

TUNBRIDGE WELLS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Member of the Federation of Family History Societies
and the Kent Group of Family History Societies



The Cowlings gather for the Buckden Feast, 1937. See article on page 8 for full story

JOURNAL

Number 49 Spring 2011

ISSN 1472-1457

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Important

Membership records are held on computer. If you do not wish your name and address to be kept in this way, please notify the membership secretary.

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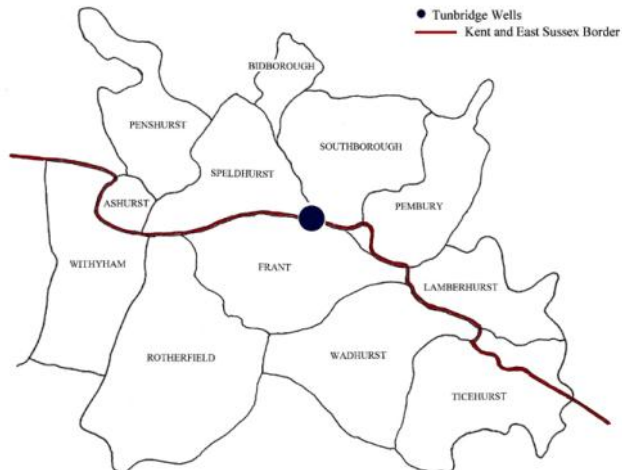
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Aims of the Society

To promote genealogical studies and family history research, particularly in the Tunbridge Wells area; to make available the results of any research; and to promote the preservation of records.

Parishes covered



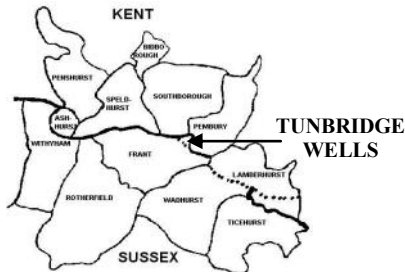
2011 Programme

- 22 March Finding a Family (Adoption) – 20 Years of Searching
Michael Farnham
- 26 April The Curiosities of the City of London (Part 2)
Stuart Robinson
- 24 May The Ghost in the Looking Glass – *The story of the 19th-century*
Lee Ault [seamstresses]
- 28 June Marriage and Courtship in the 1800s
Tom Doig
- 26 July The GRO Index. Just how accurate is it?
Celia Heritage
- 23 August Human Cargo. The story of Convict Transportation
Judy Davies
- 27 September Flowers for Emma – *A WW1 factual love story*
John and Sue Pearce
- 25 October Kent in the 19th Century
Bob Ogley
- 22 November Annual General Meeting

The Society meets monthly on the **fourth Tuesday** (except December)
at **The Village Hall, Station Road, Groombridge.**

Meetings start at **8pm.**

Refreshments, bookstall and
help desk available from **7.30pm.**



**If this journal cannot be delivered, please return it to:
Reg Butler, Glencairn, Whitehill Road,
Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 1JA**

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Copy deadline for Journal Number 50, Summer,
will be **30 May 2011**

Editorial

WELCOME TO 2011. Whilst pondering what I could write for this editorial without the mind-numbing repetitive plea for copy, I noticed that the next issue will be the 50th Journal published by the Society. Well, I thought, this is a golden opportunity to put the question from a different angle. There must be some memories of the Society's past activities that would make interesting reading locked away in the minds of the long-standing members. Those memories don't have to come only from founder members, of which we have a good number still active within our midst, but the membership on the whole. Start scratching your heads!

The first Journal was produced in 1992 and there were two volumes annually until 2001 when it was decided to publish three. Interestingly, the penultimate sentence of the first Editorial began:

“The Journal will be able to flourish with the help from the members.”

With the perpetual struggle to try and produce 32–36 pages per issue, I wonder if would be better to return to two Journals per year. However,

before we resort to that I will mention again that articles do not have to be on your actual research methods. As you can see from the collection in this issue we have quite diverse themes. There is the concluding instalment of Kathleen Freeland's early life which has given us an insight into the social history of those times. Then we have a thought-provoking article comparing the life and opportunities available to two members of a family a century apart. Hasn't anyone ever sat back and wondered how their ancestors coped with life? It can't really have been like *Lark Rise to Candleford*, all smart clothes, never doing any work or getting dirty. Another contribution, relative to the author's family history, is also of interest for its local history. That article also poses a question which some member may be able to expand on.

With the start of the year we always come quickly upon the first of the Fairs at which the Society flaunts its wares. Crawley again was the first to be held on 13 February at the K2 Centre where we had our stand up and running from 10.00am until 5.00pm. Lockmeadow Market Hall, Maidstone is the venue for the Kent Fair on 22 May from 10.00am until 4.00pm.

For the visit to Colindale on 5 April, the coach will leave Crescent Road, opposite the Assembly Hall at 8.45am and will pick up at the bus stop outside the Catholic Church in Southborough at 8.55am.

Bits and Pieces

East Sussex Historical Resource Centre

A major step in the plan for a new historical resource centre for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove was achieved when planning permission was given for 'The Keep'.

It will be built at Woollards Field near Falmer at a cost of £19m, and will replace the current archive and record office at The Maltings in Lewes which has been in operation since 1949. Work begins on site in the summer and it is hoped that the new archive centre will open to the public in 2013.

The Keep will be the new home for over 900 years of historical resources and collections of local, national and international importance. It will house over six miles of archives including written records, maps, plans, films, photographs, prints and drawings.

The Keep is also on course to be the most sustainable archive building of its type in the country and the new development will include photo-voltaics for electricity generation, solar water heating, green roofs, a biomass boiler for heating, thermal insulation and rainwater harvesting.

Certificates go up in Scotland & Northern Ireland

With effect from 1 January the cost of Scottish BMD certificates is increasing from £10 to £12 (or from £8 to £10 when ordered at the ScotlandsPeople Centre), whilst the GRO in Northern Ireland are increasing their price from £12 to £14.

Whilst these increases push the prices above those that have applied in England and Wales since April, it's worth bearing in mind that researchers with Scottish ancestors order certificates less often than those with English or Welsh ancestors, because copies of the register pages for earlier years are available online at the Scotlandspeople site.

Scotlandspeople prices will also increase from April 2011 when the cost of using their website will increase from £6 for 30 credits to £7, although this is cushioned by increasing the period of validity from 90 days to 1 year.

findmypast Offers MarriageMatch™

The fully-indexed marriage indexes for England & Wales at findmypast now allow you to search from 1837–2005 with a single search.

With the MarriageMatch™ feature, if searching for a marriage after 1912, you'll be presented with the entries for both spouses even if you only enter the name of one of them. For earlier searches you'll be shown a list of the 'possibles' spouses, the people whose names are, according to the GRO indexes, recorded on the same register page and can view each entry with a single click. On finding a definite spouse match, you are provided with the volume and page number for both spouses' records, essential when ordering certificates.

Findmypast is the only place you can search the 1837–2005 marriage records all in one go, no need to enter a quarter and date range. To be able to search all years simultaneously is a major breakthrough, especially when occurring earlier or later than expected. This improved search will save much time and effort.

If you only know one name, search for their details and you will find all the possible matches.

Do You Have Scottish Ancestry?

There was good news this week for anyone with Scottish ancestry. When announcing their plans for 2011 findmypast revealed that they will be adding the Scotland censuses to the findmypast site. If they become part of the existing subscription packages, this will be a great improvement for anyone who currently buys credits to view the censuses at the Scotlandspeople site.

What it didn't say in the announcement is whether findmypast will have the census images, as well as the transcriptions. Currently Ancestry has transcriptions, but not images, and whilst findmypast would no doubt like to have both, there's no guarantee that they'll have any more success than Ancestry did (though the fact that their parent company manages the Scotlandspeople website might just help).

Yorkshire Family History Fair

This year the Fair will again be held at the Knavesmire Exhibition Centre, York Racecourse, from 10am to 4.30pm on Saturday **25 June**. Admission will be £4.00 and there is ample free car parking available. There are also on-site cafeteria facilities.

The Fair is one of the largest Family History shows in the UK and has all the usual stalls associated with such a major event. For further details contact:

Mr A Sampson, 1 Oxbang Close, Redcar, Cleveland, TS10 4ND
Tel/Fax: 01642 486615 or see **www.yorkshirefamilyhistoryfair.com**

My First Christmas Party

*Member 57, George Weller, Flat 11 Pegasus Court, 11 Park Road,
Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3PN*

ALTHOUGH BORN IN Bristol on 26 August 1919, I have few recollections of Bristol. Vague memories of attending Sunday School and Band of Hope Meetings at the house where we lived are a short summary of my earliest memories.

When I was four years old we moved to the Cotswold village of Marshfield. This is where my earliest memories were most vivid. We lived in a house called the “Gables” (it is still called the “Gables” today) in the High Street.

Marshfield consists of one main road, the High Street, with almshouses on one end and the parish church of St Mary’s at the other.

Originally, Marshfield was on the main road from Bristol to London, now it is bypassed by the M4 motorway. Nobody goes to Marshfield unless they live there or are visiting the village.

At the age of five years I began my education in the village school. I well remember my first day there. The following Christmas while I was still five, I attended my first Christmas party which was at a house opposite, where there was a family of three children, two girls and a boy.

They had a lovely, beautifully decorated tree in the front room, something I hadn’t seen before. I remember playing games and we had a lovely tea with lots of jelly and sweets etc, to delight the heart of a little boy. This was all a new experience to me and one I enjoyed very much.

I visited the village recently and I had the pleasure of meeting again the two young ladies who lived opposite. Sadly their brother lost his life during the war and his name is on the War Memorial. One of the sisters is now a widow, whilst the other is happily married and lives with her husband close by.

Contrast and Compare

Member 278, Roy Thompson, 5 College Drive, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3PN

WHEN RESEARCHING MY family history I often start to think about the lives of people in my family tree. Did they have comfortable, happy, healthy and fulfilled lives or did they exist in miserable surroundings and abject poverty? How were they affected by the culture and beliefs of their times? How much better is it to be alive today rather than, say, 100 years ago? These and many similar questions spring to mind and I imagine that many other researchers think along the same lines. Obviously it can be very difficult to discover much detailed information about the lives of particular individuals, especially if they died a long time ago. Therefore I have concentrated on the life of someone from a recent generation, a family member whom I remember



Aunt Dollie

very well, and have tried to compare her childhood with that of one of our granddaughters, Charlotte, who has just reached 11 years of age.

My Aunt, Alice Dorothy Thompson, known within our family for 50 years as ‘Aunt Dollie’, was born on 30 June 1899 in Ackworth, which is a small village in West Yorkshire not far from Pontefract. When she was born her father, my grandfather, was 30 years old and employed as a groom, a job which he did for most of his working life. My grandmother was a housewife throughout her life, in common with many of her contemporaries.

Their accommodation was a 4 room cottage, with an outside toilet, no bathroom and no electricity. Heating would have been by coal, with a kitchen range for cooking. The cottage was probably rent-free and occupied as a benefit of the job.

Looking at the general UK picture, the average wage in 1900 was £1.40p per week – which rose to £350 per week by 2000. Of course the price of goods and services was much lower in 1900 – retail prices increased by around 66 times in the following 100 years. In London a pint of milk cost 2d in 1900 and 26p in 2000. Over the same period a pint of beer increased from 2d to £1.73p. The UK population in 1900 was about 38 million whereas in 2000 there it was almost 60 million. Unemployment in 1900 was below 5%. The life expectancy of a girl born in 1900 was 49 years, girls born a hundred years later can expect to live to the age of 80.

Despite living her first few years in conditions which modern youngsters would regard as very primitive and uncomfortable, Aunt Dollie always referred to her childhood as being very happy. She attended the local school and acquired a very good knowledge of basic subjects such as reading, writing and arithmetic. At a time when a large part of the globe was under British rule she was taught a great deal about the history of Britain and its place among the leading nations of the world. In her old age she could remember the whereabouts of most countries (sometimes under their ‘old’ ie colonial name) and the name of the capital city. The importance of education was fully recognised in the early 1900s although Aunt Dollie and girls of her generation were expected to marry and look after a home, perhaps after a period of domestic service.

Aunt Dollie never travelled in an aircraft nor went overseas, indeed she took very few holidays even in Britain. She tended to regard them as a somewhat unnecessary and frivolous activity.

There was a firm social structure in place when Aunt Dollie was a youngster with ‘the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate’. Her mind retained that structure throughout her life and she was always ready to show deference to those that she regarded as being above her in the social scale. She had a very firm sense of right and wrong and certainly was never taught to be non-judgemental. Her life in Ackworth would have been secluded in the sense that most modern methods of communication did not exist in the early 1900s. News about important events in the rest of the country or the world at large would mainly reach the village via newspapers and it is very unlikely that she had regular access to this source of information. She would have been unaware that countries in Europe were forming alliances and tensions were developing that would soon lead to the 1914–1918 war.

In material terms Charlotte is in a very different league from that of Aunt Dollie when she was a child. She lives in a home on the outskirts of Tunbridge Wells which has 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, central heating, electricity, dishwasher, washing machine, telephone, several TVs and PCs and many other modern items of equipment. Her family own 2 cars. Charlotte’s father is a financial analyst and her mother a headteacher. Charlotte has access to numerous TV programmes and the internet. She has a very good technical knowledge and can operate most equipment much more quickly than some of the more senior members of the family.



Charlotte

In her short life Charlotte has travelled widely, visiting Canada, USA, Barbados, France, Spain, and Qatar among other places. She is a very good swimmer and can cover ½ mile in less than 30 minutes. She frequently enters swimming galas and has taken part in jet skiing, body surfing and scuba diving. She is learning to play the clarinet, recorder and the piano. She attends weekly drama lessons which include singing and acting. She enjoys reading, writing and particularly drawing. Her school curriculum includes French. Subjects such as history are usually taught in the form of a project with recent ones including a study of Chile and World War 2.

She has a wide circle of friends and a very good social life.

But although there are enormous opportunities for Charlotte and other young people to participate in a wide range of activities and they are able, via the

internet and the media generally, to access an almost unlimited amount of information, some parts of their lives may not be quite as rosy as they might first appear. Information overload can make it difficult for children to distinguish the important from the trivial. One hundred years ago Aunt Dollie only communicated with her family, her neighbours and the people she knew in her village. Charlotte receives huge amounts of information from TV, radio and the internet. Does this torrent of information enrich her life or make her a happier child? In the wider arena, the ever-increasing pace of the modern world with its complexities and frequent changes means that the tranquillity that existed for many children one hundred years ago has largely disappeared. Charlotte is expected to strive in a competitive society and achieve a great deal in the years ahead; although young she is regularly under pressure to reach targets at school and elsewhere. She has limited spare time and, because of fears about her safety, probably much less day-to-day freedom than that experienced by Aunt Dollie.

She will take many tests and examinations during the next few years whereas my Aunt, who died when she was 95 years old, managed to go through her whole life without facing any formal scholastic hurdles.

On a lighter note, Charlotte and Aunt Dollie have at least one great similarity – a love of meringues. When she was in her eighties Aunt Dollie loved to eat three or four meringues, after which she usually said she felt sick. Charlotte also loves meringues although she is not yet allowed to over-indulge. Aunt Dollie's family record of 5 full cream meringues at teatime one day has not yet been beaten!

Is it better to be 11 years old today than it was a hundred years ago? That is for you to consider!

A Brief History of the Huntingdon Cowlings

*Member 64, Bryan Cowling, 18 Hydehurst Close, Crowborough,
East Sussex, TN6 1EN*

My interest in family history was kindled when, having moved to East Sussex in 1983, we were dining out at a local steak house when the waitress asked if I was the chef's father as he was also named Cowling. This was the first time of being asked the origin of my surname. The seed had been sown! I did nothing for about three years, but then communicated with relatives to begin my research and received letters from all over the world.

As a boy I was taken to the “Buckden Feast” at which the Cowling family would meet to enjoy each other’s company. I now know my ancestors and relatives had lived, worked and played in the village of Buckden, Huntingdonshire for two hundred years and I look on this village as my family’s ancestral home.

John Cowling 1760–1829

NEITHER THE BIRTH nor marriage dates of John, my g-g-g-grandfather, have been traced although family lore has it they originated from Cowling in Yorkshire but this is unsubstantiated.

John married Ann Maria and they produced a son, William, baptised on 9 November 1806, the year following Trafalgar, in St Mary’s the parish church at Buckden. Ann Maria Cowling died during 1826, aged 63, and John in 1829, aged 69 and both are buried in St Mary’s churchyard in Buckden. Over the years many of the Cowlings were baptised, married and buried in the Parish church.

William Cowling 1806–1879

As stated William was born in 1806, a time of relative prosperity but by the time he was ten and probably looking for work most likely on the land, it had deteriorated dramatically for the Ag Lab. This would have been William’s main opportunity for work or maybe as a stable boy in one of the two coaching inns of which Buckden boasted. These were the Lion and Lamb and the George, which still face each other across the High Street. In their heyday they relied on trade from the traffic which passed through the village on the busy Great North Road to and from London.

However, with the downturn in the economy plus the Enclosure Acts, more hardship had come the way of the Ag Lab and the rural communities leading to a migration to the cities in the search for work. Round about 1828, when Wellington became prime minister and Covent Garden Market was being built, William set off to make his fortune in London either walking down the Great North Road or as a passenger on a stage wagon along with the merchandise being transported. This would have been a much cheaper form of transport than by stage coach but even so may have been beyond his means. What a change it must have been to leave a village of about 1,000 people to a city 1.6 million people.

Here William met Jane Garrett, a London girl born in Blackfriars Road about 1810, and on 16 November 1828 they married in Christ Church, Spitalfields.

This is one of Hawksmoor's fine East End churches and overlooks Spitalfields. Seven months after the death of his father, William and Jane baptised their first child, Mary Ann Cowling, on 27 September 1829 at St Andrews-by-the-Wardrobe in the City of London. The family was living in Huggin Lane, Queenhithe with William employed as a brewer. A second daughter, Charlotte, was born in London during 1832 but was baptised in 1843 at St Mary's church in Buckden along with her sister Jane.

Sometime between 1832 and 1835 William and family returned to Buckden where he resumed his working life as an Ag Lab. Why he came back to his birthplace, is not known. Was it because of the riots and civil unrest of 1830 or the hustle bustle of city life? However, five further children were baptised in the parish church, my great-grandfather James 1835, Ann Maria 1841, Eliza 1846, John 1848 and finally another son William 1851. William and Jane lived for over thirty years in Hardwick, a hamlet of Buckden, until his death in 1879 aged 72. Following his death, Jane went to live with their daughter, Eliza and husband, in St Neot's. Eliza Cowling had married Samuel Wells, a paper finisher, on 21 September 1864 at the parish church in Buckden.

James Cowling 1835–1891

Buckden in the 1830s had a population of about 1000, and in common with many villages of that period was self-sufficient. The inhabitants could get all

their needs, from food to clothing and also the services of a doctor without leaving the village. It also boasted six taverns and public houses one of which, the Vine Inn, would play a part in James's later life.



James and Mary Cowling c1880

My great-grandfather James Cowling was born in 1835 and lived with his parents and siblings in Millend, Buckden until he married the youngest daughter of William and Ann Mattin of Lucks Lane. Her name was Mary and they married at St Mary's on 9 September 1857 but soon after history repeated itself when the couple moved to London looking to improve their fortunes. Within a year their first child, James William, was born at 21 Salisbury

Terrace, York Road, Islington. Nearby lay Kings Cross Station, the great Northern Railway Goods Depot as well as The Metropolitan Cattle Market. All may have offered employment opportunities to James and, indeed, on his son's birth certificate his occupation was given as Porter. For some reason he didn't stay long in London returning to Buckden. By 1861 James, aged 24, wife Mary 24, son James 2 and his sister Jane, 10 months was lodging at "Beehives", Lucks Lane, with his father-in-law. William Mattin was a maltmaker and now a widower but he died in 1863.

Charles Tye Cowling was born 28 August 1868 and his parents were licensees of the Vine Inn, in Buckden's High Street so did James's father-in-law's profession of maltmaker lead him into the publican's trade? An inventory made by a local brewery included "Beehives beerhouse" and leads one to suspect so. The family resided at the Vine until 1871. A Kelly's Directory of 1869 has James Cowling as the landlord but a cousin of my father's, May Minde (*née* Cowling) living in Norway, supplied this information:

"James and Mary were originally very small farmers but James was so strictly religious that he would not work on a Sunday which is why Mary started a pub, and kept the rest of the family going."



The Vine pub in Buckden, 1986

It is thought that James may have given up the public house during 1879 after his father died and moving into his house in Hardwick. In 1881 the family were living there and nine other children had been born between 1858 and 1880, whilst his mother, Jane had moved to live with her daughter in St Neots. May Minde also had some news of Jane:

“Grandma Cowling was living in Mill Street, Buckden from 1900 at least, until her death in, I think early 1907 (actually 28 March). I stayed with her for a week in the spring of 1906. I was so unhappy that I can still remember that spring, but Ernest was so kind to me. Grandma Cowling was just like her photograph, but poor dear she must have had a grim life.”

After his mother's death Ernest her youngest son continued to live in Mill Lane.

Charles Tye Cowling 1868–1938

Charles Tye Cowling was born 28 August 1868 at the Vine Inn, Buckden. One thing about my grandfather that has avoided explanation is his second name. Initially I assumed it was a surname linked to my family but I have found this is not a fact. Perhaps it was a place name as several small villages in Suffolk have Tye in their place names, one such being Charles Tye but no connection has been made.

Charles was educated in the village and started working as an Ag Lab at the age of twelve. Between 1881 and 1891, just like his father and grandfather before him, he too journeyed to London looking for employment as London expanded and agriculture faced another depression. In 1891 Charles was boarding with George Mattin a potato merchant foreman, living at 13 Buckingham Street. When he married Amy Ellen Coomber on Boxing Day a year later this was the address on his marriage certificate. My father told me he worked in the potato markets at Chalk Farm. Amy Ellen had lived with her grandmother, Alice Richardson, a dressmaker who made red coats for soldiers in the Crimean War (1853–1856) and had learned the skills of this trade and was always in demand whilst living in London.

Charles and his family continued to live in Islington and by 1899 he was a Proficient Grocer. When my father was born in 1903, Charles was a Master Greengrocer with his own shop at 213 Queens Road, Dalston. Charles and Amy had six children, Cecil George Ailwyn 1894, Alma Doris Amy 1897, Elsie Alice Mary 1899, Amy Helen 1901 and my father Charles William 1903 and Thomas. The home was becoming crowded so the family moved to Dunstable and Amy wanted a country life again. They viewed many places,



Charles Tye Cowling with his wife Amy and on his left, sister-in-law Annie. Annie was Amy's sister and married Charles' brother, John George

including a hop garden at Smarden in Kent but the sanitation shocked Amy who was concerned with the children's health. Charles tried to persuade her by offering her a Governess Carriage to take the children to school but to no avail and he lost a £200 deposit.

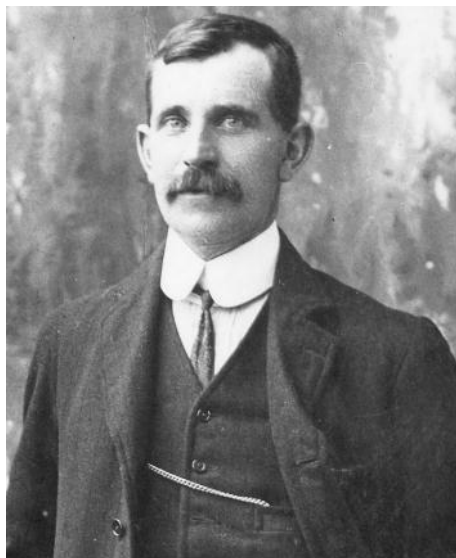
On selling the fruit shop business the new owners wanted to move in as soon as possible so the children were sent to relatives, probably Charles' brothers James and William, who were living in London. This enabled Charles and Amy to find a suitable home and they eventually settled at West Street in Dunstable. He could not afford to buy another business but had a horse and cart and was able to do some local carting. During WWI an Australian soldier, Harold Rutherford, was billeted with them who later married my aunt "Polly", Elsie Alice Mary, why Polly I have no idea For four years up to 1919 the family lived at the Dunstable Golf Club where Charles was employed as a green keeper. This period was a happy one for the family.

1919 saw the family on the move again, this time to 92 Collingdon Street, Luton where Charles became a market-stall holder selling fruit and vegetables.

During 1925 the open market moved to Luton Straw Plait Market which had been converted into a permanent, covered market with lock-up shops. The market thrived and became popular with housewives and Charles established a good reputation buying direct from the London markets where he had learned his trade and had many contacts. He continued the business until his death in 1938.

Ernest Henry Cowling 1880–1963

The last member of the Cowling family to live in Buckden was James and Mary's youngest son Ernest Henry born 1880. Eleven years later his father died leaving the widow to bring up two boys who were still living at home.



Ernest henry Cowling

Most of his working life Ernest's father had worked in agriculture and with the uncertainties of farming he became determined to see that all his sons obtained craft skills. Thus Ernest completed a seven years carpenter's apprenticeship at Page and Sons, Church Street, Buckden. The skills of the carpenter supplied many needs in a rural community so there was ample work. After progressing through all the menial tasks that make up a basic training in a trade an apprentice became a proficient joiner capable of doing anything. Each craftsman possessed

his own set of hand tools, closely guarded and prized.

When his mother Mary died Ernest continued living at Prospect House, Mill Street and early in the 20th century married Mary Lizzie Clarke. They were blessed with two daughters, Kathleen Mary and Beatrice Joan, both destined to become teachers. Ernest left Page and Sons in 1916, joining The Queen's Regiment for the duration of WW1. Later he joined the vegetable canners and jam makers, Chivers and Sons, in Huntingdon in their maintenance department becoming a foreman before retiring in 1947.

Ernest and Mary both worked hard for the Wesleyan Chapel in Buckden and were highly respected in the community. In later years they went to live with

their daughter Kathleen and husband, John Gosling in Station Road, Tempsford, Bedfordshire.

So after 171 years the name Cowling was no longer in the village of Buckden. I have been to the village and photographed many of the buildings connected with our family but after all those years there are only two Cowling graves recorded in the village, that of Ann Maria who died in 1826 and her husband John who died in 1829, and my great-grandfather James in an un-marked grave in Lucks Lane Cemetery, Buckden, Huntingdonshire. Ernest is buried in Tempsford.

*Do you remember seeing your Grandfather parading
in Tunbridge Wells wearing an Apron and Collar?*

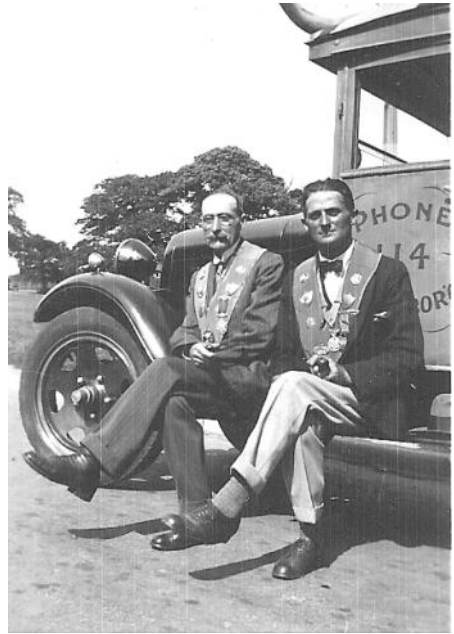
The Buffaloes and Park House, Southborough

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MY FATHER, **Alec Novis**, is nearly 96, although his body is ailing, his mind is very acute. His recall of his early life in Tunbridge Wells with his two elder brothers, **Herbert** and **Jesse Douglas** (always known as **Dixie**) remains clear and vivid.

Alec was born in the early days of the Great War, when his father **Herbert Novis** was serving in the Army Service Corps – it had not yet the appellation of “Royal” – working as a driver at the front line of action in France. His mother **Jean** (*nee* **Card**) was left at home in Holly Bank, off Crescent Road, with her 3 young boys, with the promise that as Herbert had joined up immediately, he would be one of the first discharged when the war to end all wars was finished. This promise to the millions of men was not kept, and by the time Herbert was discharged from the Army in 1920, Jean was dying of pneumonia and tuberculosis.

Afterwards, like many other men, Herbert not only joined the ex-Service men’s club in Tunbridge Wells, but also joined the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, known in short as the RAOB or Buffaloes. Two of his seven remaining brothers (two had died in infancy, and two had emigrated to Canada before the Great War) living in Tunbridge Wells, both ex-servicemen, also joined, **William Oliver Tolhurst Novis** (always known as Bill) and **Charley Novis**.



The photograph on the left is of Herbert Novis and that on the right is of Herbert and his brother William Oliver, wearing their RAOB insignia.

The brothers spent many happy years in the Buffaloes; Alec can recall the numerous parades around Mount Pleasant and Tunbridge Wells town centre, especially the annual Service parades to Commemorate the Fallen, or Victory parades, when the men wore all their badges, medals, aprons and collars. The Buffaloes would be a part of all other uniformed people, men, women and boys. Regular meetings of the Buffaloes were held in Camden Road.

At Southborough, just outside Tunbridge Wells, there was an orphanage run by the Buffaloes, the only one they had in Great Britain. The man in charge was **Mr Sealey** and his wife, as the orphanage accommodated both boys and girls. The house was called Park House, in Park Road, a large three storey house in spacious grounds for vegetables to be grown (they had a gardener) and gardens for the children to play in. Mr Sealey was the owner of a Morris Cowley car; he used to allow his friend Herbert Novis to borrow it on occasions. Alec can recall being taken in the car to Dungeness with his father and brothers, and being taken on the miniature Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway which ran at the back of the holiday chalets.

More information about the Southborough orphanage was gleaned from the RAOB website, and their Grand Primo, Terry Billingham, has kindly given

permission to reproduce below an article published in their magazine three years ago about their orphanage.

Fund raising for the building of their orphanage was commenced by the Buffaloes towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the foundation stone was laid on 3 October 1903. The building was opened the following year, on 30 May 1904, named Park House, at Southborough, Tunbridge Wells.

“In the course of the next 40 years or so, the whole orphanage question was a matter of bitterness and political dispute, and the order finally got out of the orphanage business in 1945” (taken from “Our Beginnings, the RAOB.org.uk)

And so, with that brief summary, ended 41 years of Park House. It is now a housing estate, and only lives on with the name, Park House Estate, and the memories of those who spent some happy times there.

The following article was originally published by the RAOB Grand Council in their magazine Newsround, Issue 38 October 2008 and reprinted here with kind permission of their editor

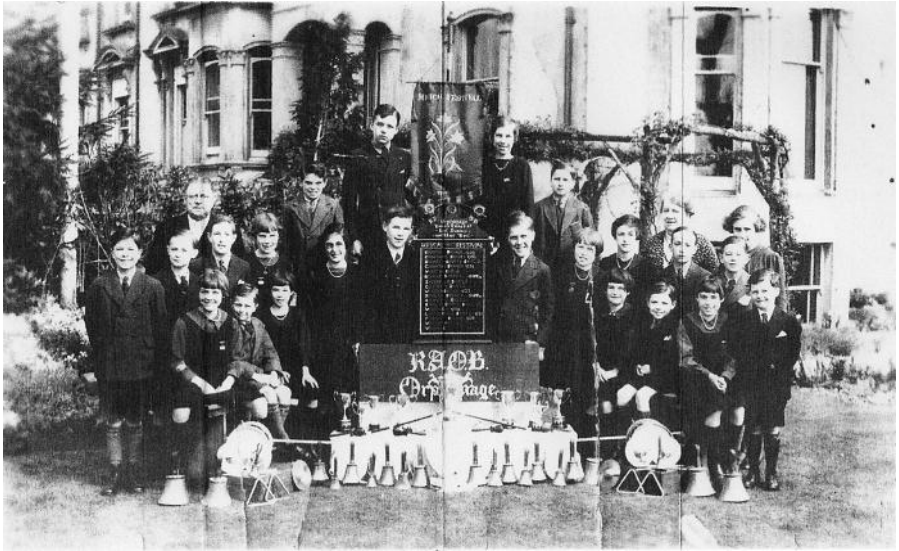
Memories of an R.A.O.B. Orphan

by Mr. John Lardner

My father, Joseph Henry Lardner, was a Portsmouth tram conductor and a member of the RAOB. He died in 1935 and as there was not a welfare state like there is today my mother working full time could not look after me properly. I was put into the RAOB Orphanage in Park House, in Park Road, Southborough, Kent.

The Orphanage was a very large three storey house with a cellar. The site consisted of the house, a very large field with a donkey, and a very large kitchen garden with a fulltime gardener. The area occupied by the Orphanage and grounds is now a very large executive housing estate, Park House Gardens.

I joined the Orphanage in late 1935 and left in February 1943. As far as I can remember the Master, Mr. Sealy, assisted by his wife, ran the Orphanage.



This photograph was taken in 1938 and followed what appears to have been a successful day at the Tunbridge Wells Music Festival

Friday night was the night the boys went into the cellar to mend any shoes requiring repair. We had lasts, knives so that we could trim the leather soles to fit, brads and glue. Old nail holes were filled with shaped pieces like matchsticks and we had a spiked wheel to run round the edge of the sole to tell us where to knock the nails in.

Friday night was also senna tea night – what a queue for the toilets on Saturday mornings. Saturday mornings the boys had to help the gardener in the garden. The boys slept on the first floor and the girls on the second floor.

We had a room full of toys donated by RAOB Lodges. We were not allowed to play with these unless we had visitors. I can remember a Meccano set. It was in a cabinet approximately 4 feet square and 2 feet high. On the edge of the field was a row of old school desks where we used to have breakfast in the summer months. Our school was behind the church on Southborough Common. We went to school two by two in a crocodile. At the bottom of Park Road was a house taken over by the army as billets for some anti-aircraft gunners; as we went by the cooks came out and gave us packets of Lyons fruit pies.

My first summer holiday was in 1936 when we all went to Bognor Regis. I did not see much of it as I went into hospital in Chichester with appendicitis. In



Another 1938 event captured on film was the Orphanage's entry in a Carnival Parade and appropriately named 'The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe'.

1937 we went to Broadstairs in Kent, and in 1938 to Westcliffe on Sea, near Southend.

Every year we went to the Tunbridge Wells Musical Festival in the Pump Rooms at the end of the Pantiles. We won or were runners up for a number of prizes, for singing and handbell ringing. We were the choir, opposite the Cenotaph, at the Armistice Day service in November 1939 in Whitehall, London.

After 1939 we had a number of evacuees billeted with us. During the day we used to watch the dog fights between the RAF and Luftwaffe over the Weald of Kent. At night time it was exciting to watch the searchlights trying to pick up the intruders.

John Lardner

I am indebted to Bro. Stan Stirman R.O.H., Curator of the R.A.O.B. G.L.E. Museum, who sent me this most interesting letter and photographs. And of course to Mr. John Lardner, who sent it to him in the first place, and who has so kindly given me permission to publish it.



The Early Life of Kathleen Mary Freeland – Part 5

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Concluding the memoirs of Mrs Verkade-Cave's grandmother who put pen to paper in the 1970s and wrote the story of her early life from leaving school, at the age of 13, until her marriage in 1925.

Kathleen name-drops quite a bit

Princes Hotel

Working in a hotel I heard quite a lot about tips in other hotels and money was always an attraction, made me keen to move on. So I applied for a job at the Princes Hotel in Hove and got it. The Hotel was a large one on the sea front and had very nice large public rooms, and many suites of rooms. I notice it is now no longer a hotel. We were always busy, but somehow it never seemed intimate, we only seemed to get friendly with the staff we worked closely with.

Celebrities

Quite a lot of celebrities stayed there; social and stage personalities. The war was still raging and many concerts and plays were put on to help the wounded. Among those I remember were **Henry Wood** (1839–1944) the great conductor of the Promenade concerts. He had a masseur attend him every morning. **Clara Butt** (1872–1936) the great contralto who was a very tall and large woman with a deep voice when speaking. **Lady Diana Manners** (1892–1986) who was very beautiful. **Seymour Hicks** (1871–1949) and his wife who seemed to me a very devoted couple. But I never saw any of them perform. I could not afford the tickets, but I'm sure they collected a great deal of money for charity.

Free breakfast

While at the Princes Hotel I learnt how to get a free breakfast. We had to write out a chit for the Stillroom to get tea, coffee, toast, butter, marmalade and boiled eggs, and another chit for the kitchen if bacon and eggs, fish, sausages were wanted. So we would call out the order wave the chit and then forget to leave it. Everyone was so busy it was not noticed, so later on we would go down and get a good breakfast for ourselves. I was never caught.

Mother is ill

While I was at Hove my mother was ill and I had to go home and look after her and my brother. My job was kept open for me, but no pay in those days. I did go back, but I was never well, goodness knows what was the matter with me. I never saw a doctor but my legs and feet were very swollen and I couldn't walk down stairs – I had to walk backwards. I felt Hove didn't suit me, maybe I was quite wrong, but I still do not like the sea. It's lovely on a bright day, but to live all year by the sea? No, give me green fields, the woods and the country lanes.

1918

It was now 1918 and the war was over. There was much excitement and everybody seemed happy and dancing in the street, but I never saw any of it. We couldn't get out, and I don't think I wanted to. I had only been at Princes for eight months, but I was not well and I wanted to work in London where I thought I would make my fortune.

The late maid

But there is one incident that I must mention which made an impression on me. One of the maids did not get back on duty in time and when this happened we always covered up for them, but this time the manageress rang and asked for her. We said she was busy and would tell her, but the bell kept on ringing and at last we had to say that she was not in. We were told that the police had called and said she had been knocked down and killed. It was very sad, but I wished I had spoken the truth.

To London

Anyway I left and went back home to Tunbridge Wells. I took a day return to London and to read on the train I bought *The Daily Telegraph* and looked at the advertisements and saw one for a chambermaid at Browns Hotel in Dover Street. I had heard quite a lot about Browns Hotel, the manageress at The Calverley had been housekeeper at Browns and its reputation was very good. In fact staff seldom left and when anyone did usually someone was ready to take over the job.

I really did not expect to get the post, but I was interested to see the place and so made my way to Dover Street and asked for the housekeeper. She saw me and we had quite a long chat, of course I mentioned the Calverley and to my astonishment she offered me the job. I was on top of the world and took the next train home without looking at the shops in London.

Browns Hotel

I had three suites of rooms consisting of sitting room, two bedrooms and bathrooms. Seven bedrooms, but only one bathroom to serve all seven which was also the only place we could do the counting of linen, draw water, drink a cup of tea and if we had any time, to read a book. Women were employed to help. They would start very early in the morning cleaning the public rooms and then help upstairs with the bedrooms cleaning bathrooms, grates, washstands and help generally. They did not wear uniform and were paid £1 a week. If we were very busy they would come back in the evening and for that they were paid eighteen pence a night. We would give them a few shillings a week something like 5 shillings, not more.

Duties

We had to clean the private sitting rooms just the grates and carpets. The sitting room waiter had to dust, one I remember used to grumble if I had used the hard broom too often and raised too much dust, and I'm afraid I did too as I disliked him.

We had to serve early morning tea and breakfast in bed when ordered, and we liked that as we could always get something to eat, and usually a good breakfast. One gentleman would ask what I would like for breakfast and the valet, who had to wait on single men. We would have eggs and bacon, fish or just what we liked. He was a very welcome visitor, but the gentleman himself would only have toast and coffee.

Pinching food

Food was not very good for the staff at any hotel at which I worked. I believe money was allowed for staff meals and if money could be made out of it the people concerned would make it. Sometimes we had food when meals were served in private sitting rooms. The floor waiter would leave what dishes had been served, and as he was clearing the table we would quickly pinch anything we could handle. Once I remember he came and asked me if I had seen anyone take some mushroom dish. I said no and then he said; 'Never mind, but the mushrooms weren't good and if I should notice anyone feeling ill we should call a doctor quick'. It was quite funny we watched each other for quite a time.

Making money from pressing

As I said we were not allowed to wait on single men, valets had to attend to them, serving early morning teas and taking them hot water for washing and

shaving and seeing to their clothes, brushing them and laying out their dinner suits. Ladies maids often came with the ladies, but if not we had to wait on them, pack and unpack their trunks, help them dress etc. The valets made quite a lot of money if gentlemen wanted suits pressed. They did it and charged and I believe they charged 5 shillings each so they would soon make a pound! That was their perquisite. They would also press ladies clothes as a favour to us and we had the money for that. I always found the valets very good and never mean. They paid the money and if gentlemen left tips for the maids they got it. People in those days had large trunks and carried a lot of clothes. By the way valets only had £1 a week wages, but they all lived very well, sending their children to good schools, and one I know was a freemason.

The head waiter had a farm in the country, and the head porter on Dover Street side had a fleet of cars and when a car was called he ordered his own. The head porter on Albemarle Street was a very superior person and kept himself aloof. He was a very handsome man, not friendly but was liked. Porters and page boys wore a brown uniform with white shirts and always looked nice and clean, and the toilet soap used was 'brown Windsor'.

Automatic cleaning system

It was all very hard work, still no vacuum cleaners, but we did have carpet sweepers to take up the surface dirt. Whilst I was at Browns a cleaning system was installed and the dirt was sucked through pipes into a room somewhere in the basement, but I did not see where. The house porters had to operate this and also clean the windows and tops of wardrobes, but it was hard work trying to get them to do the cleaning, one had to almost beg them as a great favour.

Late night duty

We were on duty each day until 10 o'clock pm and every fourth until 12 o'clock to serve any late calls that visitors might make. We had one evening off a week, and every other Sunday afternoon and evening.

The Commissionaire

When the porters went off duty at night a **Commissionaire Sargent** took over. He was quite a character and a law to himself and no-one crossed him. He was old and had been many years at Browns. He loved his cat which followed him everywhere. The cat was never seen in the day, but when Sargent was due it would walk down Dover Street to meet him and together

they walked back, the cat with his tail held high. The doors were locked at night and visitors had to ring for admittance. Sergeant sometimes had to walk from one side of the hotel to the other and he would grumble and swear all the way, but he was very courteous to the visitors, of course they heard him swearing but it amused them, but anyone else would have instant dismissal.

Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was a regular visitor and he loved old Sergeant*, he would have him in his sitting room and chat a long time. I'm sure they both enjoyed each other's company. Sergeant* had been in the Irish Guards and I've often wondered if Kipling had Sergeant's* cat in mind when he wrote about the 'cat who walked alone'. **Rudyard Kipling** always had the same suite and when the rooms were redecorated he chose the colour scheme and even his choice of carpet. I was told he had special terms and no doubt he did after all he was a good advertisement for the hotel. Stanley Baldwin was his cousin and often called to see him, usually for breakfast. I had several books of Kipling's and have always been sorry I never asked him to autograph them. I'm sure he would have done so. His only son lost his life in the war and that was a great sorrow for him.

Royalty

King George of Greece (1880–1947) stayed at Browns when he was exiled†, as did the Belgian princes‡ with their tutor. No fuss was made of them and they just had single bedrooms and used the public bathroom.

Earl Home

The **Earl and Countess of Home** often stayed with their family and Sir Alec Douglas Home must have been with them, as I know the sons were with them. They were a charming family and we all liked them, particularly the Countess. I don't think it was anything to do with tips. Tips are nice but I don't think they make you like people.

I'm not politically minded but I would vote for Sir Alec Douglas anytime, he I'm sure is good and honest. People don't change if they are good, they are good all through.

* As spelled in MS. Could be his name or just the author's spelling of the rank Sergeant, as commissionaires generally wore three stripes.

† For nine years from 1924

‡ Prince Leopold (1901-1983) & Prince Charles (1903-1983)

Lord Northcliffe

Lord Northcliffe (1865-1922) was a visitor, who called to see a Lady, I don't remember him staying, but I know the lady had a son with her and his tutor. The boy had lost an eye in a shooting accident I understood. Lord Northcliff was very fond of him and I heard him once call out 'look after his little lordship'.

American heiress

Another Lady who stayed with her son was a member of the family of the American millionaire, Morgan. They had quite a long stay and paid me 10 shillings a week. This was very good money then. She had no maid and I did quite a lot for her, but she was particularly kind to me and once gave me a whole trunk of clothes. They were lovely and what I couldn't wear I found someone who could. Some I wore for years and they always looked good.

Argentinean family

We also had visitors who were not so nice. Once a family from Argentina and they were pro German and anti-British. While staying at Browns they let the maid go to Germany for a holiday so I had more work to do for them. They stayed a month and just a day or so before leaving made quite a lot of complaints about me. This really upset me, but the manager said not to worry and said, 'you know what it is they don't want to pay for your attention', and I'm sure that was the reason.

Complaints

People who complained were not encouraged and were told the staff had been there many years and were reliable. But of course we were told about it. The same family returned to Browns and asked for the same suite, which did not please me, but I served them as well as I could. I found it best, after all you had your job to do, whether they tipped or no, and I hope it made them feel mean.

The London Season

In those days there was what was called the London Season which began the first week in May at the end of Lent and ended on the fourth of July. Young Ladies would be presented at Court, and we would be very busy. Large sheets would be spread over the carpets and the young ladies would stay in their rooms all day. The hairdresser would do their hair and as he was in

great demand they would just wait their turn. We would be running round waiting on them, getting meals and sometimes if we had time a game of cards.

They looked very beautiful, lovely dresses and jewels, feathers in their hair arranged like the Prince of Wales feathers. It must have cost a great deal of money. We would see them set off for Buckingham Palace. The carriages would line up in the Mall and took quite a long time to enter the Palace. Crowds would promenade the Mall looking at the ladies and enjoy the evening I expect.

Then there were parties and balls for the debutantes and we would listen and enjoy it too. They knew the staff very well, and would be very friendly and tell us confidences; we loved it all.

The Season ended with the Eton and Harrow match on 4 July. The Hotel was always full for that, mostly parents and sisters of the boys. The boys often had a skirmish in the corridors and bash each other's hats; the Eton toppers and the Harrow straw hats. It amused us but we noticed the boys were very well behaved when the girls were with them.

The Oxford Boat crew stayed one year at Browns. I believe the Cambridge crew stayed at Landsdown house, the home as it was then of Gordon Selfridge.

Street musicians

I remember a hurdy gurdy man playing the organ up and down Albemarle Street. I expect he collected quite a lot of money. There used to be quite a lot of street musicians. They would perform while guests were dressing for dinner and money would be thrown out to them. Some performers were really very good. One woman had a lovely voice and always wore a mask. It would be quite impossible for people to sing on the streets today, wouldn't it.

Brief scandal

Browns was a select and quiet hotel and there was never any scandals; a hotel where a man took his wife, but not his mistress. But I do remember a lady who used to visit weekends, she always had a suite and a gentleman used to visit her. She was a beautiful woman, tall and stately. Rumour had it that she worked at Whiteleys. Certainly she only came on Saturdays till Monday mornings and had all her meals in her sitting room. Her Gentleman friend sometimes left very early in the morning, conspicuously in evening dress. We never spoke about it, were tipped well and given lovely boxes of chocolates.

Married

I was now anxious to have a home of my own, so I married and my life in Private Houses and Hotels came to an end.

* * * *

History and some amusing facts

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s:

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it.. Thus the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!"

Houses had thatched roofs-thick straw-piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. So, "It's raining cats and dogs."

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt with only the wealthy having something other than bare earth. Hence the saying, "Dirt poor." The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way and the threshold came into being.

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot.

They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme: 'Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old'. Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could, "bring home the bacon". They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and chew the fat.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the upper crust.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days – dead drunk?. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a wake.

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house, and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift.) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be saved by the bell or was considered a dead ringer.

They used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot and then once a day it was taken and sold to the tannery. If you had to do this to survive you were "Piss Poor".

But worse than that were the really poor folk who couldn't even afford to buy a pot. They "didn't have a pot to piss in" and were the lowest of the low.

And that's the truth....Now, whoever said History was boring!!!