

Excerpt from the Diaries of Col. Nicholson of Norney Rough, 1933-1953

By kind permission of Sally Bolton, one of Col. Nicholson's daughters

This is a long excerpt, and below are a few of the main topics covered. If you have a particular interest in someone or something it may be quicker to do a search here:

- Lord Midleton
- Lord and Lady Hoare
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The growth of our home is typical of what has been going on in all the country round here these past four hundred years. But the last two wars have revolutionised the leisurely change in country life; while Norney Rough from 1933 to 1953 has slowly grown, the country round, its people, its woods and fields have been transformed.

Almost all the great houses of England were closed down after the Second World War - servants had ceased to exist, taxes and death duties were crippling. But in 1933 Shackleford Parish with its three small hamlets Shackleford, Eashing and Hurtmore, still were dominated by Peper Harow and its feudal owner the Earl of Midleton. The new century had brought him rich neighbours - Sir Edgar Horne of the Prudential to Hall Place; Le Marchant, a merchant banker; MacAndrew of the shipping firm; then Pedley a Solicitor who had built the Cavendish Hotel at Eastbourne; as well as Lady Caroline, the daughter of the last Duke of Buckingham, and the Earl of Antrim who inherited Eashing Park from Miss Kerr - where my father's first cousin, Lord Penzance, had lived for many years. Then in the years after 1930 there came a second invasion of lesser folk - retired soldiers, a few "daily breaders" these included: Franks of the Guildford Coal firm; Howard, Daniel, Whittaker, Heyman, all retired

Soldiers, Mary Williamson from Staffordshire, The Thorntons at Mitchen Hall, the MacDougals at Rokers and the Mills at the Old Rectory.

In 1933, there still existed in Shackleford, as in most country parishes, distinct social grades. The Peerage and the big country house mansion represented the uppermost Crust. In Shackleford in 1933 Lord and Lady Midleton of Peper Harow were the accepted autocrats, in a class by themselves. Next to them came Lady Caroline at Grenville and Sir Edgar and Lady Horne at Hall Place. I remember Carrie Hadaway, Lady Caroline's elderly niece, asserting her dignity by saying, "of course we knew all about that" - some reference to a peer having been mentioned. Wealth in 1933 still carried social weight though not so much as at the beginning of the century. The Pedleys would consider they were conferring a favour if they asked the less wealthy to dine - though admittedly the possibility of a Bridge Slave for Mrs. Pedley might be the ulterior motive; for Bridge was the ladies' chief afternoon occupation.

Below and quite distinct from the fraternity of retired men, like ourselves, came the farmers, such as the Stovolds at Lydling who had farmed for generations, belonging as much to the land as the Midletons. After them came the parasite class - that is now practically extinct - the gamekeepers, the chauffeurs, the butlers and the head gardeners. At the bottom were the villagers.

Englishmen have no love of dictators, beneficent or otherwise. But the old feudal lords had for generations ruled the tenants on their estates. Lord Midleton was a survival of these old times; the villagers always spoke of him as "His Lordship" as one might say "Your Majesty". Lord and Lady Midleton were fine characters. He had formerly been the St. John Broderick, Secretary of State for India, and at the War Office; one of the brilliant young men of the Countess of Oxford's youth. A strong Churchman, a kindly landlord, as far as his means allowed. He left little Miss Dudman in possession of the Eashing Cottage when her old mother died - and as the mother had never paid him any rent and the cottage needed upkeep, the loss to him must have been appreciable. "What else could I do?" he said to me. Lady Midleton once told me that their donations and subscriptions amounted to £600 annually. A great sum to be given away voluntarily.

When we came to Norney Rough Lord Midleton was nearly eighty. Mentally and physically, notwithstanding a lame leg, a very energetic man. He took his full share of political work in the House of Lords, and when down at Peper Harow was constantly riding round the Estate. A fine example of the last of the old aristocracy. We dined occasionally at Paper Harow, generally at a large family gathering. Lady Midleton would tell Phyllis of her experiences, how when she came as a bride, the old Lord Midleton, a martinet, was with great difficulty persuaded to allow her to buy a new bed to replace the cheap brass one in her room. But she was allowed to make the purchase only at Feltham's in Godalming High Street. Lord Midleton told me much about his youth.

He was behind the scenes on the occasion of King Edward VIII's abdication and described to me how he and other guests to dinner were kept waiting at Belvedere for a very long time while the king outside practised on the bagpipes.

I sat next him in the Peper Harow Coach House for the annual Peper Harow Cricket Club dinner when Edward VIII broadcast his abdication address to the nation - an apologia which I felt at the time had far better never have been made.

It seems curious that the Midletons should not have seen how quickly the world was changing - it is true the Second World War was yet to come; but everything was ripe for a social upheaval. Like a mighty oak ignoring the lush undergrowth, Midleton considered his park and his deer Sacrosanct. Riding round with his agent, Hancock, he pointed to a distant rise some two miles away. "Get some firs planted: it is possible that land may be sold for building." What would he think today when whole villages of new Council houses have sprung up - not merely visible but overlooking his Park.

At another time, after the Second World War had started, and the Government Agricultural Board assumed control, he discovered some pasture land near his gate being ploughed up. He ordered the ploughman to stop at once and tell his farmer, Buer, that he would not permit it under any circumstances. He even took the matter up with the government when Buer told him he had been ordered to do this ploughing. He died shortly after; and today his whole park is ploughed.

His sons, Francis and Michael, were both killed in the war. Francis, before the war, used to attend such Village committees as the institute and committees in which there was what you might call no "free speech".

The parish was very fortunate in having Lady Horne and Lady Caroline to sponsor all their needs. Both had ample means and were fine women. You couldn't impose on Lady Horne; though Lady Caroline was "Easy money" for all and sundry - Sir Edgar and Lady Horne at Hall Place were well known to Charles and Amy and Laura Nicholson. Lady Horne had been Marjorie May in the youth of all these three women; Charles had been member for Doncaster when Sir Edgar represented Guildford.

Sir Edgar Horne was as typical of his class, as was Lord Midleton. Sir Edgar was well over eighty, a carnation in his buttonhole, a full figure, a somewhat florid face, he enjoyed the good things to eat and drink - yet he could attend half a dozen directors' meetings in the day and on the next play 36 holes of golf as well - if not better - than men of sixty, a pretty stiff customer to tackle in business, I imagine. Lady Horne had a prize dairy herd at Cross Farm and a very real knowledge of this side of farming. She was fond of horses, and bred one or two for racing. She had the great advantage in farming that losses didn't matter. Painting was her principal interest; the panel paintings in the big room at what is now Aldro School are by her.

The Parish Council, the Mothers' Union, the Peper Harow Cricket Club, the village C. of E. School, the Institute and the British Legion, were all directly or indirectly presided over either by these two ladies or by Lord Midleton. "His Lordship" took but little direct control in such small affairs but Jack Wenham then at Mitchen Hall, on the Parish Council, represented him. Only at the School managers meetings did Lord Midleton make an appearance, largely I think because he was in such strong opposition to the views of the Rector, Douglas, an iconoclast if ever there was one.

Both churches, Peper Harow and Shackleford, were at this time in the gift of Lord Midleton. But to the credit of both Stafford Jones at Peper Harow and Douglas at St. Mary's, Shackleford, neither parson allowed him to interfere. His frequent instructions were not carried out if either of these rectors thought otherwise.

In this record of the changes that took place in our parish over a period of only twenty years the church must be included. The influence of the Lord of the Manor, ceased with the death of Lord Midleton. The very rich died or found their big houses far too big - and turned them over to Institutions. Peper Harow mansion became an "Approved School"; Hall Place of Sir Edgar Horne became Aldro School; Shackleford House of the MacAndrews was given to Barnardo's Home for Boys; "Grenville" was bought by the Salvation Army as an Eventide Home for old men and women.

Douglas, the Rector in 1933 was an iconoclast, a narrow-minded Crusader. He angered the villagers by reporting to the police that at the weekly village whist drive in the Institute cards were played for money. No one on his senses would have accused our old village husbands and wives of gambling. "The Institute" said Douglas "has been built on Church land - that is sufficient." Prince, who succeeded him, was a sick man; he did nothing. I think he was a man of some substance and could have afforded to retire. Eventually he did, taking our institute's caretaker with him as his servant - much to the committee's indignation. Finally Ellis came, and is still here.

Prior to Ellis's arrival the Rectory garden was a real garden. Douglas was an expert gardener; Prince's brother-in-law who lived with the family at the Rectory was equally efficient; but for the 8 years of the Ellis occupation not a spade or fork has apparently been used - and the four acres are now a jungle. A youngish country parson who cannot show a single flower or even a potato to eat cannot hope to impress a countryman with his godliness.

But above all Ellis "could not mix" - the one essential need in a country parson. This may have been constitutional, but he lived outside every village activity - the Institute, the Flower show, etc., and that was inexcusable. His wife would have nothing to do with that hive of industry and sociability - the Women's Institute. It was "none of their business".

It is, I think, a religious age; the deadening fear of hell, the basis of most church teaching in my youth, has passed; the subject of religion is no longer taboo. Non-conformist churches are packed in Godalming with young men and women; many of the village churches such as Compton are well filled every Sunday; but if you left out the Barnado boys and the old ladies from Grenville there would not be more than a dozen folk at St. Mary's, Shackleford - the others stay away or go elsewhere. "Your place on Sunday is in your Parish Church," preached Ellis; "it is your business to come." And hear me preach, he might have added. It did not occur to him that he must go out "and compel them to come in". That he must know the man in the street, the woman in the home. Church leadership had completely failed.

Leadership throughout the land was the vital factor. The Second World War had greatly modified our army theory - that only men of birth and breeding could be leaders. A large proportion of the best junior fighting leaders had neither. Birth and Breeding and education are great advantages for the lucky men who start life thus endowed; but character and

energy are essential concomitants. There were, and it is to be hoped there always will be in every village, some of the "gentry" class who volunteer their services to run the village organisations - the British Legion, the Cricket Club, the Institute, and so on. Some of them say "they like to know the man in the road", others that fortune has been kind to them and "therefore they should give a bit back". Such men are the backbone of village life. Contemporary with them and equally valuable are those somewhat rarer villagers who are also prepared to do a job of voluntary work unpaid. From each class the Chairmen, the Hon. Secretaries and the Hon. Treasurers of the committees are formed. I took a fair share of this work, at one time or another I was an official on seven village organisations. Franks, my neighbour at Norney Cottage, though a very busy man in Guildford, took more than his share. Mrs. Stovold of Lydling on the ladies' side was a "go getter" of the villagers. Saunders, a builder foreman was of the very best type that villages breed. A very hard working man by day yet he gave many hours in the evenings to "running" the British Legion. No light task, for the B.L. had no meeting place except a room once a month at "The Stag", Eashing. Short, the Pedley's chauffeur was his admirable successor.

The Gentry and the villagers were and still are complementary to one another in this side of village life. The right gentry have a natural turn for leadership; they are level headed men, knowing that there are always two sides to a question, equable in temperament, ready with a smiling "you silly ass" which from the right man can be oil on troubled waters, but from the one sided villager may promote an uproar. With Chairmen, like my neighbour Franks, there was never any "trouble"; but with those most excellent villagers such as Saunders or Short, there were often angry words on Committee.

Up to the time of the Second World War all was easy. There was a sufficiency of workers. Bickerstaff at the Post Office with Jack Newman and Cutler would help arrange a Legion Fete; W.R. Newman would loan his lorry to take competitors to village games (whist, dominoes and darts). Nash and other gardeners controlled the yearly Flower Show. Money was always available for the village "collectors" and duly entered in their collecting books.

It was natural that when the threat of war loomed that such village activities as we had should be turned to Home Defence. I found myself nominated as head Warden, and to fit myself took a course of instruction in Home Defence duties, protection against gas being considered the most serious damage, with bombing second.

Those who had been foremost in peace filled the breach in preparation for war. MacAndrew put his house at the disposal of the local Red Cross, the Women's Institute finding many indefatigable workers - Ruth Pedley, Mrs. Howard, and Mrs. Stovold. The British Legion were the backbone of the wardens.

The villager who had served in the First World War had a better sense of proportion than those authorities who aimed at perfection. "It ain't sense," said Jack Newman to me, "it ain't accordin' to reason so say as everybody must have a gas proof room. Take my cottage for instance - and most of the others are the same as mine - why, the wind whistles through in the winter something cruel. I was a gunner in the last war, as you know, and you tell me, sir, what'll happen when a bomb explodes - why every one of these old cottages'll be

shaken to pieces, the cracks'll get wider, stands to reason you can't keep gas out - not no how - stuffing paper up the chimney is just a lot of nonsense." It was nonsense of course.

Similarly W.R. Newman who controlled the Wardens in Hurtmore remarked "What's the use of their saying, 'You must have wardens on duty at all times.' When do they think we are going to do our job of work? They must be crazy."

During all those five war years we had but three bombs in our parish, and no damage.

I went before the war started first to take charge of the Guildford R.D.C. Civil Defence - and then as an assistant Controller for Surrey. My place in Shackleford was taken by MacAndrew with Ken Franks as his deputy. The telephone at the Head Warden's post at Shackleford was "manned" by which ever of the Macandrew family was at home when the telephone rang. Life, in fact, in the village was a case of business as usual.

There was no obvious change in our village life during the five war years but we emerged different. Lord Midleton had died, the Mansion and Park had been a huge Canadian transport depot; after the war the estate was sold. Sir Edgar and Lady Horne had died; Hall Place had been bought by F.E. Hill for his school "Aldro" evacuated from Eastbourne - there was a German prisoners' camp in its grounds - prisoners who were employed on local agricultural work and occasionally to help in our gardens.

There was always the possibility that Guildford or Godalming would be heavily bombed and hundreds of homeless would require food and shelter first in Shackleford Institute and then in houses - other villages in the district each taking their share. The members of the Women's Institute organised all this - beds, blankets, and cooking and sanitary arrangements. So too the men of all social classes in the Parish formed into the Home Guard. Men and women thus became acquainted on terms of equality that only war could have effected. Today the Women's Institute, the Upper Eashing Club, the other Cricket and Football Clubs owe much of their healthy state to these war formations.

All social grades coalesced during the stress of this Second World War and the barriers of class will never again be the same in any village. The social change was no doubt coming - war or no war; but a village, such as ours, had no wish for change. At political elections the vote was still solid Conservative. For the five war years, I, like numberless other elderly folk, was in far more intimate touch with men and women of all classes than I had ever been before - a different relationship to the commanded and commanding of the army, most excellent to all though that relationship is.

The "spare time" of the more or less wealthy householders of the Parish in 1933 had completely vanished by 1953 - gone with the maids, the gardeners and the chauffeurs. All very well for the young and active but a great problem for the old and frail. The barriers had been lowered between the many classes; but the upper classes' families so individualistic in outlook, had not yet learnt to coalesce. Dotted everywhere were old folk living alone in their old houses - refusing to live with relatives. The "class" distinction of old days had shrunk to a "family" distinction.

During these years 1933-1953 the change in the land had been quite as remarkable. Peper Harow Park, the dominating feature, was no longer a park. The trees many of which Lord Midleton's grandfather planted with such self-pride were for the most part still there - but on

sufferance; many under sentence. Much of the land beneath them has been under the plough, and the rest is earmarked for a market garden. The "mansion" is an "approved" school with wide stretching playing grounds that many a very expensive private school would envy. The "preserves" belonging to Lord Midleton and Sir Edgar are unfenced - and unfurnished. The farms have grown, the little fields are big fields, hedges and ditches have disappeared; the little farmers are big farmers, masters of broad acres; the Stovolds quarter the whole parish. Market gardeners have sprung up and their huge gardens stretch into the distance chequered with all the Covent Garden produce. Great assembly sheds have been built with metalled roads to connect with the main London Road. Hewitt, Richardson and now Fuller are in the way of being very rich men. There is something of the mushroom growth about these market gardeners. Enterprising, capable and hard working men, they have seized a golden opportunity. Theirs is a specialised business compared to the big farm.

These big changes have been more than balanced by the smaller. For generations the countryside remains practically unaltered - the traveller returning to his homeland after an absence of half a century turns instinctively to the footpath, to woods, the commons that generations of his forebears have known. Unforgotten; they were always there in his memory. The little "right of way", the short cuts from village to village - the footbridge over the stream, the stile, the single unforgotten elms or oaks. The returned traveller to our parish would today find himself in a strange land.

The footpath that led from Eashing to Shackleford - through the deep cutting in Norney Farm fields, turning left at the copse - a mass of foxgloves, then following Lord Midleton's Park fence a mass of bluebells, and thick with rabbit warrens and fox earths; shaded by big beeches, then across the common at Charcoal Lodge - when the annual Flower Show was held - down into Shackleford. That path exists no longer. The right of way from the Wey below Hurtmore up the steep north hill and across the plough will shortly be forgotten. Only the path from "Heaven" farm (since then a Guest House under Mrs. Jones) across Richardson's track and down into Shackleford is still in daily use - practically unchanged.

Only the old houses and cottages remain. Mitchen Hall during 1933-53 belonged first to the Wenhams and then to the Thorntons. Mitchen hall has a very old history and only its recent years are known to me. A sinister house, bringing evil to those who live in it - at least that is its reputation. It was Lord Midleton's and in the early days of the century Clare Sheridan, the writer and sculptor, Lady Midleton's cousin lived there. Death, I believe, had taken the eldest sons of her family for some generations; she lost hers at the age of 21. There was also the story - a true story - of a butler in recent years who shot a pheasant from Mitchen Hall grounds, collected it from Lord Midleton's grounds thereby making himself a poacher, and who to avoid sentence hanged himself. Phillip Gibb, writing of Mitchen Hall, tells how he stayed there as an undergraduate and how his hostess going out one night was terrified at something she saw. He does not say what she saw! However they are hearsay stories of the early part of this century.

From 1933 till Molly Thornton left Mitchen Hall and purchased the old rectory, Shackleford, we went frequently to the place. In 1933 the Wenhams were the tenants of the house, Maud Wenham, Jack Wenham's young Swedish wife was psychic, as was her Swedish nurse. She actively disliked the atmosphere of the house. On two occasions she saw a ghost of a lady, once at night this passed her on the stairs when she was with a guest. When the

Wenhams went to Witley, Molly and Nigel Thornton with their young family took possession. It's a lovely old house and they were both artistic; a swimming pool was constructed, the gardens greatly improved, the house delightfully furnished. Many times we have been to swim, to lunch or tea. Then Nigel fell ill of some strange complaint, and died; Molly had an accident to her leg and remained lame. I never heard her say anything about ghosts or atmospheres, for Molly belonged to that great but rare class of human beings who are prepared to see nothing but good in the world, and against whom evil spirits must find their spirits blunted. But when she had settled into the old rectory she admitted to a great feeling of peace.

I should like to know the past and future history of Mitchen Hall. Ghosts are snobbish folk; and perhaps City blokes are not perceptive. Phyllis, who is psychic I think, always said that the atmosphere of the house depressed her greatly. I, who am in no degree allergic to any other world, delighted in its sun-baked walls, its blind windows, its age, its aloofness. But had I the choice of Mitchen Hall, or the far smaller, starker Georgian house the "Old Rectory" at Shackleford - I would unhesitatingly choose the latter. For whether a house can have an evil atmosphere or not I am uncertain; but I do know that a house can have a good atmosphere - and that certainly is true of the old rectory. But presumably if one can have a "good" then necessarily another can have a "bad".

"Jordans" at Upper Eashing is the only other large and old house in the parish of the same "standing" as Mitchen Hall. Nothing sinister about Jordans, but Mrs. Ronaldson was like Maud Wenham, psychic. She told me how - I think on more than one occasion - she had heard at night the clink of horse and armour crossing the Ford at Lower Eashing and then climbing the lane that passed in front of the old house. Knights and men at arms, she suggested. I feel sure that arrant Paul Pry - Bill Bickerstaff at the post office - would have told all and sundry had there been anything more substantial.

What a pity it is that only the name Rokers survives. During the last century they are said to have owned most of the land round Shackleford. The little band-box house on the side of Rokers Hill where the MacDougals live is their only memorial. Perhaps the family inhabited the lovely old Shackleford Farm house of the Fergusons. I should also like to know who farmed the land from the Twiggs' small Elizabethan farmhouse. Two hundred years ago, before the Midletons built the hideous Peper Harow Mansion, the Manor House was at Baker's Farm owned by the Dorcas family; Lydling the Stovold home; Shackleford Farm House; the Twiggs' "old cottage" and Upper Eashing Farm must have been farming centres for centuries.

When we first arrived at Norney Rough the Guildford-Godalming by-pass was still unfinished. It was being constructed in sections. The section from Eashing to Milford was open; but there was a gap between this and the cross road Shackleford to Hurtmore and Godalming.

A description of Norney Farm, our nearest neighbour, during this twenty-year interval is an epitome of the change that has come over all the land in the Parish.

Once, in the forgotten past, but presumably between the years 1650 - 1750 a farmer lived in the Twiggs' old house now called Old Cottage, at the bottom of the road. As the years passed no doubt the farm prospered and the two labourers' cottages - now called Step Cottages were built with walls of a thickness to resist the centuries. Higher up the lane, and opposite Norney Rough, was a Public House - now Norney Farm. Even the name of the public house is forgotten. Examination of the title deeds of Lord Midleton's Estates and the Earl of Antrim's at Eashing House would tell, for the old boundary between these two properties ran along our road.

A very poor farm since the sandy land was so unproductive and the farmer was but a tenant farmer. There must have been a long succession of farmer tenants. "Do you think he's likely to stay?" asked Lord Midleton of Hancock, his agent. "Yes, your Lordship, I think we've got a man who'll stay this time." He was referring to the present owner Ron Buer.

Norney Farm in 1933 was rented to MacIntyre, a disgruntled and rather disagreeable man. Poor land and a poor farm of about 80 acres. He had a herd of about 12 Jerseys with pasturage in the two small and rather dirty fields of about 8 acres on either side of his house. His barns were in a very bad condition; the hens lay in the hedgerows. A big black savage dog, Sambo, kept permanently on a chain, echoed his master's distaste for anything.

I imagine MacIntyre made a living, and no more. He continually complained, perhaps with reason, that his landlord would not give him any, what he described as urgently needed help for his barns, his fences and many farm improvements. While on the other hand Lord Midleton, perhaps justifiably, was not prepared to put his hand into his pocket to repair barns, walls and additional sheds for a tenant who might do a good deal himself if he wished or nothing if he chose. Now would you - if you were either the farmer or the landlord? To be a good tenant of a farm twenty years ago was in most cases a poor proposition - it probably still is. MacIntyre left before the war. Buer came.

Then came the war, the sale of Peper Harow, and eventually the purchase of Norney Farm by Buer.

What an object lesson in possession Norney Farm taught us, watching the change from our windows in Norney Rough. When Buer succeeded MacIntyre the first thing he did was to unleash "Black Sambo". After half a day of wild careering Sambo became the perfect farm dog, obedient, intelligent, devoted - a friend of every farmer's friend. If ever a dog had had a rotten life it was Sambo - and what a fine character he must have had not to have been completely soured - ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have gone and remained.

Then in 1948 Norney Farm became Buer's own property the farm started to grow. Like Black Sambo it had been chained up, unable to move further than the length of the chain. What could be done to the land, the hedges, the ditches, the barns under such tethered restrictions? Elsewhere today good tenants can be and are evicted.

In those, not so distant, days from 1933 to 1948 the view from our windows was cut off from Hindhead by a long line of scraggy trees which topped a gorse ridge - a golden glory in the spring. Below this ridge scrub and common thick with briar and bramble, pine trees and larch with here and there oak and beech. A blackberry hunting ground in autumn, blue with

blue bells in the spring. A dilapidated wire fence was no more than a nominal farm boundary.

Who would have believed that those three fat sows of Buer's would have cleared the foreground of this jungle with its tree roots as thick as a man's leg? They made it, at first, a Somme battlefield with shell craters and broken stumps; but the sows grew fat.

Time has relative value in farm life; a wooden hut or a chicken run can be erected - a month, a house can be built and inhabited in six months; but wasteland cannot be brought under the plough and the countryside be transformed in less than several seasons. So it was that the sows work was not completed for two or three years; while the "rough" first under woodmen, and then bulldozers, was first cleared and then treated, harrowed, ploughed and finally bloomed.

While these last few years the eighty acres of Norney Farm has grown to one hundred and fifty, expanded and changed with each successive season, so the small herd of Jerseys - now pedigree - has multiplied. A herd of some sixty with many young ones coming on. Bull has succeeded Bull. The two farm horses, Blossom and Prince - a sad loss this - have been replaced by tractors. The old tumbled down sheds have gradually been replaced by breeze-block buildings.

Outside labour has not been called in; a load of bricks has been dumped, sand for cement; the circular saw is in operation timber is cut and shaped, a post and rail fence - a beauty - keeps the cows from the farm - the architects and the constructors are Buer and his family. Phoenix like the old tumbled down farm has gone and a new one - to win the prize as the best of its size and kind in this part of Surrey - has taken its place. Time has even been found to lay out the garden, to plant a border, to refashion the old well, to replace doors and windows with taste and judgment. What a lovely thing is a post and rail fence.

The mainspring is Ron Buer; but almost equally Mrs. Buer and Eustace; not to mention the nephews, and the learners. How they work - and sing and laugh. From early morning to late evening Buer is moving at his light infantry pace here, there and everywhere.

The rise of the farmer seems the natural corollary to the fall of the big land estates. Much was lost when the Midleton family disappeared. A patronising interest perhaps; but based on a high standard of life. None worked harder than Lord and Lady Midleton and their example was an incentive. Parish work took its colour from them. There is no such central standard today.

The farmers - certainly in our neighbourhood - have most deservedly risen; but their parish interest extends no further than their own farms - no further in fact than any of the rest of us. But while Buer and his like have not taken on a mantle of greatness their social position is vastly different than it was twenty years ago.

We had but a cursory interest in the new farmer of Norney Farm when he first came. A good fellow to let loose Black Sambo - an energetic fellow to judge from the pace he walked. Quick tempered perhaps, when Eustace, his small son, fell off the pony, or didn't take the small jumps too smoothly. It didn't seem as if this small boy was having any schooling but in his early teens he could drive a tractor, born to it perhaps, in this petrol age. Then during the war we got to know Mrs. Buer when, added to all the other manifold duties, she took on

"National Savings" and we all bought war savings stamps from her. Good neighbours, they proved, even though their cows occasionally broke in and ate our cabbages; and in return as equally good neighbours a young and an old bull were tethered on our front unmown lawns. And so the acquaintance grew and ripened into real friendship.

"I am absolutely ashamed, Mr. Buer," said Phyllis, "that you have never seen the inside of my drawing room." And so we drank a glass of sherry with them. That was a year or two before a glut of "Coming of Age" birthday celebrations: Eustace Buer, Sally, Valerie Thornton, the twin Franks, Joan Luff, Roger Hunt. These sealed our common friendship; for every one of these celebrants asked all the others to - dinner, dance or cocktail party and included Rob Franks, Paddy and "Blue" Daniel with, of course, Sue.

What a nice family they were. Mrs. Buer, the sister-in-law of Faulkner, the professional golf champion of England; Eustace, working like a black by day, with his first cousins, on the farm, dancing by night, or departing with flashing white teeth to some motor racing at Goodwood. Ron Buer entertaining his some 50 guests to drinks on "occasions", the farm yard packed with high powered cars; farmers and their wives from all the neighbourhood, who had come on a sponsored "walk" to see how a farm could be run.

During these twenty years the rise of the Stovolds, our big local farmers, had been spectacular. One F.E. Stovold at Lydling with his most energetic wife farmed most of the parish; but his sons Percy and Raymond, helped by their mother's money took a big step forward. Raymond is a very rich man today. When we first came his comparatively small dairy business filled his time. Now he has a monopoly of the highest-grade milk. He owns snack and milk bars in Guildford and Godalming, farms many acres of land; is the local Master of Foxhounds, sails his yacht.

And so one comes to the Social Life of the village and its comparison with the Social Life before the war.

Throughout the ages the village pub has been the centre of the villagers' social life. Where else could the men foregather? It may be that women are the more important and influential sex socially; but the only common meeting place for the men was the village pub, open to women but not much frequented by them. A good centre save only in the opinion of rabid temperance folk. The Americans who came to this country during the Second World War were full of praise of the village pub, so unlike anything in their country. So homely, so friendly.

Its continuing value has been proved by its place in the village today. It is still the centre of village life - attracting wider clientele. Twenty years ago the "gentry" rarely drank a glass of beer there, today many can be found in the well-run pub. That is partly due to the better class public house landlord. Coles at the "Stag" was once a private chauffeur, Lane at the "Squirrel" is a good example of the modern enterprising man. He caters for suppers, hires out his car, and his yard is daily in the summer crowded with motor coaches. Lane is a rich man today. The "Cyder House" at Shackleford has a good landlord who runs a darts club. The repute of all these pubs stands high; there is little drunkenness. They are much better class houses than they were twenty years ago.

If the pub is essentially a male meeting place, the Institute though it caters for all interests is predominantly female. An occasional bazaar before the war, a concert, dance or social, the stamping ground for the Conservative Association - no Liberal or Labour member ever wasted his time at Shackleford! All these functions before the war were nicely graded, socially.

After the Second World War the Institute came into greater prominence. Four or five nights a week it was hired for committee meetings or entertainments. The younger members - perhaps three girls to one man - danced. There was a weekly meeting of the Youth Club run by Astbury; more important still the Women's Institute, the greatest and most valuable of all the post war activities held weekly meetings and included practically all the women of all classes in the village. In short the Institute was a Social Centre in a way it had not been previously.

This fact is of "village life" interest for it must be remembered that much had changed in the world. The wireless has become universal, the television is in many country cottages, and numerous buses ran to Godalming and thence to Guildford. Luxurious coaches could be hired for expeditions to the sea or to London or much further afield, and the villagers had their pockets full of money.

Yet, although so much social activity was available outside the village, social life inside had never reached a fuller pitch.

There had been half-hearted attempts before the war to launch cricket and football clubs, which had existed for one or two years at most until the original patrons lost interest. Now the Shackleford Football Club could put three teams in the field and takes part in two leagues, Upper Eashing could do almost as well; Hewitt's Cricket Club at Shackleford and the resurrected Peper Harow C.C. had full programmes and all equipped themselves with pavilions.

The belief that with full pockets and ample transport the villagers would go to the town for everything is but partially true.

Another post-war feature is the improvement of the village shop. Old Bickerstaff had the Eashing Post Office and shop before the war - apart from postage stamps one went there to see his garden of which he was justly proud - you might, but most probably would not, be given a cutting from his rare Michaelmas daisies. "Bill" his eighteen stone son when he succeeded was twice in trouble over post office accounts - quite honest, quite incapable of running the little sweet store.

Dobel at "the shop" Shackleford, chronically coughing and sneezing, a mass of grievances, made greater "hay" of the British Legion accounts during his one year's treasurership than it could have been believed possible. W.R. Newman at the Hurtmore P.O. and shop was interested only in his garage and later his coal business. His nice wife, a tower of strength in the days of Lady Horne became a chronic invalid. All were shops by courtesy; only sweets and cigarettes were their real commodity.

No doubt the change in the financial conditions of the villager was also responsible for the change in the "shops", but it might have been expected that the greater display of the Godalming shops with their delivery vans would have filled the bill. The fact remains that all our three shops - Shackleford, Eashing and Hurtmore - expanded as never before. Barnes with his wife at Shackleford led the way. Gentry and villagers went down to Barnes - you

could get stores at Barnes that you could not always get in Godalming, unless unduly favoured. He delivered the newspapers - a real boon, seeing that the uncertain W.H. Smith boy rarely arrived before 9.0 or 10.0 and never on Sundays till mid day.

Cossey took over Eashing Post Office and shop from Hancock; a townsman instead of a countryman. Hancock, who was so very bad at simple arithmetic but so very knowledgeable in racing and country matters. There was so much of outside interest with Hancock that the time taken in finally deciding the cost of a parcel by post, and the matter of the change, was never grudged. W.R. Newman's descendants enlarged the Hurtmore shop to a size that positively invited patronage and all three shops were patronised - the richness of the sugared cakes alone proving the wealth and interest of the neighbourhood.

Slowly and almost unconsciously village life changed during these twenty years. The many distinct and graded classes gradually coalesced into two - the gentry and the villagers. The gentry were the retired folk or the dairy "breeders", the villagers were those who worked on the land or for the land workers. There was but one dividing line between these two - the habit of command. Not a "command" that issued orders, but a command that "took charge" and reduced matters to order. It was always - or almost always - one of the gentry that acted as Chairman or Hon. Secretary of each of the village activities, because such a one could be relied on to keep the peace and get on with the job. An honest man who could be trusted at all times with money. There was a feeling of equality on all these committees, each and everyone gave his opinion frankly - but the friendly feeling in face of all criticism was thanks to the leadership of the gentry in charge.

Times had changed. Jack Newman, my old-time gardener - and many like him - continued to touch his hat and call me, Sir; but whereas in old days if it was the case of an extra bit of work involving an extra bit of pay, he always said, "I'll leave it to you, sir" and knew that he left it safely. The other day he gave me a rude shock by saying - with reference to his son, it is true - "You'll have to give him..." I forget what, I was so disgusted.

Perhaps the male portion of the village always knew each other pretty well; the roadman or the field labourer for instance was always a personal friend - though not so intimate as now. The female portion on the other hand has become more intimate.

The domestic staff of former years had little to do with the village; generally they came from a neighbouring town or further afield. These "foreigners" have long since departed to more lucrative and freer work in factories. In their place are the women from the village. Women who have their own husbands' dinners to cook, their own houses to keep clean. Such come for a few months - an endless succession as frequent in change as French governments. Theirs and our interests become common property - the whole village has an intimate knowledge of each other's habits and customs. More is gained than lost by this intercourse socially.

Perhaps the greatest change of all as a result of the Second World War was the relative change of wealth. The Parish could have been described as "Spoon Fed" before the war. Collectors with their little books for village activities could be certain of subscriptions - big

ones from the wealthy. The church, the institute, the C. of E. school - had but to ask, and received. The Villagers had no need to subscribe, and didn't.

The rates of wealth have changed today. Wages have gone up from £2 10s. 0d. per week to £5 or £10. Hourly labour, which could be had for a shilling, now costs half a crown. The amount coming into each cottage is large, sometimes very large - and the outgoing is seen in wireless, motor bikes, television and even motor cars. Applications are still made to the "gentry" and not to the villagers for subscriptions - the gentry still subscribe but they seldom can afford television, and sometimes have no car. In comparison the gentry are much poorer today than the villagers but the villagers have not yet realised it.

Although the gentry know one another intimately in Shackleford none of us knows what the other possesses. The private income of our class is a great British secret, for ever guessed at, for ever discussed, discreetly - never - or practically never known accurately save when some disaster is self-revealing. There was a time when we thought the Heymanns were very rich, both came from wealthy but large families; now we fear they are very poor. Their little house has some lovely things - museum pieces. The Franks sell an acre of land - to raise a little capital, and that sale knocks a large bit off our reckoning of the good luck to be a coal merchant.

Molly Thornton, whose mother had "that large London house" confesses that she has to spend capital to send Vernon and Adrian to Eton. Audrey Hill, the most honest and generous of women says, "It's a lack of pennies, my dear. We just can't do it. We haven't got the pennies." Geoffrey Cook starts his flower shop in Godalming - so as to educate his children - but whether or not this brings in a fortune we don't know. We don't buy expensive cut flowers here in the country, but other folk who don't live in Shackleford apparently can afford them. Buer must be making a fortune out of his farm, we say, now that it is his; but most probably it all goes back into the farm - for that bathroom that Mrs. Buer would so much like, has not yet materialised. Jack and Betty Hunt - we once thought were very wealthy - there was that big family place in Wales of Betty's father, and Jack's equally large home in Gloucestershire - but Jack goes up daily in the paint trade and Betty sells the flowers they grow to Covent Garden. The answer is that once upon a time sufficient money was in all these homes, but not now. The older generation is still money conscious. It has always been their safety line. The younger are not so anxious - they marry young, and are prepared to run a risk.

Up to the end of the last century the Parish can have changed but little in outward appearance. At the beginning of this century was an influx of wealthy retired folk - the Pedleys, Le Marchant, McAndrew, The Hornes, Lady Caroline and Hadaway (the little Duke); this generation has left no local descendants, their ugly late Victorian houses are their only memorial. Then came, in about 1930, a fresh but poorer invasion, the retired service men, the daily breaders, thanks to improved train services, the local businessmen. The older generation said to these: "You won't stay. None of your class stays more than five years. Then they go elsewhere." But the Second World War and the housing shortage - if nothing else, disproved this prophecy. Almost all are still here; almost all have seen their children grow up in Shackleford Parish and some of these are already married. There is a stability about this 1930 invasion; it had taken the place of the very big and the big houses. It foreshadows perhaps the age of the lesser English homes.

During this period the Franks came to Norney Cottage; Roly, John and David grew up here; the Howards with Maria and John to Norney Wood Cottage; the Buers with Eustace to Norney Farm; Jack and Maud Wenham with "Tuppence" and Charles to Mitchen Hall - later to be succeeded by the Thorntons with Valerie, Vernon and Adrian; the Daniels to Timbers with Paddy, "Blue" and John; the Mills with Belinda, Robin and Nicholas - and towards the latter half of the period the Cookes to the Studio with Henrietta and Mark, the Hills to Aldro with Pam, Crispin and Freddie; the Heymanns to Norney End with Tim and Hazel; the Bartrees with Rosemary and two boys to Shackleford; the MacDougals with Johanna, Mary and Sarah at Rokers. Shackleford Parish has been a real home to all this younger generation - and indeed to the Hunts with Roger and Nicholas just outside the parish and the Luffs with Joan down the hill above Godalming. I, with most other parents, can claim to have been a regular chauffeur for some ten years between various houses and school.

Sally at five years old started her schooling with Valerie Thornton at Mrs. Birleys, Charterhouse, with Julia and Rachel Birley - a venture that ended a year later in Sally being asked to leave. Anyone who knew the Sally of those days and of today will recognise the crass absurdity. It was said by a very stupid French Governess that she fought - so she did - for years - with John and David Franks - for the love of fighting. It was a letting-off of steam in a very biddable character.

Her next venture was at St. Hilary's with Miss Hiorns, a fine schoolmistress. She fought here - also; but the fighting was admirably handled by Miss Hiorns. From St. Hilary's at the mature age of nine she passed to the Royal School getting "nought" for one paper, History, and precious little more for the others. But that admirable headmistress, "Lottie" Harding accepted her - and I am quite sure never regretted it.

Sue started life at Miss Cole's. Any Prime Minister who had had the good fortune to start his learning life with the two Miss Coles would have given them the credit for a high proportion of his subsequent successes. Their teaching was of the very highest order with the young - no matter how unruly or obtuse.

Then Sue went to Mrs. Grey - and Mrs. Grey came of the Huxley family - a natural teacher. But her popularity was in a sense a great stumbling block. All youth was crowded to Mrs. Grey's and a turbulent crowd they were. I don't know if any learnt much, Sue who was quick-witted - and very social - certainly enjoyed the games and the lunch and forgot all she'd previously been taught.

Schools have to be mentioned in this summary of twenty years life from 1933 to 1953 for education is at the parting of the ways. Almost everyone today "lives on capital" - and capital cannot last for ever; this generation, perhaps the next - and then? All our neighbours have put the education of their children in top rank of their expenditure and at the end of this twenty years span it is as well to look to what they have got for their money.

Sue, a day girl like all the others at Mrs. Grey's, cost about £100 a year. She would have learnt more book work at the village school for nothing. Sally scraped through School Certificate at nearly 17 and then left school. Sue got the best out of the Royal School - a first rate school. She got real education - a taste for life.

Sally's education up to 17 cost about £1,600, Sue's up to the same age, about £1,850.

Children must get away from home if they are to develop independent characters - but this independent character must be nicely blended with a real feeling for family - a family in which equality between the ages exists. All our young people in Shackleford benefited from being away from home at boarding schools.

We know nothing of divorce, but a great deal about family life. What more devoted or wise mother could you have than Molly Thornton; I remember her saying "It's just heaven" when she referred to Vernon and Adrian coming home from school for the holidays - and what a loss Nigel was to the family circle, for all our families have fathers. Breynton Mills was perhaps a "Roman Father", but he was very proud of his Robin and Nicholas; Belinda wasn't tough enough to stand up to it unfortunately. Most fathers spoil their daughters - or tend that way; Breynton didn't. On the other hand Jack MacDougal - the real charmer - couldn't see why Johanna, Mary and Sarah shouldn't have just everything they wanted.

Mary MacDougal was American - the opposite of the loud talking variety, lovely, unruffled in turmoil, silent but with a delicious sense of humour - and didn't she need it in that happy-go-lucky family with Jack often at death's door from pneumonia and the next day in his carpet slippers in the wet garden. "Smokey" the pony was almost a fourth member of the household. What a tragedy it was when Sarah, who had had polio a year or two previously, fell on the kitchen floor and thereby lost the sight of one eye. Who would have foreseen the Franks boys would have developed into such first rate young men, for John when he was small was a nervous highly-strung youngster, a terror at a nursery tea party, and David was a dunce. Home life and good schools made them. But was the home life of the Hills at Aldro the ideal for a family? Both Audrey Hill and her husband set the finest example. Hill a most Christian gentleman, out to help everything and everybody, Audrey his counterpart speaking no ill. All the Shackleford village - no matter what their age or sex - were invited and attended every school entertainment whether indoors or out of doors; the Hills making not the smallest social distinction, welcoming all as personal friends.

School and family life is but formative, the interest comes when the young grow up and start their own lives - and here in Shackleford was a whole generation.

Hilary Maxwell was the eldest of our batch of young women. She is the great age of 24. She started her schooling at Priorsfield under Miss Burton Brown. "Hateful old woman", said Hilary, who failed to pass her School Certificate. So she tried the Farnham School of Art for upwards of a year. Her one picture was of a "bloater"; but the bloater did not get the recognition it deserved - outside Shackleford. The other pictures that were superimposed over the "bloater" on the same canvas finally disillusioned Hilary. So she became a Secretary. I think it was with Collins, the Publishers. She disliked, at sight, the head woman, a German, and was pretty unpleasant to her. So she came home. But persuaded by Lady Maxwell that her conduct was not above reproach, she returned and apologised. Thereupon the German kissed her - and Hilary left for ever. She then tried Harrods; but was dismissed for being rude to a lady who was contemplating the purchase of a hat. Hearing that MI5 at the War office was a suitable job, she went there - for about a month. "Nothing but a lot of old women, continually drinking tea. I simply couldn't stand that," said Hilary in her slow delightful drawl. The only job that she really enjoyed was doing nothing save the unpredictable in her father's flat - but then she met the man of three previous wives, and married him.

Valerie had no doubt about her future - Painting. Valerie came from a really artistic family. Valerie has all the possibility of becoming a well-known artist by the age of - just when I wonder, for an artist it must always be in the future. Domesticity, save in the artistic sense, was not for Valerie. "Blue" Daniel was secretary to a Jeweller, was a Secretary in MI5, and was a Secretary to a man on tour to Venice.

Joan, with musical gifts, rich, elegant - learnt typing and absolutely hated it. She, too, became a Secretary - here, there and everywhere.

END OF PERMITTED EXCERPT

Sally cooked in the King George's Hospital, Hyde Stile. Paddy became an Almoner - the only one who has made it a career; but Paddy was perhaps the most attractive of all, it was Paddy who should have married, and made that her career.

When I was young no young women left their homes to earn money. Today the pendulum has swung full circle; all young women leave their homes. Work in London gives a measure of independence Two or three young daughters share a flat, or live in a Hostel; they work by day, get acquainted with young men - and if the young women are the right sort - which all of our Shackleford young women are - then it is all for the good.

The natural corollary of this account of Happy Families should be Happy Marriages - and none are better suited than our young generation in Shackleford.

This Chapter can thus well end with a brief account of Sally's wedding to Stephen Bolton. The first in our Parish.

The best record of a wedding is perhaps the bound volume of photographs - which London firms produce. Our copy, to be complete, should include a photo of Stephen two years previously in his car at Norney Rough, just arrived from another wedding with grey top hat in the back seat. Medium height, dark and very handsome. He had known Sally for two years previously at Oxford and until the last month had scarcely looked at her; but made up for this by looking at nothing else during this last month. He made a great impression on Phyllis - which burst like a bubble two years later when they were engaged to be married. Nothing personal - she could not bear the thought of losing her daughter to a soldier! A disaster (sic) which had been her own fate under exactly similar conditions.

We did the wedding "regardless" - even the sun shone on that one day amid a welter of rainstorms. It was a real success from start to finish. Stephen's father, Duncan Bolton, married them, the Bishop of Leicester gave them an address and Ken Frankes made the wedding speech.

The Wedding photographs give a picture of the Guard of Honour of the XI Hussars - in full dress; but it does not give any indication of the trouble these Sergeants had in getting into borrowed uniforms at the Institute. Two had to strip to the skin and one had to be cut out of his uniform afterwards; none could sit down - and had they tripped and fallen - there they would have remained, like beetles on their backs. The swords came from the lifeguards - for the XI Hussars were on their way to Malaya - via England.

The heart shaped spot of crocuses in the middle of the front lawn is where the centre pole of the huge marquee rested.