just after the house had been vacated by Plymouth Hospitals.

The three windowed bay with the central pedimented section was fitted between the north and south wings in the eighteenth century. This then turned the house from a 'horseshoe' shape into a complete square with a central light well. In 1877 the light well was glazed over and made into a palm court.

The central pedimented section was at one time the only entrance on the west side, until the tower was built and the back door moved to the north west corner of the house. This entrance remained in use for some time afterwards mainly for the use of tenants and others who had business with the squire, as it allowed them direct access to the Estate Office.

In 1877, Richard Cory, within a year of taking ownership, added the tower and extension to the northwest corner, presumably to give the house a more baronial look, which was in vogue at that time.



The dog in the photograph is "Nipper" the Lugar dog, who was usually with us wherever we went, he even came to church with us on one occasion, which wasn't too well received, in some quarters, but then that was in the late 1940s!

The lower photograph, taken almost 60 years later, in 2015 is shown for comparison.

LANGDON COURT - THE TOWER

Below is another one of the photographs that I took in 1958, and shows the tower and single storied extension to the north west corner of the house. It is a little bit fuzzy, I think that I must have had a bit of 'camera wobble' between looking in the viewfinder and operating the shutter, which was easily done with a Brownie Box camera!

The tower and extension were added by Richard Cory, in 1877, a year after buying the house. The single storied section is part of the service area, and the impressive archway actually leads into the kitchens.

The tower, with its castellated top, which was actually formed by extending the northwest gable upwards, was added mainly to give the house a 'baronial' look, which was very much in vogue at the time.

Just for a comparison I have added a photograph taken from roughly the same position more than 60 years later. This time with a 'Fuji' digital camera, a far cry from the old Brownie Box, although I must stress that any improvement is entirely due to the camera, not the operator.



LANGDON COURT - SOUTH FRONT - 1940s

The top photograph, of the south front of the house, was taken in the early 1940s. At the time it was under war occupation by the Army as the headquarters of the Western Command Coastal Artillery.

The scene, quite idyllic for a country in the middle of a major war, and only given away by the stacks of sandbags against the front of the house.



The lower photograph was taken in April 2020 as a comparison, and apart from the removal of the sandbags, there seems to be no change at all.

The house itself though, has seen many changes since the since the 1940s. It served as the offices for the Eagle Oil Company through the later part of the war, after the war it became a Children's Convalescent Home, and in 1960 became a Hotel. In the time since it has had a variety of owners each putting their own stamp on the place.

Unfortunately it closed its doors in April of 2020 due to the Corona Virus, but had been in financial trouble since before the previous Christmas. So now its future is uncertain, and as they say, "Watch this space!"



LANGDON COURT - VIEW FROM THE ROOKERY GATES - 1940s

This photograph of the house from the rookery gates was taken the early 1940s.

As children in Wembury School this was the first view we ever had of the house when Miss Axworthy brought us here on nature rambles. We used to go through the gates, and then over the fence just inside on the right, and then down to the duck ponds in the park. If there was time we would sometimes go up to the old quarry and wonder at the size of it, and drop stones into the water far below.

By then the house was a convalescent home for children and I think Miss Axworthy had an arrangement with the Matron whereby we were able to visit the park. We often used to see the donkey, which lived in the summer house, grazing on what had been the croquet lawn.



LANGDON COURT - THE EAST DRIVEWAY

This photograph looking towards the house from the east driveway was taken in the 1940s when the house was under wartime occupation by the Army as the headquarters of the Western Command Coastal Artillery

The drive is getting quite badly overgrown, there being no availability of manpower to maintain it in its hitherto pristine condition. A far cry from when it was a broad carriageway of raked shingle with a neatly clipped grass verge on each side.

Down to the left, the summer house and tennis court can be made out in the old pleasure ground. The croquet lawn still looks to be in reasonable condition. In later years when the house was in use as a childrens' convalescent home, there was a donkey which lived in the summer house. There was also a donkey cart, the idea being that he would transport cartloads of children around the estate and even to go as far as the beach. Whoever thought of this had little idea of the terrain involved, or the stamina of one small donkey, and apart from that I don't think that the donkey was consulted, which probably gave rise to his obstinance!

The driveway continued eastwards through the woods, across the road, and through what is now known as Church Wood, (formerly Church Walk Wood) ending up at the Church. During the Cory's tenure, and probably the Calmady's as well, the whole Walk (or Drive) was kept in immaculate condition by the estate's grounds staff, by constantly being raked and weeded, and regularly resurfaced with shingle from the beach.

This constant removal of shingle from the beach has probably contributed to, if not actually caused the main beach now to be so variable in its condition from season to season.



LANGDON COURT - THE PARK

I took this photograph of the park in 1958, I regret one of the lesser successful of the series! The view is looking north across the park from the drive to the east of the house. The clumps of trees are part of the landscaping scheme that Josias Calmady had carried out in the late seventeenth century.

In the bottom of the valley, behind the trees on the left of the photograph were the duck ponds, which are now so badly silted up and overgrown that there is hardly any evidence of them ever having been there. We used to spend many hours playing there as children, and saw many wondrous things such as dragon flies, kingfishers, water lilies, and flies darting across the surface of the water in the sunshine.

In the woods to the right of the photograph was the boating lake or 'long pond' which was an enormous expanse of water about 100 yards long by 25 yards wide, completely manmade. There was a little jetty protruding out in the middle of one side and a grassy promenade down the other side. It was fed by a stream that had been diverted from its normal course, and channelled in at the northern end. At the other end, near the south-east corner was an overflow arrangement which allowed the water to run out to re-join the watercourse from whence it had been diverted. Regrettably, like the duck ponds, it is now so silted and overgrown that nobody is aware of it ever having been there. There are fully mature trees now growing where there used to be water.

At the top of the field, on the left hand side, behind the large trees in the mid ground, there is the old quarry where the finely grained shillet was quarried that was used to build the house. It was another wonderful place for playing, as the bottom of the quarry was usually filled with water, and we used have great fun heaving stones and lumps of wood in from the high cliff at one end.

If the Wembury Docks scheme had come to fruition in the early part of the twentieth century, the Wembury to Plymstock railway line would have run through the bottom of the valley, mid ground in the photograph.



LANGDON HALL - THE PARK - 1857

This picture was painted by one of the daughters of Charles Calmady in 1857, probably Gertrude. It is a watercolour and measures 10" x 7". It is dated 18th September 1857

It shows the open parkland which rolls away to the north of the house up towards the Old Quarry, from where the finely grained shillet, from which the house is constructed was obtained.

(Shillet is a finely grained soft slate, deep pink in colour).



LANGDON - THE PARK POND - 1848

This picture was drawn by one of the daughters of Charles Calmady in 1848,

It shows the long pond in the wooded area of the park to the north east of the house.

The picture measures 8" x 5½" and is dated 25th May 1848.

Medium: charcoal on paper



LANGDON - THE LONG POND - 1848

This picture was drawn by one of the daughters of Charles Calmady in 1848,

It is another view of the long pond in the wooded area of the park to the north east of the house.

The picture measures 10½” x 7¼” and is dated 4th September 1848.

Medium: charcoal and chalk on paper



LANGDON - FISHING IN THE LONG POND - 1849

This picture shows Cycile Calmady fishing in the Long Pond, it is believed to have been drawn by her elder sister, Laura.

It is entitled "C. C. C.fishing", it is dated 19th August 1849, and measures 7¹/₄" x 5¹/₂".

Medium: Charcoal and chalk on paper



CHARLES BIGGS CALMADY

This picture of Charles Biggs Calmady was drawn in 1847 by R P Collier (Lord Monkswell) who was a house guest, it measures 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Charles was born in 1791 and inherited the estate on the death of his father (Admiral C H E Calmady). He married Emily, the eldest daughter of William Greenwood of Brookwood Park, Hampshire.

They had five girls, Emily and Laura, born in 1820; Honor, born in 1822; Cycile, born in 1824; and then a long gap, and then Gertrude, born in 1836.

Their only son, Vincent Pollexfen Calmady, was born in 1825

Of the daughters, there is only information of two of them ever getting married:

Honor married in 1850, Sir John Augustus Hugh Boyd, 2nd Baronet, of Dawson Hill, Kent.

Cycile married in 1856, William Frederick Collier, 2nd son of John Collier Esquire, of Grimstone, Devon, MP for Plymouth. (who I assume was related to R P Collier who drew this portrait).

Gertrude and Laura both remained unmarried, and have memorials in the church recording their deaths as 1879 and 1894 respectively. They are interred in a double grave in the graveyard. They lived in Knighton Villa, at the bottom of Knighton Hill, which had been used as a dormer house to Langdon, and is now better known as "Four Corners".

There seems to be no record of Laura's twin, Emily, ever having got married, or of her death, or of where she was laid to rest.

Charles and his wife Emily died in 1855, within a week of each other, Emily on the 1st January and Charles on the 6th.

Vincent inherited the estate, and in 1876 sold it, in its entirety to Richard Cory. Vincent died in 1896, 'The last of the Calmadys', and is buried in the Churchyard on the south side.

Vincent, at the age of 62, married in 1887, Isabel 2nd daughter of the late E. R. C. Sheldon, MP, Shipston on Stour, Co Warwick, and widow of Colonel F Granville of Wellesbourne Hall, Co Warwick, there were no children.



THE CALMADY CHILDREN

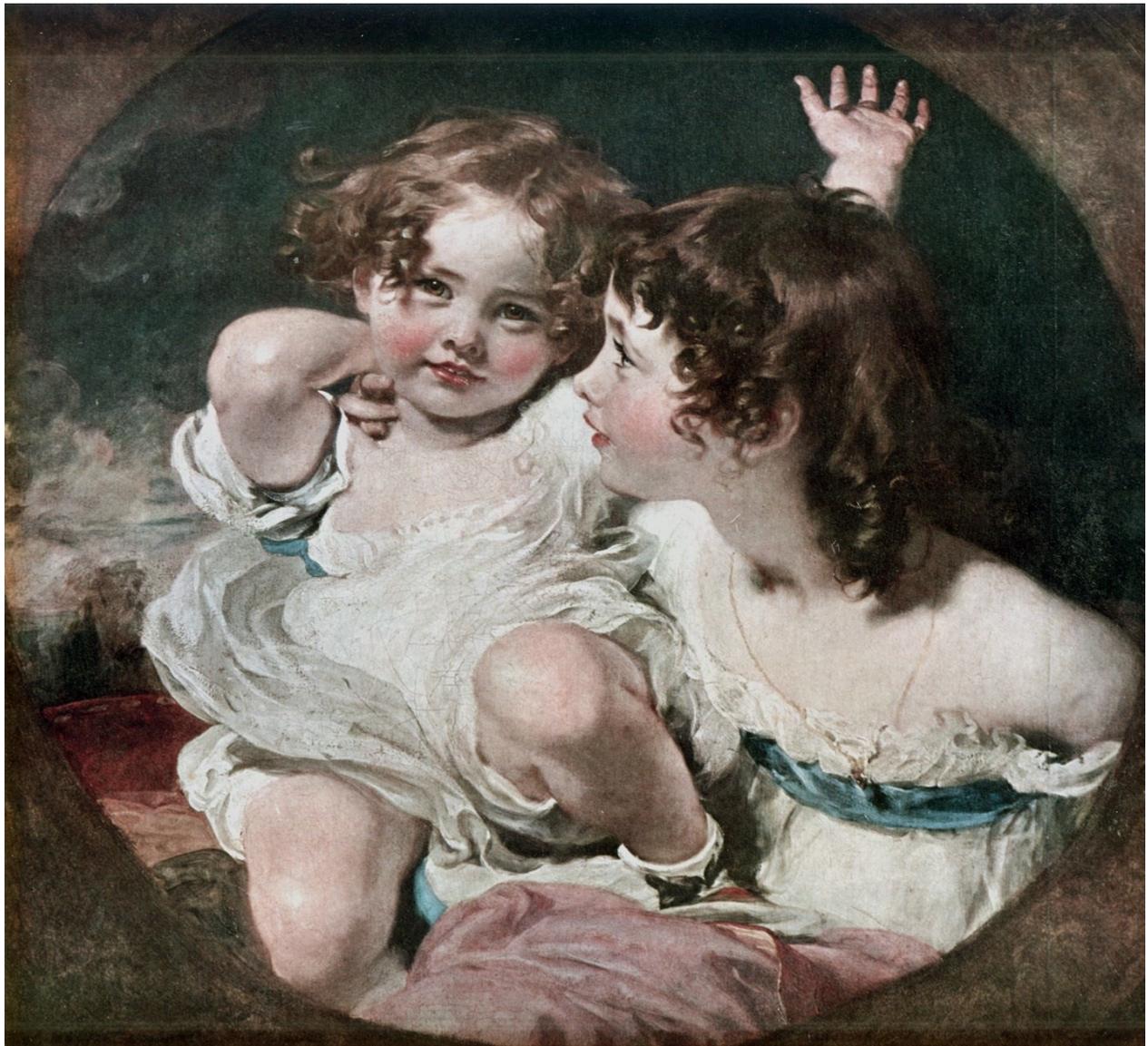
The Calmady Children, Laura and Emily were painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence, a friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the 1820s.

Emily (b.1818) and Laura (b.1820) were the first daughters of Charles Biggs Calmady, Emily being the eldest of the two.

The painting which now hangs in the Metropolitan Gallery in New York, was made famous during the nineteenth century, when it was used to adorn chocolate boxes throughout the world.

The two girls never married, and in the late 19th century, Laura lived at "Four Corners" known at that time as "Knighton Villa" at the bottom of Knighton Hill. She was an accomplished artist and occupied most of her time in her great hobby of painting.

it is not known exactly when "Four Corners" was so named. It is recorded in 1899 as being "Knighton Villa" and again in 1920. In 1926 it is recorded as "The Cottage". We who grew up in the village in the 1940s and 1950s all remember it as being "Four Corners". At that time Captain Leslie C Ayres RN, and his wife Dolly lived there. Their only son, Anthony, was killed during the Second World War and his name is recorded on the memorial tablet in the church.



CALMADY LADY

This picture is a bit of an enigma, it is un-named and undated.

It seems to be in the style of Laura Calmady so could possibly be of her twin sister Emily.

The picture measures 14.¼" x 9¼".



GERTRUDE CALMADY 1842

This picture of Gertrude Calmady was drawn in 1842 by her sister Laura who was quite an accomplished artist.

Gertrude Elizabeth born 22nd April 1836 was the youngest of the five daughters of Charles Biggs Calmady and his wife Emily.

The picture, which measures 7¹/₄" x 5¹/₄" is dated 29th October 1842.

Gertrude herself enjoyed drawing and painting, and some of her pictures of the house and the estate are still in existence.

She never married, and died at quite an early age of 43 on 2nd January 1879. There is a small memorial plate to her in the church to the right of the altar, under the rather ornate wall memorial to her antecedent Elizabeth Calmady.



HONOR CALMADY 1842

This picture of Honor Calmady was drawn in 1842, by her sister Laura who was quite an accomplished artist.

Honor, born in 1822, was the third of the five daughters of Charles Biggs Calmady and his wife Emily. She was 20 years when the picture was drawn in 1842. In 1850, she married Sir John Augustus Hugh Boyd, 2nd Baronet, of Dawson Hill, Kent.

The picture, which measures 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " is dated October 1842.



CYCILE CALMADY - 1853

This portrait of Cycile Calmady is by her sister Laura.

It measures 5" x 4" and is dated 28th July 1853. It is marked on the back "C.C.C. at Crapstone" and also "Fog at Crapstone".

Cycile, born in 1824 was the fourth of the five daughters of Charles Biggs Calmady and his wife Emily. Like Laura she also enjoyed drawing and painting and there are a few of her drawings still in existence. She was 28 years old when this picture was drawn.

Cycile married in 1856, William Frederick Collier, 2nd son of John Collier Esquire, of Grimstone, Devon, MP for Plymouth.



CYCILE CALMADY - "VIEW FROM THE QUARRIE"

This charcoal drawing entitled "View from the Quarrie" was drawn in 1846 by Cycile Calmady, and it measures 7" x 5"

Born in 1824, Cycile was the fourth daughter of Charles Calmady and his wife Emily.

The quarry is situated on the hilltop in the park to the north of the house. It was from here that the finely grained shillet from which the house is constructed, was quarried. When we were children it was a great place for playing, it was invariably full of water, and there was high cliff at one end from where stones and lumps of wood could be hurled into the waters far below, making a most satisfying splash!



LAURA CALMADY - "POPPY"

This still life study of a poppy in an ornamental jug was painted by Laura Calmady, second daughter of Charles Biggs Calmady of Langdon Court. It measures 14" x 10"

Although undated it is believed to be from the mid 1870s when she resided at "Knighton Villa" which is better known to us these days as "Four Corners".



LAURA CALMADY - "SUMMER FLOWERS"

This still life study of a vase of flowers was painted by Laura Calmady, second daughter of Charles Biggs Calmady of Langdon Court.

The picture entitled "Summer Flowers" measures 8" x 6" and is dated July 1876, this was during the period when she resided at "Knighton Villa" which is better known to us these days as "Four Corners".



LAURA CALMADY - "HAMOAZE"

This picture on a nautical theme was painted by Laura Calmady, and illustrates the diversity in her style. Laura was the second daughter of Charles Biggs Calmady of Langdon Court.

The picture entitled "Hamoaze" measures 7¹/₂" x 5³/₄" and is dated May 1879, this was during the period when she resided at "Knighton Villa" which is better known to us these days as "Four Corners".



LAURA CALMADY - "WAITING"

This is another picture on a nautical theme which was painted by Laura Calmady. Laura was the second daughter of Charles Biggs Calmady of Langdon Court.

The picture entitled "Waiting for the tide" measures 6³/₄" x 5" and is dated March 1876, this was during the period when she resided at "Knighton Villa" which is better known to us these days as "Four Corners".



CORYS AT LANGDON - 1881

These photographs were taken in 1881. The top one shows Richard Cory on horseback with Pattington the coachman and Venus the dog at the south door. The bottom one shows Bessie Frances Cory with her Stepdaughter, Bessie Buchan, at the south door in a dog cart.



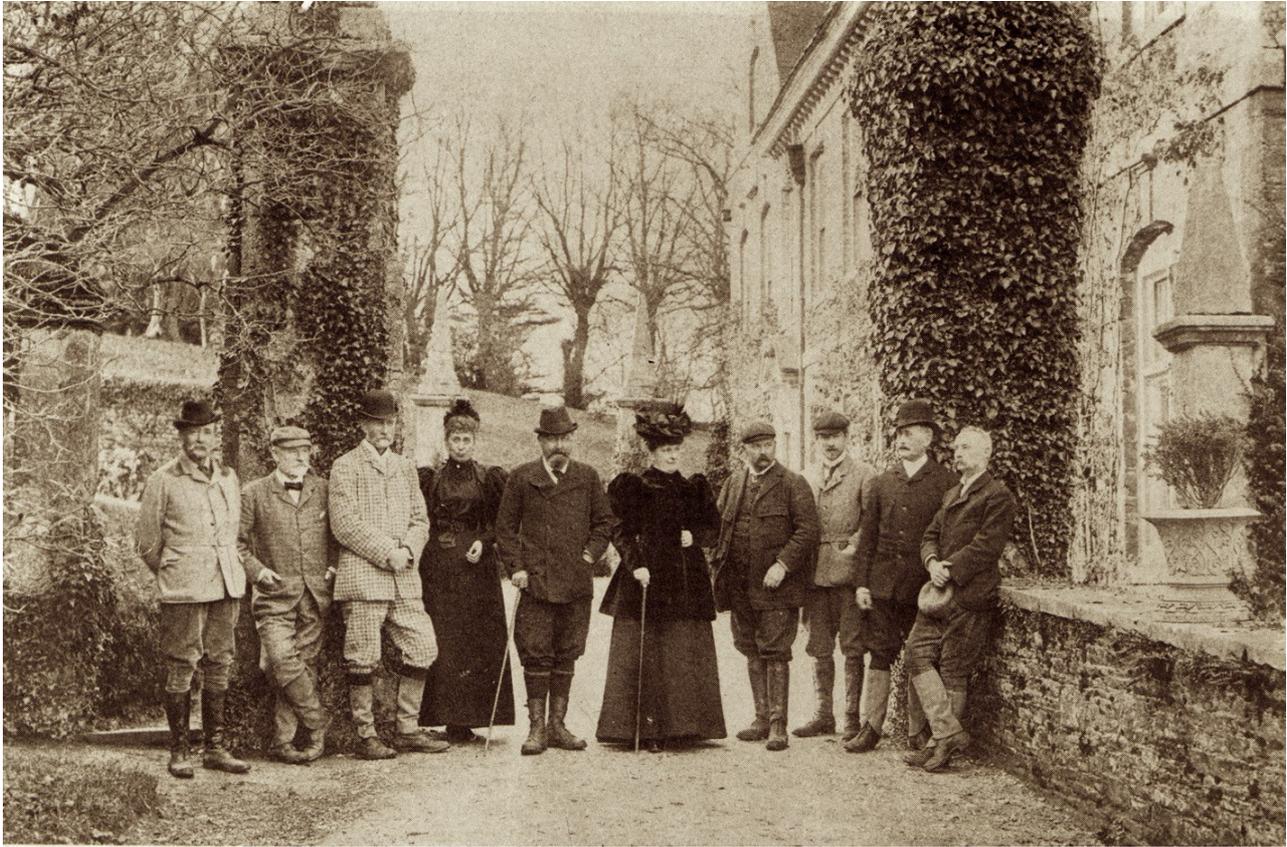
CORYS AT LANGDON - 1892

These photographs were taken in 1892. The top one shows Bessie Frances Cory in the two wheeled dog cart outside the east front with John Bryant the groom in livery. The bottom one shows the four wheeled dog cart outside the east front, with Frank and Mary Jervis, Mrs Cory, Colonel Gore, Major Nepean and Richard Cory. Driven by Pattington, and with Bryant the groom in the great coat. The horses are "Duke" and "Emperor".



LANGDON COURT - ROYAL VISITORS - EARLY 1900s

This photograph shows their Majesties King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra at Langdon Court at a shoot sometime in the early 1900s. Also in the group are Mrs Bessie Cory, General Way, Admiral Bouverie Clark, Colonel George Gore, and Admiral Sir Alexander Buller. Richard Cory is on the extreme right.



LANGDON COURT - STAFF – 1890s/1900s

The photograph below, taken in the early 1900s, shows the coachman, butlers and two cooks who were at Langdon Court. These were all 'inside' staff, there would have been 'maids' of various description, upstairs, downstairs, nursery, parlour, kitchen, scullery who also worked inside the house, and quite probably a female housekeeper as well. The 'outside' staff would have been the gardeners and grooms, there would probably have been a handyman and possibly a carpenter as well.



The photograph below, was taken around about 1885/1886. Not all can be named, but working from left to right there are:- Louise Drake, Under Nurse; Mary Gillespie, Nurse; ?? Dickenson, Laundry Maid; ?? Walker, Maid to Mrs B Cory; Minnie ??; unidentified male; Mrs Rose, Cook who threw a knife at the footman; Stentiford, The Butler; Jane holder, Upper Housemaid; Hannah Wyatt, Upper Housemaid (who married the Modbury Policeman); William ??



LANGDON COURT GARDENERS 1920s

The two Gardeners are Jim Walke, and George Erscott, head man.

George ended up at Wembury House as the Head Gardener and lived in the Lodge there until his retirement in the early 1950s, when Frank Yeabsley took over. George and his wife then moved into No.2 Knighton Hill (now No.75 Knighton Road), which had been bought by Sir Henry Studholme for them to live out their retirement.

Langdon Court, like many other large country houses, had many staff in the house and outside. Langdon also had its own electricity generating plant, and was therefore the first house in Wembury to have electricity installed.

This was not unusual in large country houses, Saltram House close by in Plympton not only had its own electricity generating plant, but also its own gasworks as well.



LANGDON COURT - SENTRY - 1942

The photograph below, taken in 1942, shows Kenneth O'Connor as a 21-year-old private in the Home Guard carrying out sentry duty at Langdon Court. The house was now under the ownership of the Eagle Oil Company, as offices, the company having moved out of London at the beginning of the war. Part of it was also used as the Headquarters of the Southern Division of the Coastal Command, hence the need for sentries on duty.

Kenneth was not called up for active service, as he was one of those battling on the Home Front in a protected occupation in the Dockyard.

Notice that the car alongside is fitted with visors over the headlights for night driving during the war. These allowed only the minimum amount of light to be directed downwards onto the road.



LANGDON COURT – THE RALEIGH WINDOW

The stained glass window on the main staircase depicts Sir Walter Raleigh smoking a pipe of tobacco which he had just brought back from the New World.

The window is believed to be by Fouracre and Watson of Stonehouse, Plymouth, and dates from the 1880s.

The bottom section of the window is obstructed by the glazed roof structure that was put in when the central courtyard was made into a palm court.



LANGDON COURT - HOTEL ADVERTISEMENT - 1970

The Advertisement below appeared in the souvenir programme that was published in 1970 for 'Mayflower 70' commemorating the 350th anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage to New England.

A.A.**

ASHLEY COURTENAY RECOMMENDED

**R.A.C.

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A 16th-CENTURY FREE HOUSE

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Take Kingsbridge road from Plymouth, turn right at Elburton Hotel, follow Wembury signpost. **BEAR RIGHT** at CROSSROADS GARAGE and continue straight on via STADDISCOMBE to Hotel

