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SHEPHERDSWELL
1780-1800
with special reference
to the village school

by Mrs Heather Lewis
(Dip. Local History)

The Society is very grateful to Mrs Heather Lewis for allowing us to microfiche this history. Anyone working in this parish will, I am sure, find it of great help.

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CHAPTER 1

AN OUTLINE OF THE VILLAGE OF SHEPHERDSWELL

Shepherdswell, a parish in the Ecclesiastical Diocese of Canterbury, is situated on one of the highest points of the North Downs, lying close to the London/Canterbury/Dover Road. It is 13 miles from Canterbury and 4 miles from Dover and occupies 1836 acres. The main part of the village is in the Manor of Upton Court but on its Western periphery there lies the Manor of West Court which, in the late 19th Century, was only sparsely populated.

Edward Hasted wrote of 'Shebbertswell'

Though healthy, is not reckoned a very pleasant one (village) either as to situation or soil.

He describes the lower lying hamlets of Cox Hill and Butter(Botolph) Street as

of low, unpleasant situation, much enclosed, having frequent woodland in them. (1)

Although some of the woodland may have been cleared by 1870, he would have found the general situation little changed, but the size of the population and the number of dwelling houses would have greatly increased. (2)

The name of the village appears equally frequently in church documents and school records as Shepherdswell and Sibertswold. In the Domesday entry it is written as Siberteswold (3) and on a

church chalice it is inscribed as Shepherds Well. However, although it would appear that the name changed in 6 centuries, the original Sibertswold is still retained and used as frequently as its counterpart Shepherdswell. Indeed in the School Admittance book children from the same family are recorded as coming from either name indiscriminately. (4)

Until 1860 the village was a small settlement lying around the mediaeval church, adjoining the manor house of Upton Court and the school which was built in 1853. In the parish there were also outlying farms each forming a small hamlet, occupied by the farmer and his family, agricultural labourers and farm servants. Most of these conformed to the usual custom of having 'living in' farm servants who were still batchelors, and families occupying tied cottages. In the 1871 census for West Court Farm there is listed - Thomas and Catherine Jacob aged 50 and 51, a farmer employing 8 men and 3 boys. Living in the house with them were Servants Ellen (20) and Jane (15) Sheaf born Shepherdswell; Ann Bailey (17) born Wootten; Charles Fisher (16) born Shepherdswell; Agricultural labourers Thomas Horn (32) born Shepherdswell; Willian Garlinge (23) born Womanswold; John Hawkins (22) born Shepherdswell; John Rogers (66) born Langdon; Thomas Sharp (20) born Canterbury; Josiah Bailey (22) born Wootten; and James Garlinge (22) born Womanswold. In 1881 the 4 tied cottages were occupied by families none of whom were recorded as previous 'living in' servants. Other similar settlements were at Botolph Street Farm, Cox Hill Farm, Long Lane Farm and Half Way Street.

In 1861 the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Co. brought the railway through the village and connected it with London and Dover. This very soon transformed the whole focal point of the village. The centre moved from the Church, which was situated at the summit of Church Hill, to the station which lay at the foot of it. A new affluence was to arrive with the building of the railway. During its construction the Netherton brickfields, which had hitherto been a minor source of employment, were used to provide local materials for the station, goods sheds, bridge and 2369 yard long tunnel. The brickyard expanded to reach from behind the Bricklayers' Arms to Botolph Street Farm. Local labour does not seem to have been used, this was provided by Irishmen, Scotsmen and Men from Yorkshire. (5)

An account of the building of the railway was published in the Dover Express

We had workmen from different parts and it was such a novelty to the people round here that they used to come down on Sundays and spend hours looking on at the work to see what progress had been made and after it had been opened people would stand for hours on the railway bridge for the opportunity of seeing a train come through. (6)

After the completion of the railway there was a dramatic change in the social structure of the village. Its situation on the London to Dover line and its bracing climate made it a desirable and healthy summer resort for London residents and as a result The Terrace was built immediately above the station by a

consortium from Dover. (7) This is a terrace of late Georgian/early Victorian style houses, quite incongruous amongst the cottage properties of the village, and occupied at the time of the 1871 census by lodging house keepers, a solicitor, an army captain, a fly proprietor, a Chelsea Pensioner and a baronet, nearly all born in London. Other large detached dwellings were to follow, near the station and

Over the bridge along the Eythorne Road a new part of Shepherdswell has recently sprung up, several villas, singly and in pairs, having been built and soon the whole road... will be lined on each side with handsome residences. (8)

By 1881 the tone of the Terrace had changed somewhat and occupants included a shepherd, an agricultural labourer and a young doctor. Ten years later the school admittance book records that 4 the Terrace was occupied by 20 children aged 2-11 whose guardian was 'Middleton'. Whereas all these children attended the village school, none of those of previous heads of households appear in the admittance book and must have either attended private schools or been privately educated.

Building was still continuing in 1881. Village artisans and shop keepers erected houses between the station and the church and more large houses with servants appear in the census. The village was changing from a collection of simple farm labourers to a far more sophisticated cross section of society. Employment for girls was now available and they went into service in the new houses.



(Hollingsbee Collection)

In 1861 the mediaeval church was demolished and in the newly affluent village a Victorian ediface was erected. The old church had been

a very dark plain little old fashioned church which had been standing there for centuries. A church on the site is mentioned in the Domesday Book. (9)

The demolished church however was in the early English style and was probably erected in the 13th Century. The new church cost £1,396 and this was raised by voluntary subscriptions which would never have been possible before the railway changed the tenor of the village life. Perhaps in this case a misfortune.

Shortly before this, in 1853, a National School had been built beside the triangular village green; a small rectangular building with a bell turret surmounted by a wrought iron cross. This, with additions, was to provide for the education of the village children from that date. Previously, any parent who considered that education was important, had had to send his child 3 miles to Waldershare. In the 1846 Church School Enquiry there was no school at Shepherdswell, but

Waldershare, which had a population of 92 had a school united to the National Society, attended by 200 children from 6 parishes and entirely supported by the Earl of Guildford who did not wish to make a return. (10)

The enquiry also suggested

There was a school at Lydden, population 248, held in part of the church,...this parish should unite with Shepherdswell and Coldred in order that a school might be maintained by subscription.

However, Sheperdswell was to have its own school, shared with children from Coldred, Barfrestone and Woolage Green, who seem to have been allowed to attend on suffrance. (11)

The School population must have substantially increased between 1853 and 1870, but 1870 is the date when the first log book was installed and therefore this study covers the 30 years from 1870-1900.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Edward Hasted, The History and Topographical survey of the County of Kent, (1972 reprint of 1797-1801), Vol IX, 375
- 2) 1861 census population 212
1871 " " 504
1881 " " 522
1891 " " 520
- 3) Ipse abb. ten, Sibertswalt...ibi esed. T.R.E. valeb. 8 lib.
Domesday Book of Kent.
- 4) Louisa Beer admitted 12.3.83 Shepherdswell
Thurlow Beer admitted 28.5.83 Sibertswold.
- 5) H Coppen, "Memories of Old Shepherdswell", The Dover Express
and East Kent News 13th August 1926.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Bavington Jones, "Annals of the Villages in Dover's Rural Border and in the Fair Lands of Kent Beyond", Dover Express (1901).

- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Coppen, opus cit.
- 10) Canterbury Cathedral Library, Church School Enquiry (1846).
- 11) Sibertswold C.P. School, Log Book, January 19th 1874.

Children from Barfriston 'Huts' a special case to be considered by the Committee.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A labourer is in poverty and therefore underfed
In childhood, when his constitution is being built up
In his early years and his middle life when he should be
in his prime
In old age
and
The women are in poverty for the greater part of the
time when they are bearing children (1)

During the late 19th century the expectation of life of a woman who reached the age of 20 was 46, and one third of her life would be devoted to child bearing. In Shepherdswell 1 in 4 children born between 1872 and 1882 failed to reach the age of 5. Out of 102 live births, ie children baptised in the village church in the last 30 years of the century, 25 died in infancy and 13 school age children (5-11) died without it even being mentioned in the School Log Book. It must have been accepted as an inevitable fact of life. Most deaths were caused by insanitary conditions, poor resistance to disease due to malnutrition, and illness possibly aggravated by working in the fields in harsh weather conditions.

Conditions for farmers became increasingly difficult during the latter part of the 19th century. Villagers, who through poverty had looked for a better life overseas and emigrated to N. America, Australia and New Zealand, had found it there. After initial hardships and disasters farming thrived for them and now they flooded the home market with cheap food. The only way for

farmers to compete with the influx was to increase fertility by using superphosphates. Their costs therefore rose and wages were depressed. (2)

The accounts for a typical agricultural labourer and his family in 1872 were judged to be in the neighbourhood of -

Wages, father 12s;, son 3s;, = 15s per week. The week's bread and flour 9s 4d;, one cwt of coal 1s 1d;, rent of allotment 1d;, This left for butcher's meat, tea, sugar, soap, lights, clothes for 7 persons, school pence, beer, medicine, and pocket money per week 4s 4d. (3)

Not only was the community suffering from an agricultural depression but records show that the ten years 1871-1880 were unusually wet, the average rainfall being 20% above normal. (4) The School Log Book records the frustration of teachers who were battling to educate children constantly kept at home because it was too wet to send them inadequately dressed for school.

This heavy rainfall caused

bad harvests in the middle and later 1870s (because of)....unparalleled harshness of the weather....despite shortfall in home products, prices failed to rise....imports had become so large and had such an influence on prices as to make English arable farming disastrously unprofitable when the crops failed. (5)

In 1876, the worst harvest of the century, wheat sold for 42/10d compared with 60s in a bad year in the 1860s. (6)

1879 was the coldest winter of the century with much snow, well into May....no corn to sell worth naming and nobody cares to buy English produce the quality is so bad. Farmers ruined in every direction....vast quantities of grain pouring in from America. (7)

Conditions in Kent, however, cannot have been quite so dire as in some other counties in England. Farming was more diverse and not wholly dependent on corn crops. The excuses given by children kept away from school to work on the land indicate a wider variety of products which were not competing with overseas trade. Fruit was not being imported in much quantity since it did not keep well, and it always found a ready market in London. The Kent hop fields were thriving and according to the census several heads of household were market gardeners. The harvest in August, however, still necessitated a long summer vacation and the depression in wheat prices and poor crops must have caused unemployment.

In spite of the hopelessness felt by many of the farming community, when Henry Coppen, of 'Coppen and Sons' the village grocery and post office, wrote his Memories of Shepherdswell 1926, he did not look back on a boyhood of hardship. He recalls rather, a picture of a self sufficient community (Appendix 2). The villagers baked their own bread

from flour grown from corn close by our door - it was taken to the old mill on the top of the hill, ground and taken away. The cottagers do a lot of gleaning, thresh it themselves....on the attic floor, and winnow it by keeping up a little blast by fanning a sheet so as to separate the corn. The mill was one of the finest in the district and splendidly built. (8)



SHEPHERDSWELL MILL (Hollingsbee collection)

The village was well supplied with ponds and wells, with the parish well situated at the top of Church Hill in the centre of the original village community

the wives with their children used to draw water in the day time and the men would get a good supply in the evening....there would be quite a throng at this well on a summer evening. (9)

Additionally there were 13 other wells and five ponds used for watering cattle and sheep, washing clothes and for brewing

Brewing was carried out in almost every house, the bran was given to the pig....the ale was a good quality but not especially strong....the men were for the most part straight forward and trustworthy but they used to have two or three days of drunkenness and then perhaps work steadily for two or three months. (10)

A bout of drinking must have been a necessary escape from a life of perpetual toil, but the consequent drunkenness must have caused great deprivation and probably a deal of cruelty to the children.

In a world where working life, which lasted until old age, began in childhood, and where the working day of 12 hours was prolonged in the summer, children clearly needed the protection of the law.

The Act of 1876 attempted to do this, limiting the employment of children under 10 to six weeks in the summer. Between the ages of 10 and 14 children could only be employed if they reached certain educational standards, but education was not made compulsory.

The act was largely ignored and on almost every page the school log book records absences from school for such reasons as stone picking, picking greens, fruit and hops, harvesting, rooking and storing turnips. The children's wages were needed at home and few farmers were sufficiently altruistic to turn away cheap labour. As farmers were also magistrates and school governors prosecutions were hardly likely.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

Throughout my researches I have been impressed by the work of the Anglican church in the amelioration of living conditions, setting standards of behaviour by means of the moral teaching at Church, in those days well attended, and at the same time being responsible for most of the social welfare then available, thus making the village a more homogenous and happier place.

One of the great problems for the ordinary villager was to find enough money to purchase the more expensive necessities such as clothes, boots and coal. Again the church found the time to help meet this difficulty. The vicar set up a clothing club, a coal club, and a savings club. Payment into these clubs was made by the children to the vicar at school when he collected the school pence. Doubtless the school teachers assisted in this work so that the school itself, in conjunction with the church fulfilled an essential social function.

November 6th 1871; The children to Dover with parents in order to spend club money

The railway now made it possible for the families to travel to Dover where the money could buy winter clothes before it became swallowed up in beer or general household expenses.

The coal club money would have been taken down to the foot of Church Hill where there was a 'coal distribution centre' built in 1865, the coal having been brought up from the nearby station. Although coal had been discovered when the tunnel was built (10) the Kent coalfield had not then been exploited.

Distribution of the coal club money appears normally to have taken place during Michaelmas week

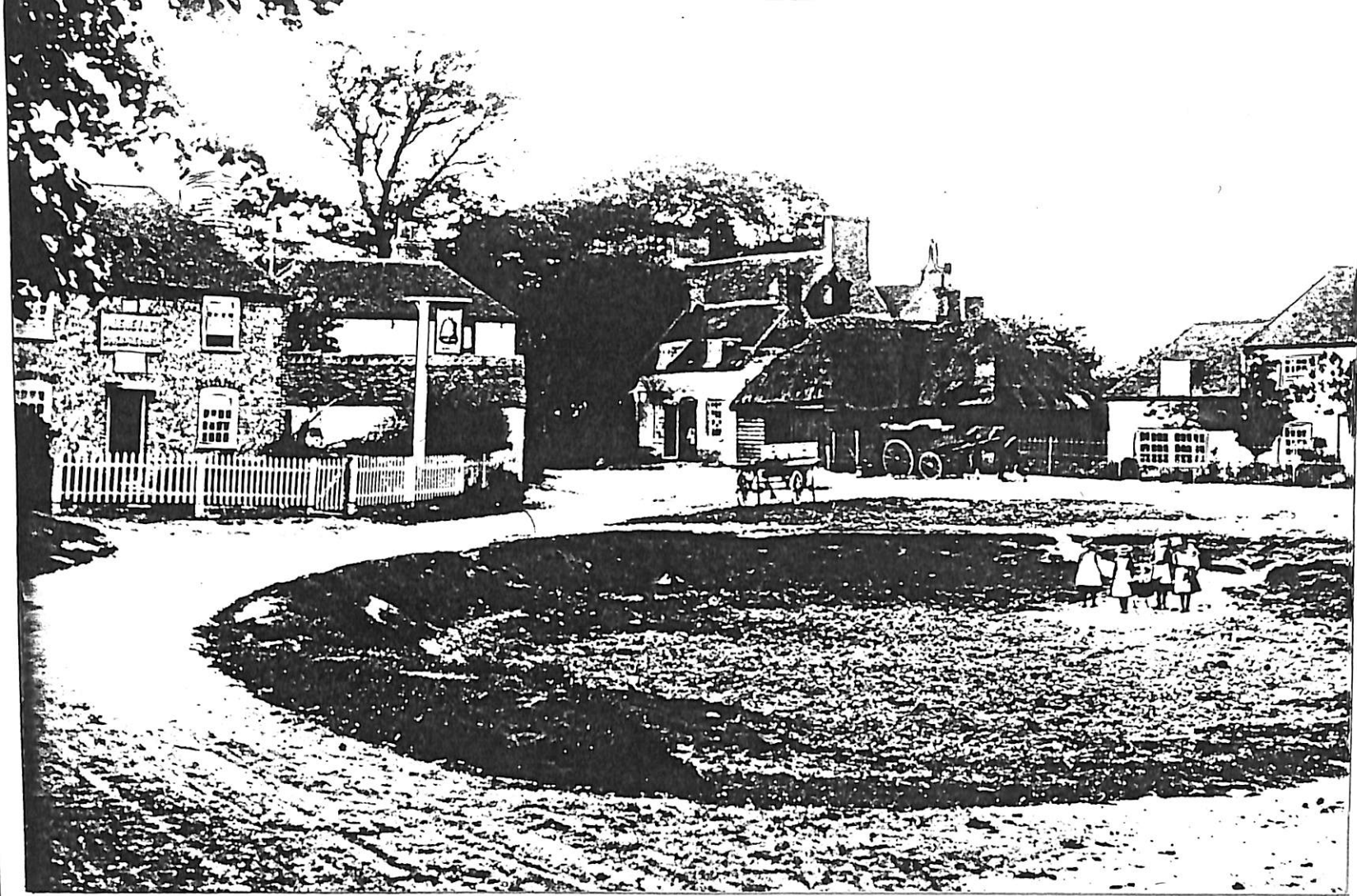
October 13th 1873; The Rev. Scott....gave notice that the coal club cards were to be brought in order that the coals might be distributed among the several families that had availed themselves of this providential association.

From this it seems obvious that only 'several' families contributed to the coal club. Others must have found it difficult to contribute their school pence let alone extra money for coal. There was still woodland in abundance in the area, where there must have been dead wood to be had for the gathering.

The care of the roads at this period was the responsibility of the farmers, each being responsible for a stretch of road. This duty was not always observed

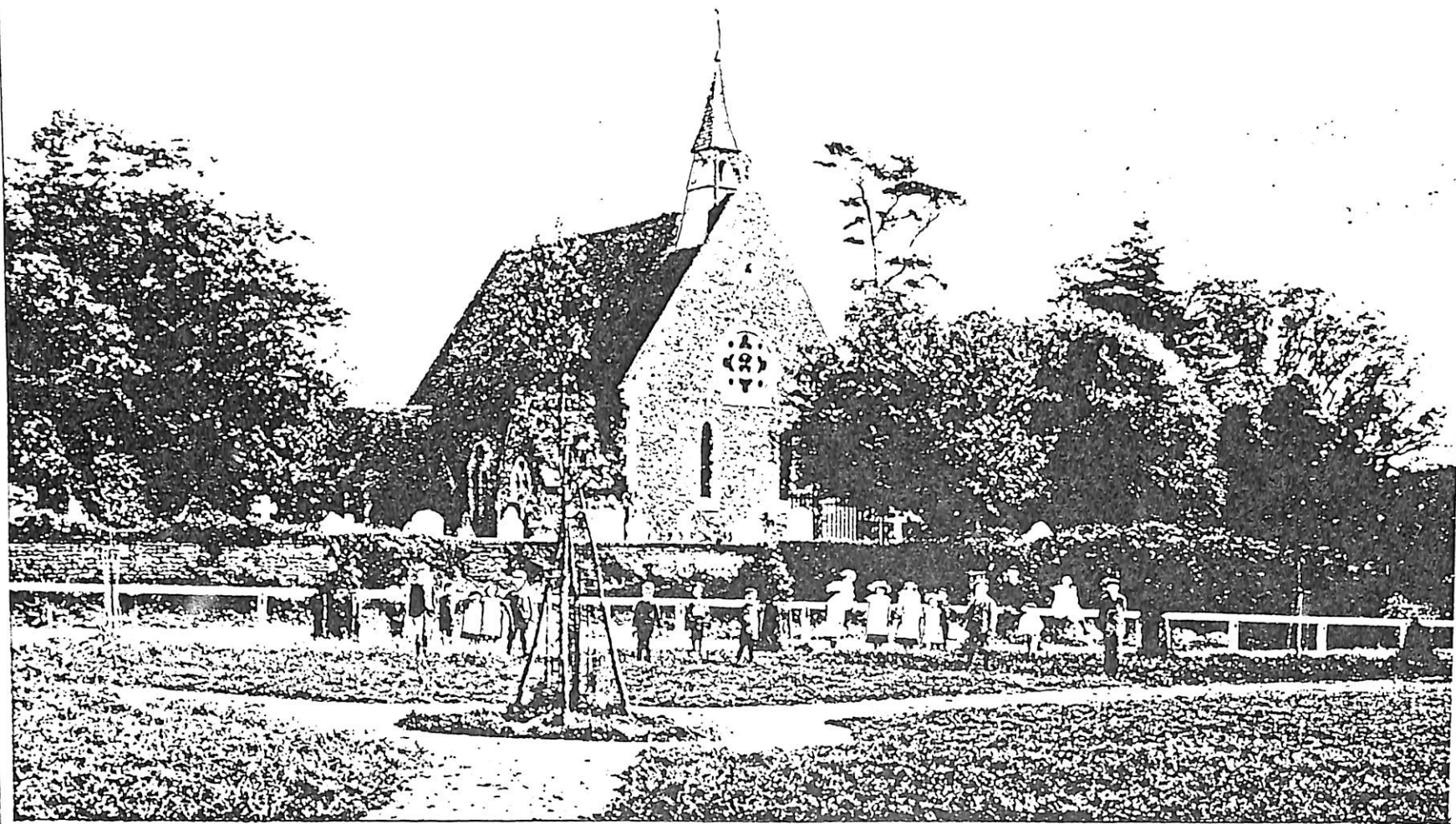
There was a small assessment made, collected by the farmers themselves. Sometimes the roads were done properly, but very seldom. The farmers put stones on the roads when they could spare the time and the horses - at the expense of the parish. (11)

A stroll along the village street would still have meant getting plastered with mud in the winter and covered with dust in a dry summer.



THE VILLAGE POND AND FORGE about 1880

(Hollingsbee Collection)



Shepherdswell Church.

Shepherdswell Church.

M. C. 13

Village Children on the Village Green after the pond had been filled in, about 1898.

(Hollinsbee Collection)

An important milestone in the life of the village was the draining and filling in of the pond on the village green. Over the years this had become increasingly noisome and unpleasant, probably it was not only a place where the local cows and sheep came for water and in doing so churned up the mud around its border, but may also have been a dumping place for rubbish. It was a large pond occupying much of the area of the green and it was decided to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria by filling it, turfing it, fencing it in and plating trees around its border. Two photographs of about that date show, first the pond when it had dried up in a hot summer with a few children standing where it should have been, and another when the horse chestnuts had been planted around its periphery with a turkey oak in the centre. It is probable that little drainage was ever done for in years to come (until 1984) large subsidiary ponds were to accumulate in the roads surrounding it whenever there was heavy rain.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Seeborn Rountree, Poverty, a Study of Town Life (1971 reprint). 171
- 2) Rowland Parker, The Common Stream (1976), 215.
- 3) F.G. Heath, The English Peasantry (1874), 2.
- 4) J.M. Stratton, Agricultural Records AD 220-1968 (1969), 117.
- 5) Chambers and Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880 (1966), 190.
- 6) Stratton, op cit., 117.
- 7) Ibid., 140.

- 8) Henry coppen, "Memories of Old Shepherdswell", Dover Express and East Kent News, August 13th 1926.
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) Ibid.
- 11) John Bavington Jones, "Annals of the Villages in Dovers Rural Border and in the Fair Lands of Kent Beyond", Dover Express, 1901.
- 12) Coppen, opus cit.

CHAPTER 3

THE SCHOOL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EDUCATION ACTS AND CODES

In 1870 the financing of the school was still governed by the Revised Code of 1862. This was the first of the notorious 'payment by results,' codes and from the time when it was first inaugurated national education had been adversely affected by it. A teacher's salary and the quality of school equipment depended on the scholar's regular attendance and on his ability to pass certain tests.

Its regulations were such that Managers could claim at the end of the year -

- a) The sum of 4s per scholar according to the average number in attendance through the year at the morning and afternoon meetings of their school.
- b) For every scholar who had attended more than 200 such meetings:
 - 1) If more than 6 years of age, 8s subject to examination.
 - 2) If under 6 years of age 6/6d, subject to report by an H.M.I.

Every scholar examined forfeited 2/8d for each failure in one the 3 Rs.

Every scholar for whom the grant is claimed must not be presented for examination in the same or a lower standard for a second time. (1)

The school log book records a continual effort to enforce a good attendance and to achieve results but the reports of the H.M.I. in the first 10 years of inspection show little success in either of these aims. The master, Mr Cook, records -

In the Infant School a group of little children between 2 and 6 years of age were asked a few simple questions, the crass ignorance evinced by the answers of some, will it is hoped impress H.M.I., and convince him of the arduous task presented to the teachers who have to prepare such children for examination. On the other hand those who have attended 250 times and over were questioned on more advanced subjects and appeared to answer with intelligence. (2)

In 1876 Lord Sandon's Act increased the Education Departments grant so as to make it possible for voluntary schools to meet the increased cost of education. This would have assisted the financing of Sibertswold school, but there must have been considerable difficulty in finding enough funds, for in July 1877, a special vestry meeting was called to investigate how to increase funds for the school. It was agreed that a voluntary rate of 2d in the pound was to be collected and that managers would raise payment by scholars from 2d to 3d (3). There was an immediate and dramatic reaction to this, for on July 9th Mr Coulton the master recorded -

This morning 94 children came to school. The Rev. Wimberly told me to send home all who would not pay 3d, left in school only 11 boys and 17 girls. (4)

The following day, for the Diocesan Inspection, there were only 29 children present, and on the Monday after only 11 appeared. However the boycott was short lived and a week later another 42 returned, but it was not until 1881 that children returned in comparable numbers.

Finances at that time must have been severely strained for at the same time as the payments by scholars were increased, Sarah Beauchamp, the monitor, was paid off and the master records

I have had to depart from the time table because there is no one to help me (5)

In 1880 grants were revised. They were to be based on the average attendance and

For each child the grant was 4s

Plus 1s for singing
1s for good organisation

For each pass in reading, writing and arithmetic if 250 attendances had been made the grant was 3s.

On average attendance of children over 7, if classes passed a creditable examination in one (or two) of grammar, history, geography, plain needlework 2s.

The total grant not to exceed 17/6d. (6)

This may have had a beneficial effect on rural schools where attendance was influenced strongly by local farming demands and the distance children had to travel in bad weather, Shepherds Well, situated high in the North Downs was, in this decade, experiencing weather conditions of particular severity.
(7)

Perhaps the shortage of money was partly responsible for the constant change of teachers between 1870 and 1880. During this period there was a succession of seven teachers in charge of the

school culminating in its closure on June 27th 1879. It remained closed, and the children without a school, until February 9th 1880 when Emily Battershall was appointed and thereafter the staffing problem ceased.

Further economies must have been necessary when the 1883 code was introduced. This was based on a percentage of individual children passing examination. This meant that every individual failure cost 1d over the whole school.

In addition to this clause, there was to be a new grant for merit based on 'fair', 'good' and 'excellent' in respect of a) organisation, b) intelligence and c) quality of work in elementary subjects. Obviously well staffed and well supported schools achieved high grants. Sibertswold School was not one of these, it was one of those with irregular attendance and had had a constant change of teacher.

The Log Book records a despairing effort to enforce attendance in order to achieve results, but the reports of H.M.I.s in the first 10 years of inspection show little success. The school was inspected every June until the six month closure and thereafter in December. The report that followed had to be entered in the Log Book by the Chairman of the managers (the vicar). The entry for 1870 states -

The school has come under inspection for the first time. I am satisfied with the discipline and religious instruction and the elementary attainments are in a very fair state of efficiency. (9)

However the entry for 1871 is less favourable

The mistress (Miss Stevenson) seems to have made some mistake about the requirements of the New Code and partly for this reason so many children failed to pass in arithmetic. (10)

In 1872

The arithmetic is very bad, reading creditable, writing fair. Great improvement must be made before the next inspection. The grant to be reduced because singing is not being taught and a deduction made because Miss Stevenson was not qualified. (11)

It was not surprising that in 1874, after five changes of teacher in three years, arithmetic (under Mr Cook) was a "total Failure" although it was said that Mr Cook worked hard and steadily. Mr Cook resigned, giving only a fortnight's notice, shortly afterwards.

It was hoped that his successor Mr Thompson would improve the standard but he was forced to resign two months later because he was considered unqualified. It was left to the next master Mr Coulter and his wife, the sewing mistress, to do this. Reports became more favourable and 10 months after Emily Battershall arrived in 1880 the report was

That the children are in nice order, elementary attainments are very fair and the infants have been diligently taught. (12)

Thereafter standards improved and in 1883 the school received the 'Good Merit Award' because 'Miss Battershall has worked diligently'. (13) In almost every report between 1880 and 1895

when she resigned, Sarah Beauchamp received favourable remarks. She became a pupil teacher under Miss Battershall but also appears in the log book, first as one of the children who returned to school for the H.M.I. inspection in 1876, and again as the monitor who was 'paid off' when money was short in the same year.

Arithmetic seems to have been a constant weakness in the school but this was equally the case in most rural schools

In a backward agricultural district, with much child labour, the percentage passes could be as low as 18, and in another 22.5.

In most cases reading was the highest, in arithmetic the lowest...the child knew the reading book by heart - and was unable to read anything else....only arithmetic required a little genuine knowledge. (14)

Grammar was the other weakness mentioned occasionally in the reports. Canon Routledge remarked in 1892

It is with great hesitation that I recommend any grant for English as Grammar is weak in the third and fourth standards. (15)

It was hardly surprising that this subject should be difficult to teach to children to whom standard English was totally alien, who only heard grammatical English spoken from the pulpit and from the teacher (although, judging from the log book, they did not always hear it spoken in school)

Standards were to improve however and in 1899 the report read

The children are as usual in excellent order and the instruction is generally very fair. (16)

Miss Battershall was to continue to be teacher of the school until 24th December 1914 by which time the H.M.I.s report for 1907 had read

This is a very good little school, it continues to do good work, the discipline is of the right kind, the teaching is skilful and effective. The children are bright and intelligent. Their knowledge of general topics is above average (17)

She had, when she retired, been teacher at the school for 34 years.

For the whole of the period 1870-1900 the visiting H.M.I. for the school was Canon Charles Routledge. Although many inspectors were recorded as being tyrants, posing impossible questions to pupils and asking them to read and analyse passages beyond their comprehension, (18) neither Canon Routledge nor Mr Brown his Deputy appear to be typical of this image. At the inspection of December 1872

the Inspector (Canon Routledge) desired the children to sing a couple of songs from a list presented to him, he remarked "they sing very nicely". Mr Brown then proceeded to examine the 13 boys and 14 girls over the age of 7. One could not fail to be struck with his quiet assuasive tone, yet those who could do their sums correctly in the morning failed before the examiner, to the chagrin of their humiliated preceptor.

The atmosphere of anxiety and the build up of pressure that must have been prevalent in the school for days before the examination could hardly have failed to make both the children and the master nervous. Poor Edward Hammish who

read fairly in the class books pronounced 'thin' as 'then' and when corrected seemed to lose the power of articulation and was plucked. A year since this boy had an impediment in his speech, through careful training it had nearly disappeared.

Canon Routledge, in his report to the Committee on Education 1882, shows his enlightened approach to education. He fully sympathised with the dispirited efforts of teachers to retain the attendance of children against the frustrating effects of weather and employment. He stated that

The irregularity of attendance is the one evil which disheartens teachers, keeps back children and spoils the symmetry of educational efforts. (20)

The yearly inspection of schools and the resultant financial reward or penalty was responsible for the narrow education children received up to 1880. Even after that date, although the new code introduced a wider curriculum, children were treated by a public department, by managers and schoolmasters, as suitable instruments for earning money. (21) Canon Routledge however was extremely enthusiastic about the 1880 code and spoke of its "breadth and liberality" that gave teachers a choice of subjects and methods of instruction. He spoke of the infant school as being -

no longer a dull refuge for babies. It was a centre of energy and life, a model of morality and disciplinary training which the upper classes envy. The almost universal instruction in History, Geography and Grammar has relieved the monotony of teaching. Music and needlework are treated as sciences and not an agreeable interlude for recreation. (20)

Sibertswold School was fortunate in Canon Routledge. Although reduction in the grant was sometimes threatened by him it seldom occurred. Perhaps, because it was a voluntary school and he was a C. of E. Canon, he had some sympathy for the difficulties of a parish struggling to maintain its school. He at any rate understood the difficulties of the teacher endeavouring to produce equal standards from children of diverse ability, and championed their cause before the Committee on Education when he wrote

Teachers should not be forced to throw clever and stupid children into a classroom and be pecuniarily fined if each does not come out equally well cooked. (23)

However it was not until 1890 when Kekewich introduced a further new code that the schools and their teachers were freed from payments by results, individual inspection was abolished and there were no more percentage grants. These were now to be based on average attendance and yielded a fixed grant varying from 12s - 15/6 plus grants for class and special subjects.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) M. Sturt, The Education of the People (1967), 253-4.
- 2) Sibertswold C. P. School, Log Book.
- 3) H. C. Barnard, A Short History of English Education from 1769-1944 () 170.
- 4) St Andrew's Shepherdswell, Vestry Minutes, July 1877.
- 5) Sibertswold C. P. School, Log Book, July 9th 1877.
- 6) Ibid., July 6th 1877.

- 7) Sturt, opus cit., 345.
- 8) J. M. Stratton, Agricultural Records AD220-1968 (1969), 117.
- 9) Sibertswold C. P. School, Log Book, June 26th 1870.
- 10) Ibid., August 7th 1871.
- 11) Ibid., September 9th 1872.
- 12) Ibid., December 5th 1880.
- 13) Ibid., December 7th 1883.
- 14) Sturt, opus cit., 279.
- 15) Sibertswold C. P. School, Log Book, December 10th 1892.
- 16) Ibid., December 2nd 1889.
- 17) Ibid., December 12th 1907.
- 18) Sturt, opus cit., 351.
- 19) Sibertswold C. P. School, Log Book, July 19th 1874.
- 20) Canon Charles Routledge, Church School Enquiry, (1886), 440.
- 21) Sturt, opus cit., 373.
- 22) Ibid., 431.
- 23) Ibid., 441.

CHAPTER 4

THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The purpose of the Established Church in setting up National Schools was to exert a religious influence over the children it was educating. (1) To ensure that this was being done satisfactorily the school had an annual inspection by the Diocesan Inspector. The Archbishop of Canterbury in the pastoral letter to the clergy on February 4th 1873 wrote

Among the efforts by which the Society has endeavoured to promote Religious Instruction on the principles of the Church of England none at the present moment compare in importance with that for maintaining an efficient system of Church Inspection of Parochial Schools in Religious Knowledge...I do not see what hope there would be of upholding the religious element in our schools in competition with the secular knowledge, into which alone the Government Inspector is now charged to enquire, but for the collateral machinery of Diocesan Inspection. (2)

In order to ensure that the children of Sibertswold School were properly instructed in the subject the vicar came into the school to teach Scripture. On October 26th 1876 the teacher, Mr Coulton, entered into the Log Book

Rev. Wimberley (the new vicar) took a class in Scripture this morning Told me to make a new time table so that the children can have 50 mins for Scripture every morning. (3)

It was arranged that the vicar would come in twice a week to take a class and the curate twice a week. This did not seem to have been carried out, for on November 9th it is entered that the vicar had not been in for two weeks and in the succeeding weeks there are spasmodic references either that the curate had come in and taken Scripture or else that he had not arrived.

By 1880 the Rev. Wimberly was 'giving his usual Scripture lesson' once a week and in 1892 he was merely remaining to prayers. It would seem from this that the religious education of the children was gradually transferred from the vicar to, one must suppose, the teacher and that the 'liberty reserved for voluntary schools....of unfettered religious instruction' (4) was being exploited less as time went by.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education Annual Reports. (1872-1877), 28.
- 2) Ibid., 23.
- 3) Sibertswold C.P. School, Log Book, October 26th 1876.
4. Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education Annual Reports (1872/1877), 28.

SECULAR EDUCATION

The narrow education that children received in school prior to the 1880 code was due to the pressure put on them to achieve passes in reading, writing and arithmetic and thus to achieve a larger grant. This was partly relieved in 1880 with the introduction of additional subjects and the subsequent financial reward given for success in their examination.

Geography and Grammar were adopted as part of the timetable soon after Emily Battershall arrived in 1880. There are frequent entries of Grammar being taught in place of geography, particularly just before an inspection. The structure of the English language must have been alien to the village children and a more difficult subject to teach. Several times it is mentioned by Canon Routledge as "not being quite up to the mark".

(1)

Sewing had always been considered important in the school. In the early years (pre 1874) it was taught, rather spasmodically, by the 'ladies' of the village. In 1874 Mrs Coulton was appointed sewing mistress, which is some indication of the importance attached to the need for children to make and mend their own garments. In the 1887 inspection the H.M.I. reported

Some creditable specimens of needlework were shown to me
(2).

But in 1893

The summary mark 'fair' is given to the needlework specimens by the Directress of Needlework who reports that the darning in the fourth and fifth standards is most unsatisfactory. (3)

Singing was also often mentioned in the log book. Frequently 'ladies' visited the school and asked to hear the children sing. A list of songs was entered in the log book yearly just prior to H.M. Inspection and then lessons were missed in order that the whole school might practise in readiness. This did not fulfil the requirements of the Code in 1884 for Canon Routledge reported

Singing by note is not sufficiently good to earn the grant. (4)

More than learning songs by heart was required.

The Cross report of 1886 recommended that Standards 1 - III should be taught by 'Object Lessons' and Standards IV - VII should be taught English and Geography. There was a grant of 2/- a head for passes in these subjects (5) and from the H.M.I. reports it appears that Miss Battershall soon after included them in the timetable.

From 1896 onwards lists of Object Lessons for the following year were entered in the log book and included subjects such as

Mosses and Lichens
Rabbits compared with Hares
Action of water on Sugar, Salt and Chalk
Paws, Claws and their Uses
Cotton and its Manufacture
Barometer
Rain, Rainbow, Vapour, Dew, Snow, Hail
Frogs compared with Toads
Lighthouses, Uses and Construction (6)

Poems for the English class included

Evangeline (Standards IV, V, VI, and VII)
Lord Ullin's Daughter (Standard III)
A Night with a Wolf (Standards I and II) (7)

The Cross Report also recommended that Drawing should be included in the boys' curriculum - girls apparently took sewing instead.

On October 12th 1890 there is a note that

Drawing was taken by the boys from 1.40 - 2.15 instead of reading and writing. (8)

Another such lesson took place on October 21st but there was no further mention until the exam on November 16th when the children were examined by Col. Grant and thereafter yearly by different military officers.

Over the last 30 years of the 19th century it can be seen that there was a gradual broadening of the curriculum. 'Payment by results' although a pernicious evil in the education system, did encourage schools to add extra subjects to the timetable in order to increase the grant. Children leaving the school in 1900 had a far greater knowledge of the world outside their village than those leaving in 1870 and they were therefore better equipped to take advantage of the changes that were to take place in England in the twentieth century.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Sibertswell C.P. School, Log Book, december 31st 1891.
- 2) Ibid., December 24th 1887.
- 3) Ibid., January 21st 1893.
- 4) Ibid., December 26th 1884.
- 5) J.S.Maclure, Educational Documents in England and Wales 1816-1968(1973),129.
- 6) Sibertswell C.P. School, Log Book, December 11th 1896.
- 7) Ibid., December 11th 1896.
- 8) Ibid., October 12th 1890.

CHAPTER 5

ADMITTANCE

The Comment made by the teacher in the entry in the School Log Book for March 26th 1873 ~~was~~ that

parents regard the school as a convenient rendez vous for their little ones (1)

seems born out by the age at which many of the village children commenced school. About one in ten of them started at three years and it was not uncommon for children as young as two and a half to be admitted even as late as 1892, when Charles Hubbard, who was two years and eight months, was admitted with his brother who was five. Unfortunately the date of withdrawal was never entered in the admittance register so it is not possible to tell the duration of the childrens' attendance, but, since the population seemed to be very mobile, it is probable that many of them completed their education elsewhere.

For this to be fully understood the reasons for this mobility must be given.

It was the custom on Lady Day for many of the agricultural labourers to change their employers.

Their household belongings and families were piled high upon the farm wagons when they arrived or departed, 'flitted' being the usual description (1)

There were frequent entries in the Log Book of families changing their houses and servants their places, of children leaving the village and other families being admitted to the school, both soon after Lady Day and also at Michaelmas.

The two censuses for 1871 and 1881 give a clear insight of the movement in and out of the village. Any concept of it as a settled community is completely destroyed by reference to these. At Netherton Brickyard out of the 7 heads of household (which included a shepherd and a thatcher but no brickmakers) in 1871 only one of these is still there in 1881. At Beausfield where the occupants were all agricultural labourers out of 8 households 2 were there in 1881 and in Cox Hill cottages out of four agricultural labourers one remained. A further example of the mobile community is indicated by the fact that out of 101 heads of households in 1871 only 11 were born in Shepherdswell although most of them came from within a radius of ten miles.

The place of birth of their children is further evidence of how many times they moved during their working lives -

James Ash, a farm labourer, was born in East Langdon, married a wife from St Margarets and had children born in Guston, Dover, Sutton, Little Mongeham and Sibertswold. None of these were far from Shepherdswell but nevertheless it shows a remarkable mobility within a confined area.

A skilled labourer may have moved further afield. The family of Charles Knight a domestic gardener, of Hazling Dane who was born in Ripple, Kent, married a girl from London and had children born in Hayes, Romford, Southend, Walmer and Sibertswold. This is an example of the nomadic life many of the children must have led.

On a higher social scale the movement is no less perpetual. The village doctor, Walter Dixon, a widower was born in Adelaide, educated at Edinburgh, with three children born in Balham and one in Shepherdswell. Thomas Jacob a farmer of 553 acres, who one might expect to be more stationary, was born in Lyminge, married in Barham and had children born in Lyminge and Camberwell.

This presents a picture of a population perpetually on the move. The children must have moved from school to school, in some cases almost yearly. Their education must have been of a most piecemeal variety.

Of children who entered the school when their parents moved into the village, their previous school is not entered until 1883 but from that date over a half of them had been to school previously, usually in a neighbouring village, for example —

In the year 1888-9

8	children	had	not	previously	attended	school
4	had	attended	Nonnington	School		
2	"	"	St James,	Dover		
2	"	"	Buckland	School		
2	"	"	Guston	School		
3	"	"	Temple Ewell	School		
1	"	"	St Mildred's	Canterbury		

In the year 1890-91

13	had not previously attended school
2	had attended Selstead School
3	" " Swingfield School
4	" " Tilmanstone School
1	" " St James Dover
4	" " Barham School
1	" " River School
1	" " Ospringe School
1	" " East Malling School
1	" " Alkham School

Exceptions to this mobility within the County of Kent were the children whose guardian was entered as 'Middleton of the Terrace'. Between the 3rd October 1892 and the 9th October 1893 20 such children whose ages ranged from 2 1/2 to 11 were admitted to the school. These children came from the orphanage at Twickenham (2); a private school (2); Brixton (3); Kennington (2); St Mark's Paddington (1); Southsea (1); Folkestone (1); St Augustine's Kilburn (2); the rest were too young to have previously attended school. Two of the Brixton children were Italian, Francis and Angelo Pepe. Although these children arrived in pairs they were not always related. In the Church papers there is an undated list of adult inhabitants of Shepherdswell and in this list Miss Middleton of the Terrace is entered as 'orphanage'. It would be interesting to know who paid for these children to attend the orphanage. It seems unlikely that a local authority or church would support children from London. Could they have been unwanted children, paid for by relatives altruistically for the healthy climate of Shepherdswell or, more, probably, because it was an obscure village? In what

conditions they lived it is not possible to tell. There is no mention of them in parish papers or in the school Log Book. Their names - Christmas, Stuart, Hubbard, Holcombe, Wilks, Martin, Pepe, Wills, Reader, York, Piet, Pierpoint, Clinkerscales, Groppler, Hoskin and Metcalf have not persisted in the village nor in Kent Directories except for those common enough to be found anywhere. No more children from this orphanage were admitted after 1893.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Sibertswold C.P. School, Log Book, March 26th 1873.
- 2) Rowland Parker, The Common Stream (1976), 222.

CHAPTER 6

ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

The revised Code of 1862 made schools financially dependant on children achieving 200 or more a.m. or p.m. attendances; the 1880 Code assessed on average attendance and the 1883 Code assessed on the examination of children who had been 6 months on the register.

It was therefore obvious that regular attendance meant more revenue for the school and a greater salary for the teacher. The impression received from reading the School Log Book is of teachers anxiously studying the weather because on that depended the daily attendance. In fine weather the children were frequently absent helping in the fields. In wet weather they may return to school because farm labouring was not possible, (1) but it was equally likely that they would stay at home because they had inadequate clothing.

Attendance at school then depended on the weather. Frequent entries report consequent low attendance

February 24th 1873: This morning was one of the roughest of this long and dreary winter, wind N.E., snow falling fast at 8.45, at prayers only 15 children present, at 10 when the registers were closed there were present 17 boys and 14 girls = 31 total. (2)

July 6th 1875: Some of the boys who cannot go to work today have come to school.

March 25th 1878: No children at school today, so much snow they couldn't get.

June 23rd 1892: Rain fell heavily nearly the whole day. Few children presented themselves so school was not kept.

It was more than probable that even if the children had suitable clothing for such weather the drying facilities, especially in the summer, were non existent and for those who had only the clothes they stood up in, to have ventured out in pouring rain would have been foolish.

Reasons for low attendance were those of any rural Kent community of that time. Although there was a long summer 'harvest holiday' which seemed to vary each year in duration and date, many of the children were still absent when the winter term began as they were fruit picking or away hop picking. Likewise many had already forsaken school in July for hay making and soft fruit picking and before Easter for stone picking. In November they would be storing turnips for the winter.

Education was to become compulsory before some children attended school at all and an entry for January 1875 reads;

the Agricultural Act caused an additional 20 children to be admitted today. some of these were 11 and 12 and did not know their letters. (3)

The Agricultural Children's Act came into operation on January 1st 1875

No child below the age of 8 was to be allowed to work in agriculture, while between 8 and 12 years a certain minimum school attendance was required. Within weeks of it coming into operation....it had become a dead letter (4).

Lord Sandon's Act of 1876 dictated that no one should employ any child under the age of 10 or between 11 and 14 unless they had reached Standard V but this seemed to have had little power to prevent the traditional use of child labour on the farms.

Before the 1880 act it had been the duty of the Vicar and curate to visit recalcitrant parents to admonish them over their children's non attendance. The usual answer being that 'if the children did not work they must starve'. The very young age of admittance was probably also accountable to the absence of older siblings who were working in the fields. On March 26th 1873 the teacher complained

Certain children were kept from school to meet the most frivolous of excuses. The curate promised to make enquiries and would endeavour to correct the impression evinced by parents who seem to regard the school as a rendez vous for their little ones not required at home. (4)

After the 1880 Act the School Board Officer visited the school and took the names of absentees. The first entry for this was on July 20th 1881. He called again on November 1st and then not again until November 1882. On this occasion he left an 'absentee book' in which were to be inserted the names of the children who had not attended in the previous month. A copy of this was to be sent to him monthly.

This seemed to make little difference however to the absences caused by bad weather and until the end of the 1870-1900 period attendance continued to be governed by weather conditions.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Sibertswold C.P. School, Log Book, April 24th 1873. The unseasonable cold weather has compelled the girls employed in the fields to pick up stones, to relinquish their rough labour and return to school.
- 2) Ibid., various dates as quoted.
- 3) Ibid., January 1875.
- 4) Pamela Horn, Education in Rural England 1800-1914 (1978).

CHAPTER 7

THE TEACHERS OF SHEPHERDSWELL SCHOOL

The post of teacher in a rural National School, as opposed to one in a Board School in the era of 'payment by results' cannot have been well paid. Board Schools were funded by the rates in addition to receiving the government grant, whereas National Schools had to depend on church contributions to supplement the grant.

Finding and keeping suitably qualified staff must have presented a problem to the managers of the school and not all the appointments made were recognised by the inspectorate. There were 4 classes of teacher -

- a) pupil teachers
- b) assistant teachers
- c) provisionally certificated teachers
- d) certificated teachers (1)

It was required that the teacher was either certificated or provisionally certificated in order to receive a full grant. The following entries from the Log Book show that this requirement was not always easy to meet.

November 22nd 1869. Rebecca Reed, who was formally apprenticed as a pupil teacher in Christ Church School in the Parish of St Georges in the East, London and trained in the Brighton Training School, during the years 1863-4,...and subsequently engaged in the School of Ty-Wardreath up to the time of her present engagement, entered upon her duties.

June 10th 1871. Miss Stevenson came and took possession of the house as temporary mistress until the Harvest Holiday.

(September 9th 1872. H.M.I. report; Miss Stevenson cannot be identified in this department as a certificated teacher. Therefore the 1872 grant is reduced.)

September 28th 1871. Miss Lydia Barry, mistress trained at Westminster and in charge of 3 (mixed) schools for 20 years entered upon her duties as mistress under a temporary engagement up to Xmas next.

December 30th 1871. Miss S. H. Burnett, a trained and certificated Mistress came to Sibertswold School House on December 30th and on January 1st entered upon her duties as mistress of the National School.

March 25th 1872. Mr G. G. Cook entered upon his duties as Master...having been appointed by the Managers Committee.

July 16th 1873. Mr Cook is not qualified to receive a certificate until next year (Article 51).

September 26th 1874. The Master Mr G. G. Cook left the School House and resigned his situation having only notified his intention of doing so in a letter to the Vicar having date September 1st and as no successor has been found since that time, the school was closed for a fortnight.

October 2nd 1874. School was opened today under the charge of Mr C. Thompson, an experienced teacher in elementary schools from Alsager.

November 4th. Wife very low and weak, wants teacher to come home and not bother about with the requirements of the Government certification.

November 6th. The only cause that Mr and Mrs Thompson could not become the future teachers of the school was the bothering Government Certificate.

November 24th 1874. I (R. H. Coulton) take charge of this School.

June 29th 1875. H.M.I. report. 'I think the present master will increase the efficiency of the school by the next inspection'.

May 27th 1879. School closed.

February 9th 1880. Emily Battershall, certificated mistress, entered upon her duties.

In addition to the teacher in charge, the school employed pupil teachers. These were engaged by the manager to

teach during school hours under the directorship of the principal teacher and to receive instruction out of school hours. They must be not less than 14 and were required to pass an exam. each year and a final one as specified under the Vth Article. (2)

This apprenticeship was to last for 4 years and after that they could become

- a) Students in Training Colleges (these did not have to take the Vth Article exam).
- b) Assistant Teachers.
- c) Provisionally Certificated Teachers. (3)

The progress can be followed of Sarah Beauchamp who was born 23.12.65, entered the school in June 1868 (aged 2 1/2) and must have been appointed pupil teacher by April 2nd 1880 when she was recorded as a recognised pupil teacher but had

made unsatisfactory progress in her studies throughout the week, no lessons having been well learned or said.

On June 18th she must have made more effort for a 'decided improvement in her work' was recorded and by January 2nd 1883 the H.M.I. reported that

the infants are nicely taught. S. E. Beauchamp is recognised to serve as a qualified Assistant Teacher under Article 84 of the Code.

Twelve years later the vicar attended the school and presented Miss Beauchamp with a testimonial on behalf of the children on her leaving the school. She was now aged 30 and had never aspired to become certificated.

Under the steady influence of Emily Battershall and Sarah Beauchamp the school had improved out of all recognition.

- (1) S. J. Curtis, History of education in Great Britain (), 115.
- (2) Ibid., 116.
- (3) Ibid., 116.

CHAPTER 8
HEALTH AND HYGIENE

In 1893 13,000 people died of measles and 7,500 of diptheria in England (1). Both these diseases must have been far more prevalent in cities where droplet infection was aggravated by overcrowded conditions in the home, school and in employment. In villages such as Shepherdswell, high in the North Downs, infection was only likely to be fostered in the overcrowded classroom. Childred in this atmosphere must have been extremely vulnerable and an epidemic of small pox could cause panic, and of measles the closure of the school.

The unhygienic practise of spitting on the slates to clean them helped disease to spread rapidly (2) and many apparent colds soon became diagnosed as measles and coughs as whooping cough. This progress can be followed from reference to the Log Book in November 1889.

November	27th,	Several children sent home with severe colds.
	28th,	Two children sent home, too ill to finish their lessons.
	29th,	Several children absent through illness.
December	6th,	Numbers greatly reduced on account of the prevalence of Measles. School closed by order of the Medical Officer of Health.

How fatal this proved to be to the children, and how many thereafter suffered eye and ear problems, it is not possible to tell but there must have been some after effects.

Small pox seemed to be the disease that created the greatest panic, and in the 30 years this study covers, there were at least 4 epidemics. Mr Cook in a summary of the year May 1872-May '73 records

During Spring and Summer of last year small pox raged here, three of the school girls were severely attacked and several children were taken from the school and others sent out of the village to avert the epidemic...Disinfectants were used about the school, offices and precincts and also sent round to all the homes of the children (3)

As a result of this epidemic lessons were given to the children on 'the laws of Health, ventilation and Personal Cleanliness'.

It is probable that not all the teachers were as fastidious as Mr Cook (March 1872 - September 1874). The smell of unwashed bodies and dirty clothes must have been irksome to a man who was obviously well educated. Apart from his lessons on personal hygiene he writes of every precaution being taken to cleanse the school, the precincts being saturated with Landy's oxygen, carbolic acid and quick lime and of the "sanitary conditions of the school being excellent". (4)

There is evidence of all the common childhood illnesses occurring in much the same frequency as in the late 20th century, however the severity and epidemic proportions reached were far more extreme. In April 1896 the school attendance during a measles epidemic dropped from an average of 70 to 38 and the school was closed and in July of the same year a whooping cough epidemic reduced the numbers to 42.

The 'closets' and 'catch pots', as they were referred to, must have been the cause of much gastrinal infection and one H.M.I.'s report said that they must be emptied twice a year (5). One can imagine their condition after six months in the Summer! On the 5th November 1874 the Medical Officer from Dover inspected the premises and 'did not understand the breaking out among the children'.... He added 'the closets must be attended to' (6). He did not say by whom.

Village life was obviously harsh but it does not seem to be as disease ridden as life in the town. The mere fact that serious illness caused concern is evidence that it was not always present, that the villagers expected to be reasonably healthy most of the time. The stinking and fetid conditions of industrial towns must have been far greater killers than the cold winds, leaky cottages and low wages of the farm labourer.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost (1965), 234
- 2) Pamela Horn, Education in Rural England 1800 - 1914 (1978), 137.
- 3) Sibertswold C. P. School, Log Book, May 30th 1873.
- 4) Ibid., May 30th 1873.
- 5) Ibid., June 29th 1874.
- 6) Ibid., 5th November 1874.

CHAPTER 9

LEISURE

In the late 19th century village children's leisure and school attendance were clearly determined by the fact that labouring families, living on a mere subsistence level, needed their children's work in order to survive,

Thus the date of the summer school vacation, termed the 'Harvest Holiday', was variable so as to coincide with the harvest when children were expected to help their parents in the fields. Had it been otherwise the older children would not have attended school. However, although the extent of leisure which the children enjoyed was debatable, they at least benefited by sunshine, fresh air and occasionally by food provided by kindly farmers.

During the harvest every man, woman, boy and possibly girl would have taken part in the work. As many as 24 men might scythe a 30 acre field. The raking, heaping, stacking in the barn and the threshing would be accomplished by the whole work force. (1)

By the end of the harvest they must have felt a great sense of communal accomplishment culminating in the traditional harvest supper given by the farmer to his workers when they enjoyed the bounty they had helped to produce.

The second great festival of the year was Christmas, once again related to the work ethic, when the farmer gave a bushel of wheat to each of his men. At this feast it would seem that the established church provided life's excitement, when the children and their parents followed the custom of carol singing, starting at the Vicarage, and thence to Wadershare Park, Wootton Court, Denne Hill and Fredville, all large country houses several miles apart involving long journeys, the compensation being escape from the humdrum, not to mention the 'cake and ale' and even the occasional sixpence. (2)

A further illustration of the church's concern for the children's welfare was illustrated in 1893 when the Vicar of Shepherdswell, the Rev. Thomas Falkner announced in school that any child who attended school on December 28th could enjoy the Christmas Tree Treat which he was giving for them. The attendance for the week before Christmas had been 106 and there could have been little more than standing room in the larger schoolroom on this occasion. Thus he provided both for their emotional and physical welfare as well as encouraging them to attend school. He frequently gave the children small treats, clearly directed towards the same ends.

The medieval custom of an annual village fair was observed in Shepherdswell on Whit Wednesday in front of the Bricklayers Arms in front of Church Hill.

There used to be the little sports. Generally in the country fairs there were coker-nut (sic) shies, a little rifle range, little old fashioned kinds of sports.

Generally something in the way of a barrel organ was there. It used to begin in the forenoon. The fair people would arrive overnight as a rule and set up their stalls and the fun would be in full swing all the evening, right up to ten o'clock. It was the most lively day of the year, for there was not much going on in the way of amusement or sport. (3)

However there were other quieter events, such as the Annual Flower Show, organised by village groups, which provided an interest to village life. Thus on August 18th 1891 the teacher complained.

Several children absent from school, the Annual Flower Show took place, hence the reason. (4)

On April 17th 1873 is recorded

73 children presented themselves in very nice tidy manner. After drill on the Green they marched off to the Poultry Show in good order, their orderly mien was commented on by several ladies and gentlemen. During the remainder of the afternoon they played games in the meadow and enjoyed themselves very much. (5)

and on June 18th 1872

The Earl of Guildford's Estate at Waldershare Park was used for the Forresters' Annual Fete and attracted a large concourse of spectators. (6)

As Shepherdswell was a National School the village children were expected to attend Sunday School regularly and an annual Sunday School Treat was provided as a incentive for those whose attendance merited it. The log book entry for May 1st 1873 gives an account of this.

This afternoon 90 children belonging to the Sunday and Day Schools assembled on one of the vicar's fields and greatly enjoyed themselves at racing, football and other

games under the surveillance of the Rev. J.T.U. Allen (curate). Tea was provided at the schoolroom. Mr and Mrs Stillwell called to kindly offer a copious supply of new milk and several pots of marmalade....several ladies of the village attended the gathering and kindly assisted in contributing to the happiness of the little ones. (7)

Some years the organisers of the Sunday School Treat were more ambitious and arranged an outing rather than a treat in the village. Thus in 1873

on a delightful September day the jubilant band started from the schoolroom at 8.30 a.m. under the charge of the master to St Margaret's at Cliffe where they were met by the vicar and the Rev. Allen. After a very happy day by the seaside the children returned in good order brimfull of thankfulness at 8 p.m. (8)

It would be interesting to know the means of transport used to travel the eight miles to St Margaret's Bay. Surely the children did not walk - had they done so it may have been the reason for the thankful return! The railway could have taken them as far as Dover but there would still have been 5 miles to walk. It would seem more likely that farm wagons or brakes were used. (Brakes - open topped horse drawn buses).

The relationship between the Anglican Church and the Dissenters chapel on Church Hill was surprisingly tolerant, as on July 17th 1873, when the vicar gave the whole school a half holiday in response to a request from some Dissenters who wanted their children to attend the Wesleyan Annual Festival. (9)

Holidays were granted (or taken) for various reasons, sometimes entailing a journey to Dover where, in 1893, the Prince of Wales laid the memorial stone for the Work on Dover harbour. In 1873, on June 17th, another sensation was created by the disembarking there of the Shah of Persia and the children were given permission to go and watch. (10) The railway was having the effect of enlarging the horizons of village people in a way that would have been inconceivable 50 years earlier.

On May Day the children made their traditional garlands of flowers in school and then carried them from house to house asking for contributions. In 1872 the master, Mr Cook, commented

Their pretty garlands were much admired by the parishioners. (11)

However the following year he seems to have changed his mind for he wrote

The children and some of their parents seem to regard it as a prescriptive right to parade the garland.

He urged the vicar that it was a custom that

greatly disturbed the work of the school and that it was found to produce no good results. Last year from over exertion and excitement many children were not able to attend for the remainder of the week....the children who merely make the school a place of rendez-vous got the gain and gratification, such as it is. (12)

The Vicar however regarded it as an innocent and seasonable amusement. As long as Mr Cook remained at the school he complained annually about the custom and about the school being 'disturbed by children bent on making the garland'. (13) The custom continued for some years but seems to have died out by 1890.

Conditions for rural communities were hard in the years 1870-90 and pressures from a world outside their previous experience could have been expected to influence villagers passtimes. Yet, for the most part, traditional festivals were celebrated much as they had always been. A study of the School Log Book stresses frequently the paternal, attitude of successive vicars and the interest of village 'ladies' in the well being of the children. There are repeated mentions of gifts, buns, sweets, toys etc. and parties at the vicarage, which indicate a caring attitude to the children.

FOOTNOTES

- 1) Rowland Parker, The Common Stream (1976), 224.
- 2) Henry Coppen, "Memories of Old Shepherdswell", The Dover Express and East Kent News, 15th August 1926.
- 3) Ibid.,
- 4) Sibertswold C.P. School, Log Book, August 19th 1891.
- 5) Ibid., April 17th 1873.
- 6) Ibid., June 18th 1872.
- 7) Ibid., May 1st 1873.

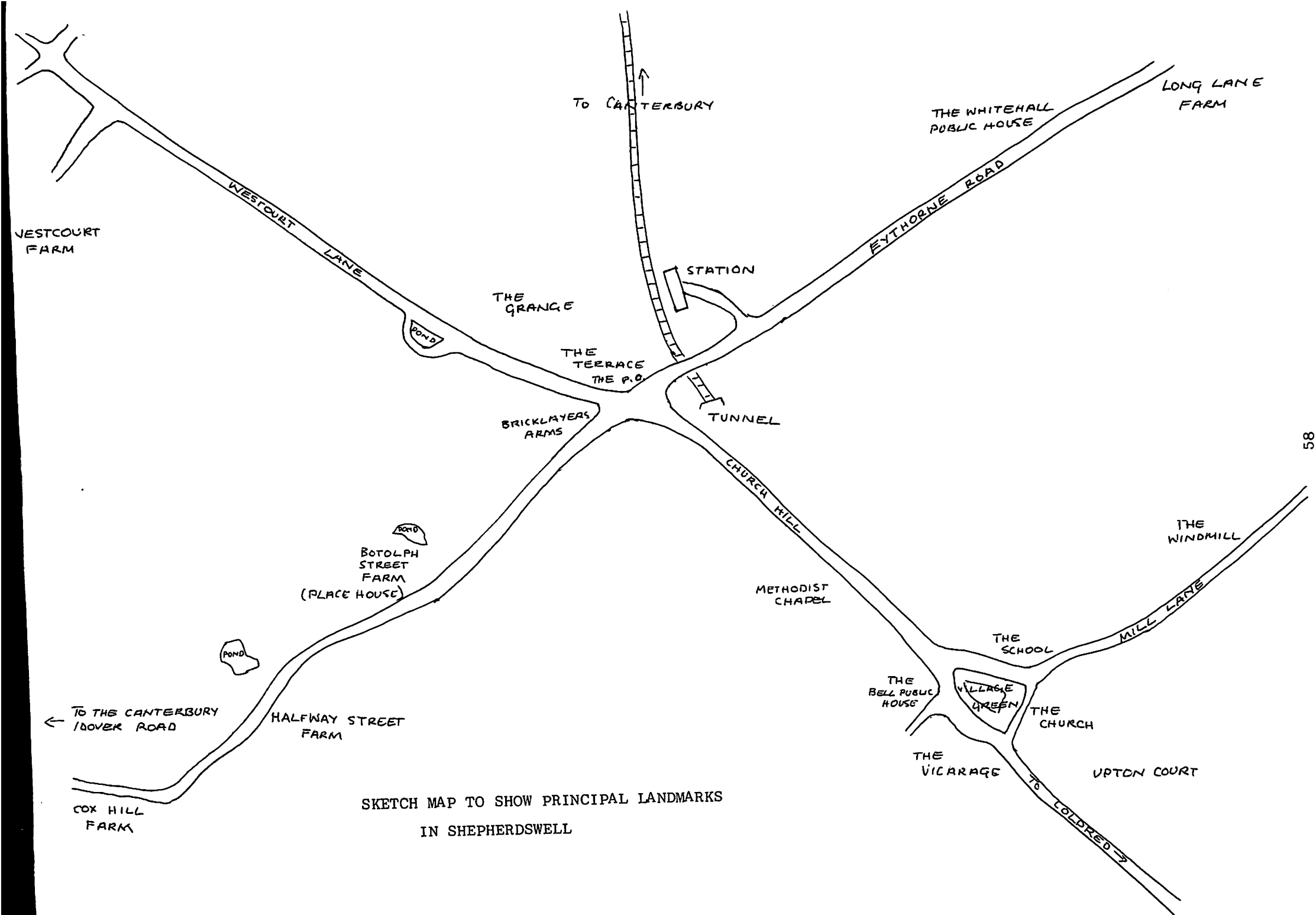
- 8) Ibid., September 9th 1873.
- 9) Ibid., July 17th 1873.
- 10) Ibid., June 17th 1873.
- 11) Ibid., May 1st 1872.
- 12) Ibid., April 29th 1873
- 13) Ibid., April 30th 1874.

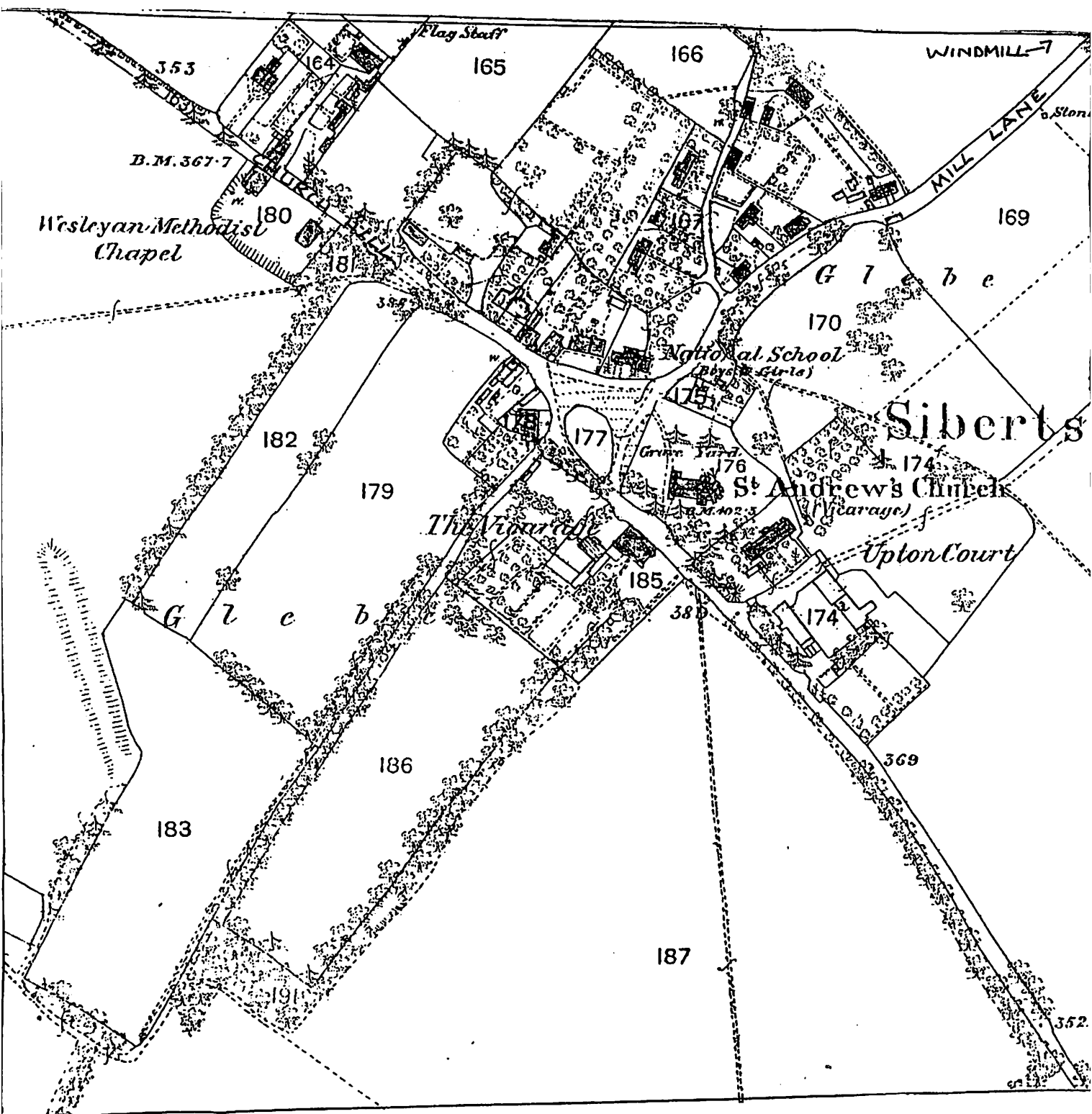


Mr. Coppen, Shepherdswell.

Shepherdswell.

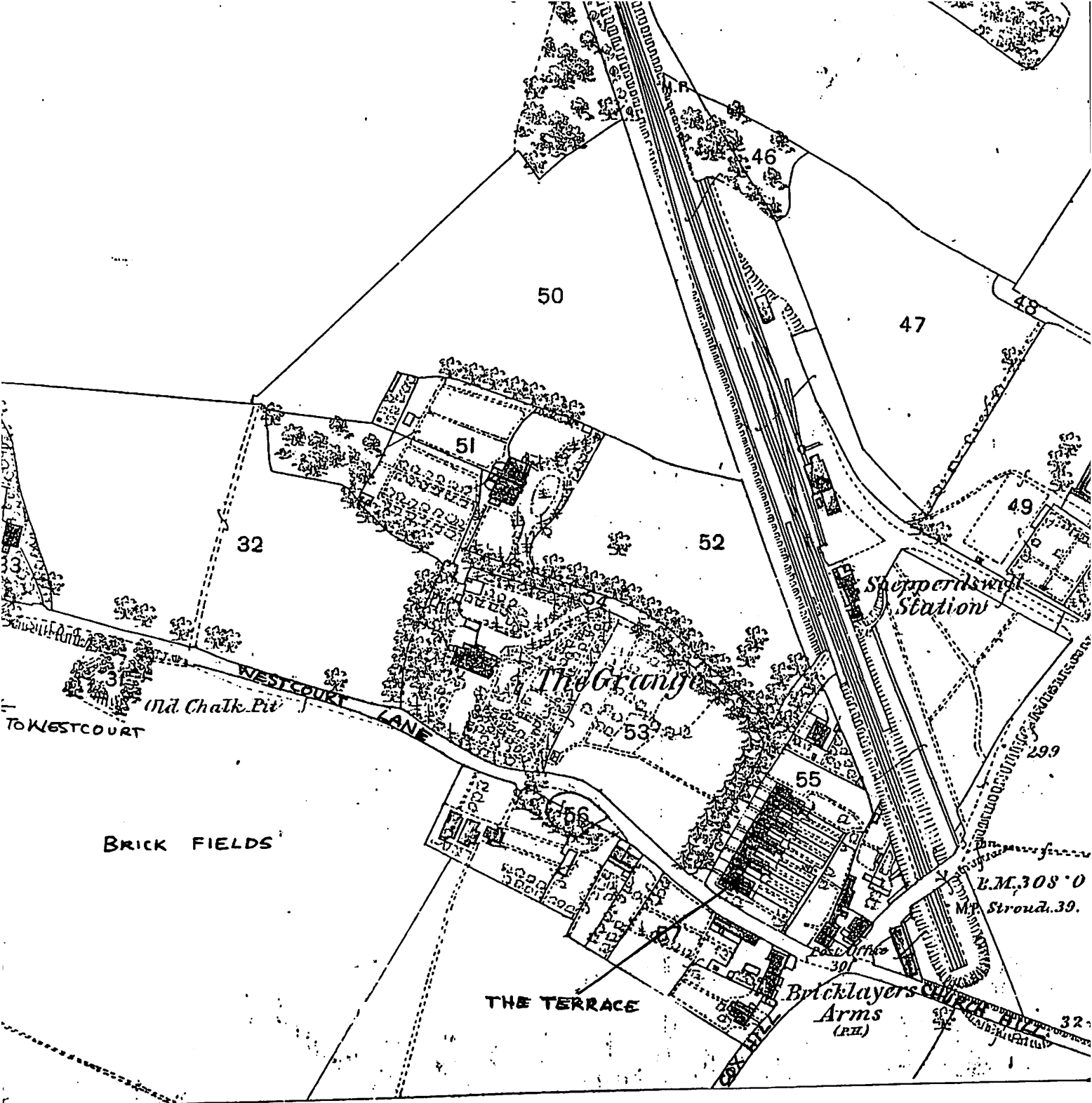
M. C. 1446.





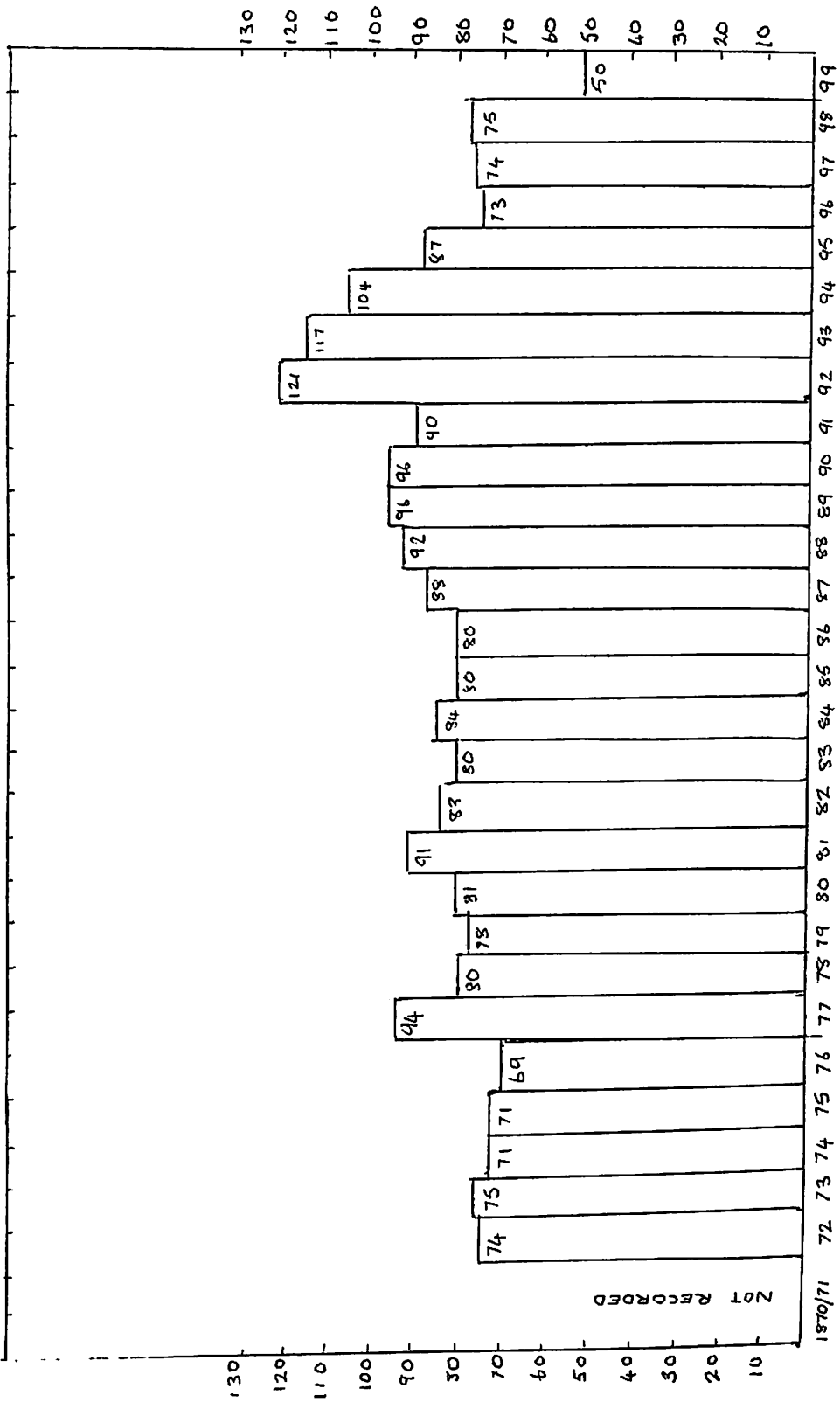
The original village of Shepherdsweil was situated near the parish church and the manor house of Upton Court.

1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey Map of Kent (1872).



After the arrival of the railway a new centre grew up located near the railway station.

1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey Map of Kent (1872).



Average attendance at Sibertswold School in the years 1870 - 1900

APPENDIX 2

Occupations given by heads of households in the 1871 census indicating that the village was a self sufficient community. (see page 10)

Shepherd	Constable
Thatcher	Vicar
Haycutter	Parish Clerk
Master Carpenter	Doctor
Shoemaker	Solicitor
Cordwainer	Paper Maker
Hoopmaker	Fly Proprietor
Grocer	Baronet
Blacksmith	Landholders (2)
Dairyman	Captain
Miller	
Gardeners (5)	At the Station
Farmers (5)	Railway servants (2)
Farm Bailiff	Porters (2)
Market Gardener	Signalman
Brewer	Engine driver
Publicans (4)	
Postman	
Carriers (2)	

Also many agricultural and general labourers.

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