

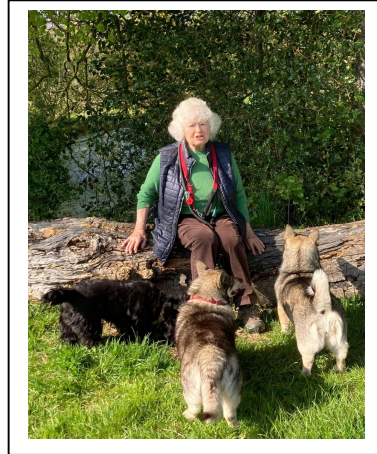
DOROTHY PARSONS MEMORIES

History of my family coming to Baiden and Mount Easy Farm.

Dorothy Parsons (nee Judge).



Dorothy 20 years old
1958



Dorothy's 85th Birthday
9th May 2023

My grandfather, George Judge, born 1864 and his wife Agnes came from Rolvenden In 1899 to Baiden Farm, he was employed as wagoner and worked with the Shire horses. He, his wife and four children, Charles, Edward, Elizabeth & my father Albert who was three years old when they moved into Baiden Cottages.

The farm grew hops, all types of soft fruit, apples, pears, corn, hay, sugar-beet, also reared sheep, pigs, cattle, had two shire horses and a pony that drew a trap (carriage)

Grandfather worked until his death in 1939 and both he and grandmother are buried in St. Margaret's church yard.

Grandfather had a terrible accident; he was collecting rag-stone from the quarry at Boughton near Maidstone for the farm lane and when returning home on Linton Hill the brake on the wagon wasn't working as it should. He pulled over to the side of the road and got under the wagon to ascertain the problem and the horses moved forward and the wagon with its full load ran over his leg which had to be amputated above the knee and he apparently worked in the fields with his wooden stump for the rest of his working life. There was no compensation paid to workers in those days.

My father was born in 1896, he attended Horsmonden School and walked through the fields to get there. When he left school, he worked for a butcher on the Green called Noakes and when he was seventeen, he joined the army, he was in the Buffs and was sent to France during the First World War, thought it would be an adventure. When he was demobbed, he came home and worked on the farm, met my mother and they married in 1929.



Above: Dorothy's parents at Mount Easy Cottage 1978

Left: Dorothy's Parents with Bruce their dog in 1932

My mother, Hilda Mancktelow, came from Marden and her father was a blacksmith and worked for Alan Couchman's grandfather at the Ramshill Forge in Horsmonden. My mother worked as housekeeper to Mr. Hartridge at Mount Easy Farmhouse and that's where my parents met and lived after they married. They lived there until Mr. Hartridge died and then moved into Mount Easy Cottage where I now live.



Mount Easy Cottage



Mt Easy Farm c1920



Mt Easy Farm 2023

The people who lived here before my parents, Mr. and Mrs Lloyd also worked for Mr. Hartridge and they had a little shop here in the garden. They moved to the Lamberhurst Road in the village and opened a shop there. They also fostered children and in the 1980's I was driving home down Schoolhouse Lane and offered an elderly couple a lift explaining that the lane was a no through road and little did they realise and the man said they were down from London for the day and he was bringing his wife to see where he was fostered as a child, it then became apparent that it was my home that he'd come to see. I thought this was rather remarkable that I should discover them. He remembered it only being a short distance from the village and it's actually two miles, anyway they had a lovely day remembering everything with my parents and I popped them back on the train for London in the evening.

My grandmother Bertha Heasman, nee Mancktelow worked in service for the people who owned Cranbrook Mill and they lived at Castlemaine Farmhouse and that is how mother's parents met as the forge was opposite Castlemaine.

My father, Albert Judge, was the hop drier at Baiden Oast, he lived and slept in the oast for the duration of the hop season.

As a youngster I had a bin and picked hops with all the Londoner's, it was good fun and when I was in my early teens I was promoted to the 'bookie', I recorded how many bushels of hops everyone picked, following the measurer noting it all down in a ledger and then on Saturdays we would sub them some of their earnings and they would go to the village and shop and have a few pints in the pub and then come nightfall they would come back to the farm singing at the top of their voices.

It was quite a learning curve for us children on the farm as their lives were totally different to ours, they appeared very streetwise. I used to wish that I could live in one of those

huts for the summer. At the end of hop picking, they'd have a big party and we were all invited, I remember my mum sending us with buns she'd baked and homemade lemonade.

Of course, the time came when cars, tractors and machinery became available and life on the farm became totally different. Here at Baiden there were sixteen adults plus teenagers and with mechanisation all those people weren't required, many of them went to work in the local businesses of which there were many.

I was born in 1938 and during the Second World War which I vaguely remember. We had a Morrison shelter in the sitting room where my mother, baby sisters Janet and Betty and I slept (it virtually filled the room) and father slept under the kitchen table.

I can remember hearing the throb of the German bomber planes going over as they made their way to bomb London at night but being so young and my parents were very calm, I don't recall being really scared.

There were occasions when we all sheltered in a deep ditch when our mothers were working in the fields and the Spitfires and the German planes were firing at one another overhead and the shrapnel was whizzing about.

Another occasion an incendiary bomb came down about 500 yards from our home but it didn't explode and the army bomb disposal personnel came and disarmed it and all we saw was this large fire, we were very lucky that night.

During this time a Scottish bagpipe band came marching through the farm, I do remember being quite scared then because I thought they must be Germans, think they may have been heading for Capel Manor as there were soldiers billeted there at the time.

Another memory - our milk used to be delivered by pony and trap from Kemsley's, Hayman's Hill, mother used to take her jug out to be filled.

Memories of school

I started school at Horsmonden Primary in 1943, teachers remembered are Miss Vousden, Miss Parren, Mrs Rolfe, Miss Turner, Mr Boddington and the Headmaster Mr Parkinson. We were collected from Baiden by Mr. Ratcliffe in his local carrier's lorry, Eric Coley used to hoist us up into the lorry. We used to go to school with our gas masks hanging around our neck in a cardboard box.

There were air raid shelters at the back of the infant school and I remember doing air raid drill which wasn't much fun and probably the most frightening thing in my life were the doodlebugs.

There was a large cherry tree between the school and the village hall and remember the class sitting under the tree and being given a few cherries to eat, such a treat.

School dinners were served across the road at Heathleigh house, the dinners were always tasty and remember always being hungry. Each morning in class we were given a bottle of milk with a straw, in the winter when it was cold this was lovely but in summer not always so good. We used to use two bottle tops to make pom-poms winding the wool around and then cutting between them.

During my time at Horsmonden Primary we were allowed to go into the village after lunch, many pupils who lived locally went home to lunch, we used to wander around the green feeling very grown up but someone was caught stealing cherries from the orchard where today's school stands so we were then confined to the school playground.

We went on to secondary school at thirteen and took an exam to establish which class we would in at our new school. Mr. Parkinson coached six of us (likely candidates for technical or grammar school) they were Stuart Knight, Roger Pettigrew, Donald Couchman, Francis Rummery, Maureen Paul and myself, it was quite special on reflection but Mr. Parkinson was very strict and I was quite intimidated by him, he was very revered by us all and we certainly all behaved when he was around, as I grew older, I came to respect him very much.

I did pass the scholarship exam to go to the technical college but my father was very Victorian in his views on girls' education and the logistics of getting me there and the uniform etc. it was decided I would go to Paddock Wood Secondary and had a very enjoyable time, made lots of new friends.

At fifteen I left school and home and was employed as a children's nanny, this was a marvellous experience and I went places and did things I would never have done had I stayed at home - I continued my education, I was encouraged to do my best and became very confident and pleased with myself.

Then in 1959 I was twenty-one and was employed by Kathy and George Hawkins at W H Boddington's, Cathy taught me to do the wages and book-keeping, this was one of the happiest times of my life and I worked for and with them for twenty-five years.

In 1960 Peter and I were married and then in 1964 our daughter Helen was born, so my life was very good. We lived at Bassetts Farm and we saved and saved and bought 32 Oast View in 1966, we stayed there until 1975 when we moved back here to Mount Easy Cottage and Peter built a large extension and garage onto the property.

In 1961 Bainden Farm, the eight cottages, two farmhouses were all sold. My father bought our cottage and modernised it; one bedroom became a bathroom.

During my childhood we had no electricity, no bathroom, a toilet down the garden and a cold tap over the sink. I clearly remember when the electricity supply was installed, it transformed our lives, mother had an electric cooker, a fridge and an electric iron but we still had to bath in front of the kitchen fire.

Christmas was always a magical time, my parents used to make most of our toys, dad made us a lovely dolls house with furniture and once made a scooter. My first doll had a china head and a rag body and she opened and closed her eyes and mum made her some wonderful clothes, some knitted and some sewn.

Our stockings usually had an annual, a board game and nuts and sweets. We didn't write a list of what we wanted but always left a sherry for Father Christmas and a carrot for his reindeer.

Our Christmas tree was always the top of a Leylandii tree which grew at the bottom of our garden, we used to put clip on candles on it which only mother was allowed to light. I once lit these and the tree started to crackle so very quickly put them out but when mother came home, she knew as the smell lingered and there was big trouble.

Father made us a bodge with pram wheels and I was instructed not to go to the top of the hill until I'd learnt to handle it! Needless to say, I went to the very top of the hill and ended up in the ditch at the bottom of the hill very stung with stinging nettles and filthy dirty, I was scared to go home so told a load of lies as to how it happened and obviously wasn't believed. I think I was a bit of a nightmare child on reflection, always thought nothing will happen to me.

Mother had a sewing machine and made all our dresses etc. and father repaired our shoes and I used to deliberately wear the segs out of the heels as I hated the clip clop as I walked but he soon noticed and replaced them.

My hair was my mother's pride and joy, I had these long plaits which were a big problem to me, the boys would tie me to the school railings or give them a tug so one day in a fit of pique I cut one off and had to be taken to the hairdressers to have my hair professionally styled and I felt so grown up. After mother died, I was sorting through her things and found my plaits stored away in a pretty little box.

Life on the farm as a child was always exciting, each season brought a change of activity. When the harvest was brought in, we rode on the wagons sitting in the corn or hay - highly dangerous but great fun but none of us were ever hurt. When father was harvesting mother used to pack a picnic and take it to him in the fields and we three girls would go along as well which was memorable. Summer time was two hours forward at that time so the evenings were very long and stayed light until 10 pm.

The corn was built into round stacks and the tops were thatched to keep it all dry and the thatcher used to put a corn dolly on the top, sometimes a crown or a pheasant and in the autumn the threshing machine would come to extract the grain.

The machine came from Lambert's yard and consisted of a steam engine, the threshing machine and a little cabin towed behind rather like a shepherd's hut. The farm dogs had a wonderful time chasing rats and mice. Lambing was also a lovely time.

Sweets were another vivid memory, we had a ration of a ¼ lb per week and it was looked forward to immensely, we used to go to Crowhurst to choose what we were to buy. I remember Mr. Crowhurst had some bananas for sale and I'd never eaten a banana before and I ate it on the walk home, it was delicious!

Horsmonden Village Fetes.

There flower shows and fetes in the Sports Pavilion, the children used to enter miniature gardens in seed trays and bunches of arranged wild flowers and many village gardeners entered their vegetables and flowers.

One fete was held at Nevergood Farm, it was not long after the war and Ted Cheeseman arranged for Whittles Ice Cream Van to be there and all the children were given an ice cream which was such a treat. I think Whittles were from Marden. There were pony rides and lucky dip.

Over the years there were fetes held at Rectory Park, Sprivers, Capel Manor and on the Village Green. I remember going to all of these and they were all events that we all looked forward too and on reflection my mother was really committed to getting us involved in it all as we always walked to these occasions, imagine dragging three tired kids home after a day of fun!!

Most of the fete's has races for different age groups, the sack race, the three-legged race and sprint races, there was also a fancy dress competition, some of the competitors had fantastic outfits, there were cash prizes for first, second and third places. There was the greasy pole where two people sat on a greased pole suspended over a tank of water and the participants would hit one another with a straw filled sack and inevitably the loser fell into the water, there were coconut shies, Punch and Judy show and some years there were floats which were trailers decorated to portray some event relevant to that time. Also remember a brass band playing on the green.

Cinema

There was a cinema that came to the village hall each week, the projectionist used to come and set it all up, it was very well attended and all the teenagers from the village used to congregate there, many a romance happened. The projectionist would pop over to the pub and if anything went wrong with the film someone would have to go and get him.

Cycle Speedway

Skid-kids was also very popular, the names that come to mind are: - Roger Parker, Johnnie Hope, Robert Payne, John Barham, George Owen, Rodney Akehurst, George Kember, Denis Brown and quite a few others. This was held where the tennis courts are now & there used to be teams from other villages that came and competed.

Sunday school

During the war we attended Grovehurst House opposite the pond, then transferred to Baiden Farmhouse. The Rev. Barker would come and give us bible readings and prayers but not many attended so perhaps that's why the meetings ceased. Later when I was

about ten my cousins and I used to go to the Methodist Chapel, think we were probably sent to give mother some peace for a few hours, there was always a good lunch ready when we got home.

Sidney Chapman was the preacher and Jessie Russell played the organ; she sometimes played her violin. Jessie is a distant relative (my aunt Elizabeth married her uncle) This wasn't unusual in villages as most families were distantly related as there weren't many means of travel so most stayed within walking distance of their village of birth because of their work.

A funny memory of chapel - the Parsons boys used to attend and they had a little dog called Monty who followed them everywhere and needless to say it sometimes followed them into chapel and all the boys had to take it home and never reappeared.

This was my first introduction to my lovely Peter but it wasn't love at first sight that happened when he came home after having done his National Service. He'd grown into a man in those two years and I knew that he was the one.



Dorothy and Peter 2003

Favourite Past Times

In what seemed like continuous hot summers was meeting up with the Giles girls from Lampkyns and various school friends from the village and walking down through Ash Farm to the River Teise, many of them swam but I never got the hang of it. We used to take bottles of pop and picnics and stay down there for hours, happy, happy days.

Village Dances

In the late 1950's my friends were borrowing the family car or acquired their own so we used to pack ourselves in and go dancing on Saturday nights, they were held in the village halls in Goudhurst, Brenchley, Marden, Wadhurst and Horsmonden, one of the bands was Cyril Mapley and there used to be a lady bandleader by the name escapes me, the jive was the "in thing" and everyone could do it in various degrees of expertise.

We girls used to get dressed up in our finery and many of the boys were teddy boys.

Peter acquired an old car and one night coming home from a dance and running low on petrol he drove all the way up Pullens Hill in reverse as the petrol wasn't getting to the engine going forward, I'll never know to this day if he was pulling my leg.

Sometimes we went further afield to dances, Pat Diprose from Goudhurst used to take us all in her father's carrier's lorry which was always a good laugh. Also went to the football & cricket club dances in the pavilion.

Seaside Visits.

My parents each summer during the school holidays would take to Hastings on the bus, we would get up early, the excitement was really something, ride our bikes to Caple Cross and leave them at the Drum and Monkey, we'd get the number 97 bus to Hawkhurst and then another bus to Hastings, there were treats of candy floss and ice cream.

Another adventure was going on a coach trip with my mother to see Bertrum Mills Circus in London at the Haringey Arena but we didn't get to the circus because of the London smog, the coach got snarled up in traffic and nothing moved all night, we must have been quite near because we heard the lion's roar.

It must have been quite worrying for my father because we had no way of letting him know and he was at home looking after my sisters.

Another adventure, I was twenty and another visit to Hastings on the back of Sarah Parsons' Vespa Scooter, she rang me at work to say that she'd passed her driving test and we arranged to go for a ride after work and we drove to St. Leonards parked the Vespa

and walked along the beach to Hastings Pier, ate fish and chips and then walked back to the scooter, I had great difficulty one foot before the other the next day. Sarah was in the Wrens based at the Admiralty at the bottom of the Mall in London and I used to go up to meet her and we'd drive all around the city on it, the traffic wasn't as it is now.

I'm going to conclude this nostalgia adventure of my childhood and my family - if nothing else it has made me realise why I felt compelled all those years ago to move back here and look my parents in their old age, my father had very strict rules but was fair and loving, he adored us all and my mother was his life.

Having seen what a hard life his parents had after grandfather lost his leg he prepared for his old age, he went without lots for himself and he saved enough to be able to buy this house when the farm was sold, we weren't lavished with cash but we were lavished with love.

Dorothy Parsons

(Composition J Freeman)