

Glimpses of the Village in the 1920s and '30s

"There were five big families and we all had to doff our caps."

There was a definite hierarchy in the village with families relying heavily on employment from the big houses and estates. Few families were independent of them.

John Edmonds There were five big families and we all had to doff our caps: the Barhams (at Hole Park), the Tennants (at Great Maytham), the Woodds (at Kingsgate), the Coombe Bakers (at Sparkeswood) and the Geddes family (at Frensham).



Hole Park

Angela Priestman Most people worked directly or indirectly for those families in the big houses. Everybody owed allegiance to their own employer when it came to electoral times. Tennants were all Liberal. Labour was a minority party in those days. And I think the rest were all Conservatives.

The Hon H J Tennant had been a Liberal Member of Parliament previously so all their tenants had to vote Liberal and we had to vote Conservative.

See & Hear the Member for Ashford Division



Mr. W. P. SPENS,
O.B.E., K.C., M.P.

SOCIALIST PROMISES

Socialists claim that the successful management of State services such as the Post Office, and of municipal services such as water supply, prove that Nationalisation of industry would be equally successful.

This is entirely false reasoning.

Existing State and Municipal services are monopolies; there is no competition; methods are standardised and seldom call for change.

Industry is carried on under entirely different conditions; competition is world-wide; new needs are constantly arising; invention and discovery call for frequent change and adaptation of method; enterprise is essential and risks must often be taken.

That officials working in or under a Governmental Department are not qualified to deal with these conditions is proved by the fact that "wherever the Socialist policy of State ownership and control of industry has been tried it has proved to be a complete and costly failure."

Next Friday, 2nd AUG.

KILNDOWN:
at FINCHCOX at 5 p.m.

CURTISDEN GREEN:
Mr. WOOLPACK at 9 p.m.

CRANBROOK | HAWKHURST

following dance: F. Vane, D. J. Hilder, J. Ward, J. Harvey on view and a factory was the service was augmented SCHOLAR son of Mr. Bull, of H. examination results his brother, Mrs. M. R. Sandhurst

PRINC

EFFD

All Road to raise a Parish Council successful Warden. The Rev. of the Rev. and was B. B. Tennant the Rev. In her said she

I remember my mother and father going to a meeting addressed by the Conservative candidate who was a Mr Spens in those days. My mother was not impressed; she said he was like a cat on hot bricks.

The village was very quiet and very ordered. Everybody worked locally so everybody knew where everybody was. If you saw someone working in the field, well, you'd know which farmer he was working for. As well as the big houses there were minor gentry everywhere. They were very much aware of their position, above the villagers and below the gentry.



The Pittance in Rolvenden Layne

Three spinster ladies called Papillon who had named their house "The Pittance" were lesser gentry. Their father had lost his money in the First World War and come down in the world. Three ladies who gave a lot to the village, especially Alex the youngest one.

There were lots of spinsters in the village; the Miss Tweedies at Rawlinson, the Miss Pipers, Miss Inge, Miss Smeeth and of course there was Miss Alison Tennant. Down the Layne there were three Miss Beards who lived next to the pub, Betty Boulton at Walnut Tree Cottage. She was young. I think she still had hopes. She tried to catch one of the Geddes boys but she didn't manage it.

Lady Geddes was a great character in the village. She was Irish-American and very democratic. Very exotic. She had a lovely car. It was red inside and she had a dress to match it. If she was driving down to the Layne at the same time as we village children were walking home from school she'd stop her car and fill up with as many as she could squash in to give us a lift home. I can't imagine the old Colonel [Barham from Hole Park] doing that! My only memory of him is in church – he had a gammy leg as straight as a ramrod – walking up, limping up the aisle. Very much respected old boy. No, I can't imagine any of the Tennants doing that. I can't imagine any of the other gentry doing that. But Lady Geddes did.



Frensham Manor

There was a Mr and Mrs Day. These two were retired empire-builders. I think little Mr Day had taught somewhere in the Empire. The Empire! He was rather a nice little man and he would like to have said good afternoon and smiled as he went by. You knew he daren't. She was a big pompous woman. Anyway, one day Lady Geddes had her car full of children, was driving down to the Layne, got just about onto the hill when she said, "Oh, there's Mrs Day." And Mrs Day was walking up the hill on the footpath. So she stopped the car and Mrs Day came running along. "Oh, Lady Geddes! Oh, Lady Geddes!" and she looked in the car and it was full of all the village children. You should have seen her face. It was too funny!

Mrs Coombe Baker didn't appear very much. She'd been an opera lady. A big lady with furs slung round her neck. She ran the Voluntary Aid Detachment in the First World War. I think she was getting on by the time I was a child. I never knew Mr Coombe Baker. My friend Edie and I, on the way home from school, used to go round to the back of Sparkeswood sometimes. Edie took a little tin can with a lid and the maid would fill it with skimmed milk. They would skim off the cream for the use in the kitchen and there was this skimmed milk left and they gave it to her.



Sparkeswood House

There were no teenagers in those days. We left school at 14. The girls mostly went into service so they were tied. The boys would start working early, in the gardens, working on the farms. Shops were run by families. There were men serving in the shops in those days. I didn't have a teen-age; nobody did. You didn't rebel. You went to work or you kept your nose down, as I did. No, teenagers were only invented after the war.

The only people we were told to avoid were the tramps who walked regularly between Tenterden Workhouse - that's now West View - and Rye Workhouse. I can remember seeing one rolling drunk up the Streyte once. Somebody must have given him some money and he'd been in The Star. We were told to avoid those but Daddy would never pass one. My mother said if he hadn't got a penny in his pocket and he saw one he'd come back indoors for something. You see a lot of them were ex-servicemen and when I grew up it was in the aftermath of the Great War.

Ron A Monk I think there were about 16 gardeners on Tennant's estate when my dad came up from Snape in 1923. The kitchen garden was separate and where Plum Alley was, off Frogs Lane, that was all orchards to Great Maytham. They had the manager for the fruit stuff in the end bungalow in Frogs Lane. Carvell was the actual head man of the gardens and everything. Judge was in the kitchen garden. They grew everything in the kitchen garden. They'd got to produce stuff they needed. The garden boy, he used to have to get a list from the kitchen and he'd go down to the kitchen garden, take a big wheelbarrow or a handcart and wheel it back up. Anything from asparagus, lettuce, all kinds of stuff. The old gardener there never used to get on with the head man. They logger-headed a bit.

The [kitchen] garden was split like a cross, and there were quite wide footpaths, and on each side was cordon apples. It was a walled garden at one end, but it fell down. Where the footpath is, that's where the wall was. They had some standard pear trees, which were near to the road, like a big line of them went the whole length of it. There was the brick wall, then the cold-frames. Up the top end. There's a lot of work in that. When I was a kid I had to help lift them on and off. They were pretty experienced people. When my dad was up there he grew everything up to melons. The greenhouses were at Maytham - to the right of the house. There was a peach casing and nectarine casing. Next to that was vines, a lot of vines and a lot of work once you get the fruit 'cos you have little scissors and thin them out. It was the only time when I've known that if there was any surplus it was sold to a farm shop in Tenterden, by the Town Hall. My dad was away through the war up there, then he came back. He still had work at Maytham, then he worked over at Cornhill. Alison [Tennant] was over there, the daughter. She was a bit of a hair-brained thing. Done all sorts of queer things. She had all kinds of ideas.

Anyone who was any good at billiards, and all the main tennis stars, they came to Maytham and played there. There's no tennis court there now but there used to be a red dust one and a grey solid one.



Great Maytham