PLATT

and its heritage

FOREWORD

As a tribute to the late Mr and Mrs O. Hailstone who were responsible for the publication "PLATT AND ITS HERITAGE", we reprint the original Foreword, slightly abridged.

"We, of St Mary's Platt and District Society, decided in 1974 that we should endeavour to play our part in the celebration of European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975. We thought that an excellent way of local participation would be to bring to fruition a project which was envisaged after the very successful Village Exhibition of 1969, planned and staged by the Platt Women's Institute. The enthusiasm engendered by that exhibition set a number of people thinking that a documented history of the village would prove of considerable value and interest.

Although there was a grouping of 15th and 16th century houses at Pigeon's Green and in Long Mill Lane, St Mary's Platt did not exist as a village community until the church was built in 1843, and a new parish was formed out of part of the parish of Wrotham. We hope that this booklet will stimulate local pride and, with it, a desire to preserve what still survives as a visual reminder of the beauty of the English landscape and its domestic architecture.

My wife, in her work of compiling the booklet, wishes to acknowledge the help she received from the records of the initial work carried out by Platt W.I., the preliminary research work of Mrs Jenny Geliot, and the co-operation of Miss Melling and the Kent Archives Office at Maidstone. We also have to thank Mr Kenneth Browne R.I.B.A. for the cover illustration and others who helped in copying maps and taking photographs."

O. Hailstone (Chairman)
Crouch — June 1975

When all the copies of the booklet had been sold, it was decided by the then Chairman, Mr Barry Boulton, to invite donations towards the cost of updating and reprinting.

Mr Kenneth Whitehorn assisted by Miss Betty Churchyard volunteered to do the necessary revisions, and the result is now complete.

Thank you, Barry, Kenneth and Betty for your work, and also those who made financial contributions.

We are also indebted to Mrs Jayne Semple and Mr and Mrs R. Cameron for their help with some of the revisions.

Sheila Harley (Chairman)
August 1991

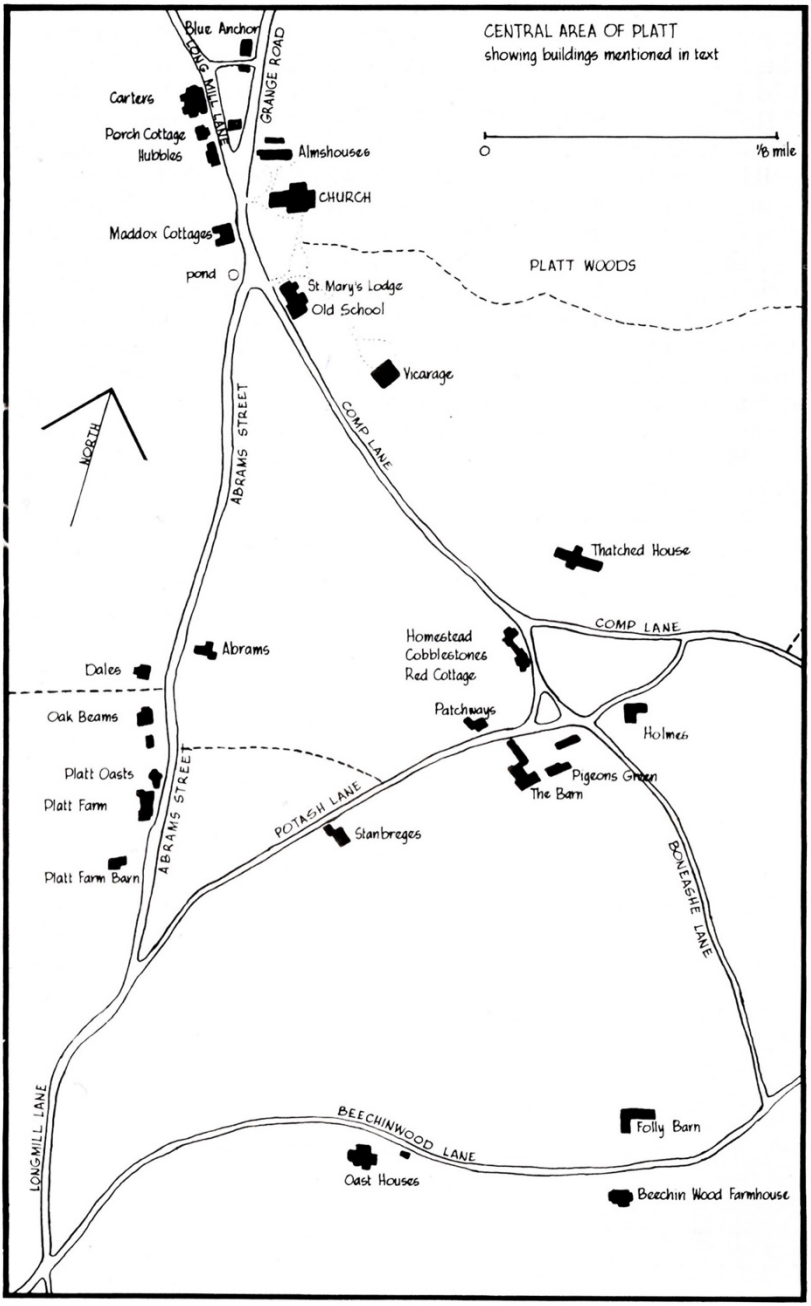
PLATT

The village of St Mary's Platt is dominated by its church tower. Whether you approach it from the north coming over the escarpment of the chalk downs, or from the west along the sandstone ridge from Seal Chart, or from the south coming down the hill from Hurst Woods, the visual focus is the grey church tower standing sentinel over the roofs of the village. Only on the east does the steep hanger of Platt Woods rise up behind the church, giving it a changing back- ground that varies with the seasons.

The church is not ancient; it was built in 1843 when the parish of St Mary's Platt was formed out of six hamlets, Platt, Crouch, Great Comp, Little Comp, Wrotham Heath and Nepikar, formerly all part of the parish of Wrotham. No record could be traced of the decisions which led to the choice of site and building of the church, though the gift of land by the Lambarde family probably dictated the former. The resolve to form a new parish was certainly taken when the redoubtable Reverend George Moore was rector of Wrotham, and the first vicar of Platt, the Reverend John Mickleburgh, had served as curate under him. Mr Mickleburgh was for three years curate in charge of St Mary's until it was officially declared a parish church in 1846.

Built at the cost of £3,200, the church is well-sited, following the Victorian ideal of being above but not aloof from the village. The architect was John Whichcord who, while still in the office of D.A. Alexander, had worked on the London Docks, and later had taken charge of the design and building of Maidstone Gaol. After this he moved to Maidstone, became surveyor to the County of Kent, and worked for the Medway Navigation Company designing locks and bridges. He was the architect of the Corn Exchange and the Fire Office in Maidstone and of St Peter's Church at Tovil.

St Mary's is larger than it looks, the bulk of the church being hidden behind the fine tower. It is built of Kentish ragstone, from local quarries; this is a hard stone, difficult to cut and dress, but not vulnerable to the weather. Pevsner's Buildings of England, West Kent volume, queries Whichcord's use of lancet windows in a tower of fourteenth century style, but from the village street, looking up the steep steps to the main entrance, these tall narrow windows seem


CENTRAL AREA OF PLATT
showing buildings mentioned in text
1/8 mile
Blue Anchor
LONG MILL LANE
GRANGE ROAD
Carters
Porch Cottage
Hubbles
Almshouses
CHURCH
Maddox Cottages
pond
PLATT WOODS
St Mary's Lodge
Old School
Vicarage
NORTH
ABRAMS STREET
COMP LANE
Thatched House
COMP LANE
Homestead
Cobblestones
Red Cottage
Abrams
Dales
Patchways
Holmes
Oak Beams
Platt Oasts
Platt Farm
Pigeons Green
The Barn
ABRAMS STREET
POTASH LANE
Stanbreges
Platt Farm Barn
BONFASHE LANE
LONGMILL LANE
BEECHINWOOD LANE
Folly Barn
Oast Houses
Beechin Wood Farmhouse

effective and practical. Cruciform in shape, the church is ninety feet long, the nave without aisles thirty feet wide. One can, alas, only concur with Pevsner's opinion of the timbered roof; here are Victorian exuberance and romanticism gone disastrously astray. The stained-glass windows on the south side are in memory of John Terry who built The Grange.

There is a village legend that the masons who worked on the church lived in the old cottages on Platt Common. Certainly, during the decade 1840-1850 many well-constructed ragstone buildings were erected in the parish, indicating a local source of skilled and inexpensive labour.

In 1841 the four Almshouses on the north side of the church were opened. Although built with money from the Betenson Trust, established by Lady Helen Betenson, they are not a copy of the original Almshouses erected in Wrotham in 1808 by the same Trust. It is likely that they were by Whichcord, who would have already been working on the church. Romantic cottage orne in style, like the church they grace their site.

The school, opened in 1846, was also to Whichcord's design. It consisted of the building now known as St Mary's Lodge, though smaller than it is today and without the porch entrance on to the vicarage drive. Two small rooms downstairs, and two above reached by a ladder, were the Master's lodging, and there was one large schoolroom. The entrance to the school was in Comp Lane. The school was enlarged in 1882 when education became compulsory. The original cost of £640 was met by a grant from the National (Church of England) Society and subscriptions from parishioners and local well-wishers. It is interesting to note that the list opens with a gift of £150 from the children of the late Reverend G. Moore. The first master was Mr Crittle who had taught at Ightham. He was appointed at 10/- per week plus the penny a week each child was expected to contribute. Shortly after the school opened he married, and his wife became the schoolmistress. The custom of appointing a man and wife to take charge continued until the new school was built in 1912. The Crittles were followed by Mr and Mrs Perkins, and they by Mr and Mrs Dover. In 1912 at the insistence of the inspectors of the new Board of Education the present school was built on Platt Common at a cost of £1,300. The old school was sold for £600 to help defray the cost. It was bought by a Mr Lewis, who lived at Millwood at Wrotham Heath. He

rented it back to the church until some six years later it was redeemed and was used for various parish activities until the 1970s. It was finally sold in 1988 and converted into two private houses. The original master's house had been privately occupied since 1956.

The original vicarage (now Glebe House) stands in the glebe beside the church. There is no record of Whichcord designing the house, a plain Victorian building probably erected by Tomlyn (the builder of the school) from a ready-made plan adjusted to the Mickleburghs' taste. Because unfortunately all early parish records have been lost, no details of the decisions taken, or the planning or costing of the building exist. John Mickleburgh's diaries, which gave much detail about the school, have little to say on the vicarage, possibly owing to his increasing ill-health, for sadly he died before the house was ready. Later in the century it was enlarged by the Reverend F.T. Gregory, vicar from 1855 to 1898, who also built a house (now Ruffway) at the top of Platt Common for his curate. It is an interesting footnote to the novels Trollope was then writing that this country clergyman should need to provide himself with a curate and a vicarage of manorial proportions to minister to a parish of under 1,000 souls. In the 1950s the house was reduced to its original size, and in 1980 a new vicarage was built in the grounds.

The pair of semi-detached villas which William Jonathan Carter had built in 1845, and the front of Porch Cottage all have the same fine masonry as the school. The stones are evenly cut and laid on mortar reinforced with small flints, a process known as galleting. The houses have brick dressings and quoins, which gives them a neat air like two Victorian spinsters. Porch Cottage is interesting in that the stone front and gabled porch were added to a very much older building.

The present public house, The Blue Anchor, was built about 1860, of ragstone with brick dressing, the stone of a rough cut and random laid. The original Blue Anchor was part of Church Cottages and a bricked-up window on to Grange Road shows where beer was handed out when called for. In 1771 the list of innholders for Wrotham gives Edward Smith as landlord. In 1774 on 7th March a "William Barnes of the Anchor at Platt" was buried in Wrotham.

The row of cottages opposite the church steps was built in the late eighteenth century by Robert Hubble, a farmer of Dales. They incorporate an older cottage that was on the site. In 1822 they were

listed as two cottages and a grocer's shop, and this remained the village store. Platt acquired its own Post Office in 1903 with Mr Pearson registered as sub-postmaster; in 1912 both shop and post office were moved to the premises with a street frontage which remained in use until 1989, when the shop and post office finally closed.

So, between 1840 and 1850 Platt village developed its centre with the church, the school, the almshouses, the public house, the vicar- age, and the shop; they were all grouped round the cross roads where the roads entering and leaving the village meet. During the four previous centuries, the hamlet had been part of the parish of Wrotham. It centred round the triangle formed by Potash Lane, that part of Long Mill Lane which was then called Abrams Street, and Comp Lane. At its apex the bridle road to Wrotham church and town met the road to Borough Green and Sevenoaks. This area was called generally Pigeons Green. The Pigeons Green we know today was Plott Green. Comp Lane led to Great Comp and Little Comp and from there to Offham.

15th CENTURY

"A baron of Wales, a knight of Cales,
And a laird of the North Countrie:
A yeoman of Kent with his yearly rent Could buy them out, all three."

There was good reason for the old rhyme. By the fifteenth century a more centralised government had led to a great increase in the population of London, and Kent was the earliest supplier of the London food markets. Platt lies on the Greensand ridge. Then, as now, the top of the hill was a great tract of woodland, the soil being too shallow and infertile for it to be worth clearing, but on the slopes were small farms, of about ten acres on which corn was grown and cattle were reared. Hops were introduced into England during the reign of Henry VIII and hop growing was widespread by 1577. The cost of dressing the garden with poles, and of picking and drying, meant a large capital outlay (for those days). The fields were mostly enclosed. The Kentish law of inheritance, gavelkind, which divided a man's property amongst all his sons, rather than accept the eldest as heir, led to small separate enclosures, and the pattern of farming on the ridge, of pasture and tillage, encouraged it. Enclosed fields kept the cattle inside on the grass and away from the corn. The farmers of Platt sent their surplus produce to Wrotham market, where it was bought by London merchants and shipped from the ports of Gravesend or New Hythe to the City markets. With their profits they built themselves sturdy timber-framed hall-houses.

Platt Farm, dating from 1442, still has a medieval crown post in its roof, as have Dales and The Red Cottage, both built earlier. Another hall-house, quite as old as these, stood on the south side of Plott Green. It was called Heathes and belonged to the Baker family when it was first built. Unfortunately, all that was left of it was destroyed by a bomb in the Second World War. The present house, Pigeons Green, is a modern replica. At both Dales and The Red Cottage, the old entries to buttery and pantry can still be seen. The only fireplace in all these houses would have been in the centre of the hall, with the smoke finding its way out of louvres in the roof.

"Full sooty was hir bour, and eek hir halls" (Nun's Priest's Tale)

16th CENTURY

From about 1550 onwards, chimney stacks were built into these houses and with the growing desire for privacy, another floor was put into the hall with a staircase rising up to it. These new floors are easily distinguished from the earlier. The joists are set on edge instead of flat. They are more widely spaced and less bulky. This can be seen most effectively at Dales where the master carpenter has carefully numbered his beams, I, II, III, IIII, V, VI is missing, cut away, but VII is still there. Oakbeams is a sixteenth century timber- framed house which early in its life was divided into cottages appurtenant to Dales. The thatched weatherboard barn dates from the eighteenth century. Also, in Abrams Street was Abrams Cottage (Abram meant a wanderer or gypsy), now Rose Cottage, which has an interesting bread oven.

Patchways hides behind its eighteenth century front a much older timber-framed house which in 1568 was known as Hunts and was farmed by Richard Larkyn. It had two fields, Bacherons and Nether Bacherons, which are now part of Paddock Orchard. Holmes has sixteenth century timber-framing under its ragstone and tile hung walls. For a time, this house was called Yew Tree Cottage, but it has now reverted to its original name. By 1550 The Red Cottage had been turned into five small dwellings. It is thought that one of these may have been a weaver's cottage. In the middle of the century there was an influx of Flemish refugees into Kent escaping from the religious persecutions in the Netherlands. One of these might possibly have bought the old hall-house, installed his loom and divided it into cottages for his family and skilled workers. Just below the Red Cottage, the Homestead is another timber-framed house of this period.

April 1st, 1568 Wrotham Manor Rental (Excerpt)

"Nicholas Baker als Heath, holds in the borough of Wyngfield a messuage called Heaths, two barns and other buildings. A garden, orchard and land adjoining in all by estimation four and a half acres lying at Platt to the common there called Platt green to the north. To a lane called Boneashe Lane to the Easte, to the lands of Thomas Haslyn to the south and to the lands of the same Thomas and a little lane

leading to a messuage of the said Thomas to the west. And he holds a messuage, barn and orchard called Stanbredges containing by estimation one acre lying at Platt aforesaid.

And he holds a croft of land called Boneashe field containing by estimation five acres lying to Boneasche Lane aforesaid to the west and to the said Boneashe Lane and the highway between Oldcastle cross and Dales and the lands of Robert Stone to the east, and a little lane called Gooles Lane to the west, and a common called the Nappies and the highway to Horsnayles Crouch to the south. Which premises lately belonged to Thomas Baker at Heath (senior) afterwards William Baker, then Thomas Baker (junior) deceased."

Later in 1619 when Nicholas's grandson "Francis at Heath als Baker" was selling the house to Nicholas Miller the sale included " a thatched barn standing near a piece of land called Standbridge garden, as much of the said Standbridge garden as has been enclosed with the barn" which indicates that a building was in existence where the dwelling now called "The Barn" in Potash Lane is situated, but the attractive weatherboarding and hipped roof are eighteenth century embellishments.

Over the years all these early houses have been altered, enlarged, or divided up. Walls of ragstone or brick were built around the original timber-framing up to first floor level, in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century. In Holmes and The Red Cottage the upper floor was tile hung, while at Dales there has been brick infilling between the framing. In the nineteenth century they were nearly all divided up into labourers' cottages. The three close together at Pigeons Green — The Red Cottage, Cobblestones and the Homestead — were a row of seven cottages in 1930. Later they became the desirable dwellings we see today, cherished as parts of our heritage. But, still maintaining and supporting the structure, are the oak timbers that were young trees when the English archers fought and won the battle of Crecy.

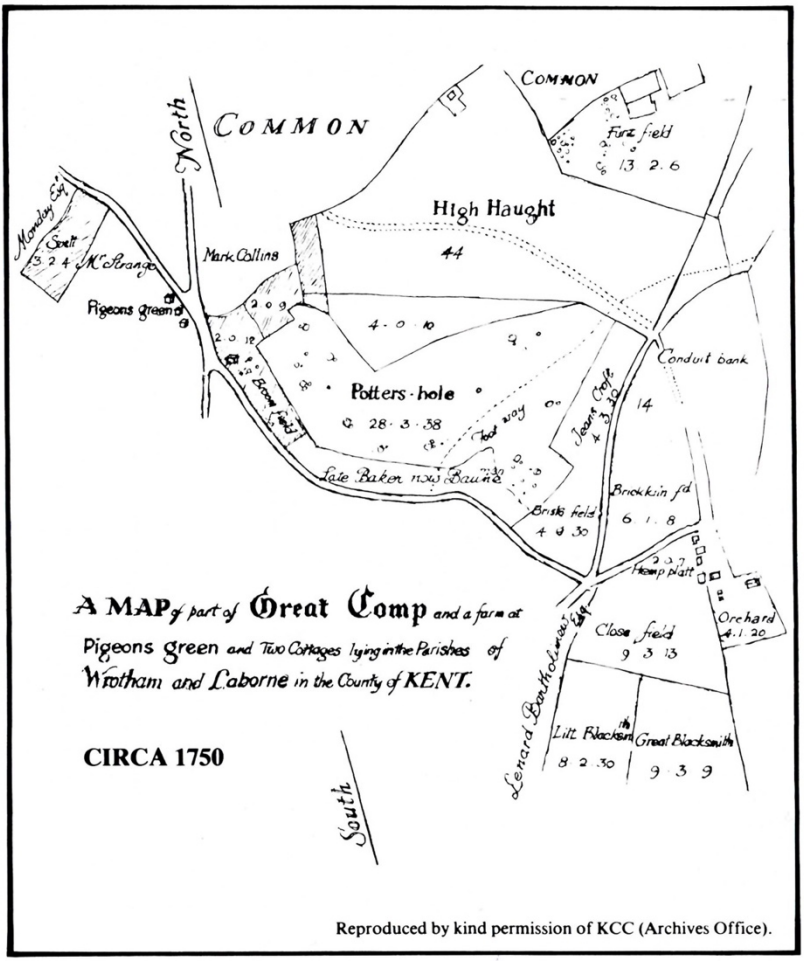
17th CENTURY - THE WROTHAM POTTERS

Pottery making had been a cottage industry in the district from medieval times. The old names of local fields — Potters Mead, Potters Bank, Potters Hole, Slipfield — testify to the presence of suitable clay. At the back of Platt Farm is the remains of an old kiln and bucketfuls of shards have been dug up in the grounds of the house. The Wrotham potworks, attached to the brickworks and situated south-west of Wrotham town, flourished between 1612 and 1721. The potters produced pieces, mainly tygs and jugs, in red clay under a coating of lead glaze, employing a primitive but imaginative use of white slip in the form of moulded relief work. These pieces have now become collectors' items, for this was the first decorated pottery of its kind made in England. The names of the potters, identified by Mr A.J. Kiddell in his book "Wrotham Slipware" were John Livermore, Nicholas Hubble (senior), Nicholas Hubble (junior) known as "le potter", George Richardson, Henry Ifield, John Eagleston and John Greene. All, with the exception of J. Livermore who lived in Ightham, are known to have lived in "Wynfields Boro " from the hearth tax record of 1663-1664, and to have been members of large and inter related families. The potters' friend, patron, financier and possible fellow potter was the owner of the brickyard, George Baker. Eventually he took over the pot-works, probably because it owed him money. When he died in 1696 the value of his property was £439.10s. 0d. His son George Baker II did much to increase the family status. His will dated 4th February 1708 describes him as a gentleman of Platt. He left lands in Seal and Kemsing, as well as the brickyard, and he owned property in London. His children George, Phillip, William and Anne were all under age at his death. George Baker III died in 1734. His will is quite short and clearly written. Except for a few small legacies to his sister and nephews, he left all his property to his young wife Penelope.

So, in the court-baron of 1739 we find Penelope, now married to John Beauman, from a Wrotham farming family, disposing of and consolidating her property.

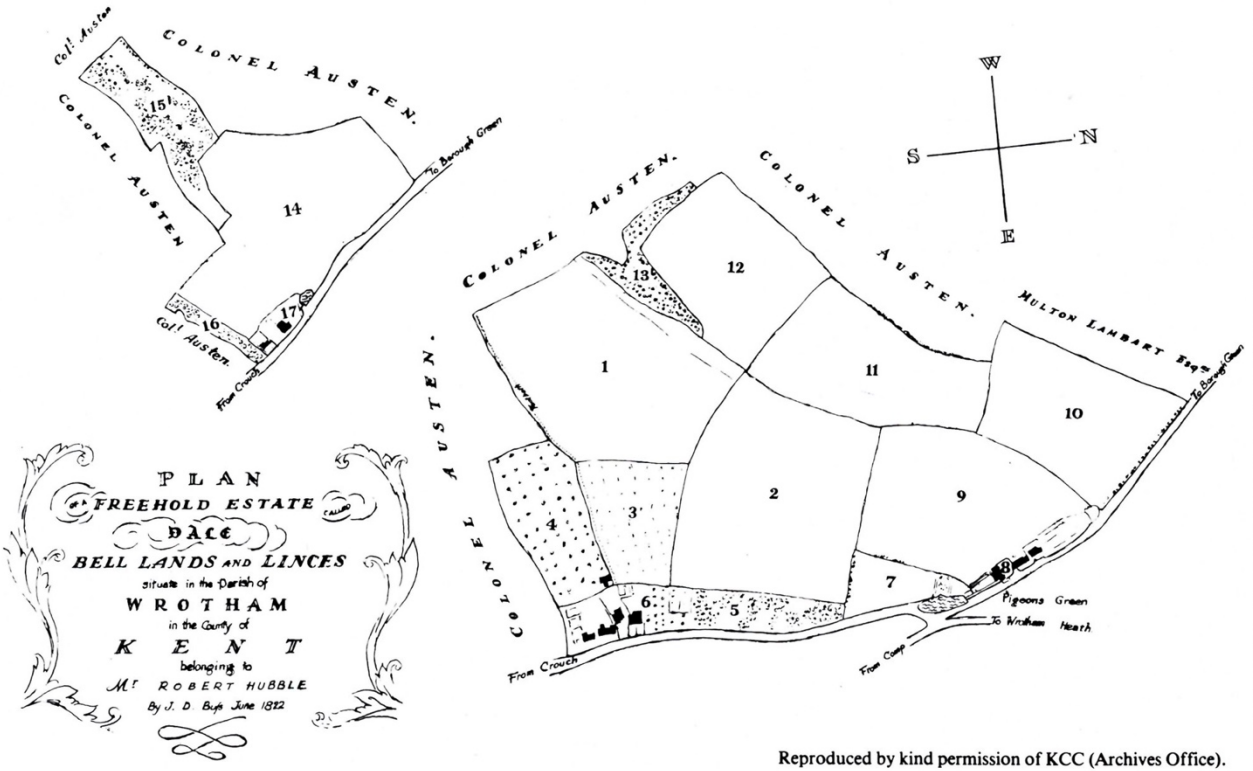
> "She hath alienated (i.e. sold) Brookswood consisting about twenty-two acres and little faith being about one acre and Great faith about three acres and Mappesfield about two acres, other part thereof lying near Crouch to William Carr, being now in his own occupation, and she hath alienated Bell lands in the occupation of William Hubble containing about twenty acres to Robert Strange and she hath alienated other parts thereof called parklands in the occupation of John Kidley containing about twelve acres to Thomas Scoones, and also a tenement late Ifields to Robert Franks being in his own occupation and that John Beauman in the right of the said Penelope, he having inter- married with her is entitled to the remainder, consisting of a tenement and land called plat farm being about thirty-six acres, and a tenement and land called Eaglestons land and Ifields land consisting of about six acres and of a piece of land containing about half an acre lying at Crouch behind a house there called The Black Boy."

Eighteenth century Platt now began to take shape. John and Penelope Beauman were farming at Platt farm. They had a sizeable acreage, a good stone barn beside their farm and the first hop kiln seen in the village, a round stone-built kiln and a small hop-store beside it. The building was charming as well as useful, the store having ornamental pargeted plaster work. Down the street their neighbor Robert Hubble was farming at Dales. He had ten acres of land which ran east to west across to Crouch Lane. In 1734 the Hubbles bought from Anne Miller (of Crouch) a house called Lintseys Bottom. It had eight acres of ground and was let to Thomas Hawley. Lintseys or Linces as it was variously spelt, stayed in the Hubbles' possession until the farm was sold some time after 1822. By 1840 it had become two farm cottages and assumed the name by which it is known today, Sotts Hole. Dales had two cottages and a barn belonging to it lying between it and Platt farm. At the bottom of the street they had been renting from Bakers, and later from Robert Strange, a strip of land running north along the road to Borough Green called Bell lands. At



Reproduced by kind permission of KCC (Archives Office).

the south end of Bell lands was the village pond, beside it was a barn, farther up was a cottage and then a house. It is believed that this house is "a tenement at Pigeons Green near Platt, known as The Bell, in the occupation of Widow Broad, belonging to Anne Ifield". In 1741 Robert Strange was given the right to enclose "ten rods of waste, called Pigeons Green adjoining the Bell Inn there". Later in 1776 the Hubbles bought the Bell lands and erected alongside the road two cottages and a shop incorporating the old cottage. It seems possible that the modest Victorian front of Porch Cottage masks the house that belonged to



Reproduced by kind permission of KCC (Archives Office).

DALE

1 Great and Little Barnfield.
2 The Seven Acre.
3 The Hop Garden.
4 Orchard.
5 Shaw.
6 Dale Farm House, yard cottages, gardens, orchards and building.

BELL LAND

7 Pond field.
8 Farmyard, grocer's shop, cottages, buildings, gardens and ponds.
9 Bell field.
10 Great Popes.
11 Little Popes.
12 Hurst field.
13 Shaw.

LINCES

14 Hop garden.
15 Shaw.
16 Shaw.
17 Cottage gardens, buildings.

Anne Ifield and was let to Widow Broad. Across the way the Lambardes had a small farm which a century later, they gave to the parish for the erection of a church and to provide a glebe. They also had one field curiously named "Suett" on the north side of Bell lands. Their farm had no homestead, only two cottages, and they farmed it themselves from Great Comp to which it was connected by a footpath through the woods. Beside the Lambardes' farm was a small holding consisting of "a tenement and barn and four acres of land". It was called Dales Green farm, and in 1741 Mark Collins had just inherited it from his mother, Mary Collins. Later he sold it to Richard Rich and eventually the Lambardes added it to their land. It is now St Mary's Close, and all trace of "the tenement and barn" have disappeared, but it explains why in 1840 this area was called Dales Green. Along Comp Lane was land belonging to the Beaumans, possibly the six acres of "Eaglestons land and Ifields land". Interesting to us is the footpath clearly marked across their fields leading across Potters Hole and up to Windmill Lane. It is still there and in regular use today, nearly two and a half centuries later.

In 1764 Penelope and John Beauman sold "Eaglestons land and Ifields land and other lands" to Thomas Harris Esq., and in 1769 they sold Platt farm to Tobias Hammond. They were now getting on in years and there is no further trace of them. There is no record of the death of either in Wrotham parish registers, nor has any will found its way into the archives. The Hubbles continued to farm at Dales throughout the century. George Hubble died in 1764 and was succeeded by Robert. When Robert died in 1776 his son young Robert was under age and it was his guardian William Dean of Crouch who actually negotiated the buying of Bell lands for the Hubbles. In 1822 Robert Hubble had a map made of his farm. Dales land had now doubled in size, to twenty acres; Bell lands covered twenty acres and Linces eight acres. Soon after this the farm passed out of the possession of the Hubble family. In the 1780s the register of Wrotham Manor Rentals comes to an end. Probably it ceased to be worth while collecting the small amounts paid, in lieu of feudal duties, that had been agreed on three hundred years before. But for the next sixty years, until the Tithe Map of 1840, there is no record (apart from Robert Hubble's map) of the families who lived, farmed, bought and sold land, and died in Platt.

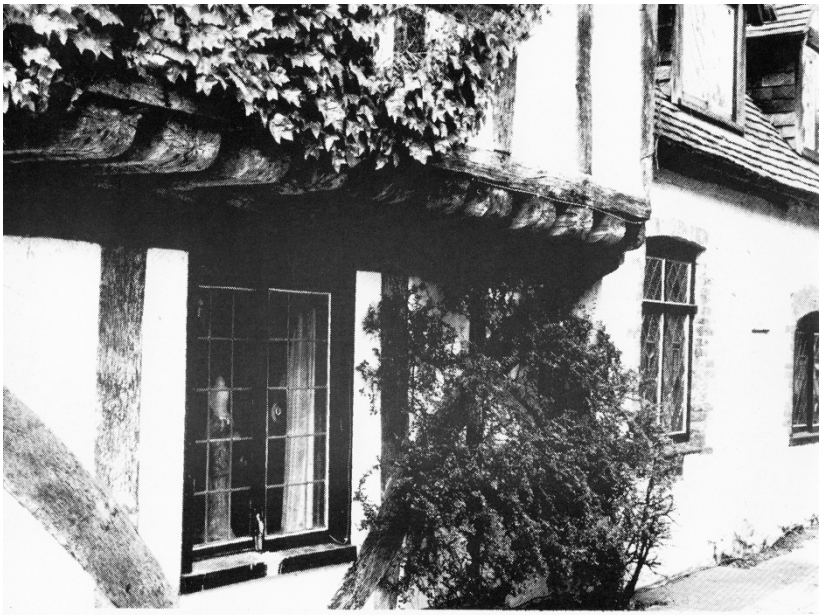
19th CENTURY

In 1830 there was a widespread movement of revolt in south-east England caused by bad economic conditions generally and great discontent against the payment of heavy tithes. There was a riot at Wrotham where five hundred labourers surrounded the Reverend George Moore in his rectory crying "bread or blood" and demanding that he halve his tithes, as it was impossible for the farmers to pay them. He defied them saying he'd rather be hanged in the nearest tree than accede to such violent proceedings. Luckily the rioters dispersed without bloodshed, but there was a reform of the tithe awards and each parish had a map made to define them. The awards list the landowners and the tenants who rent the farms: they do not give the names of cottages or individual householders.

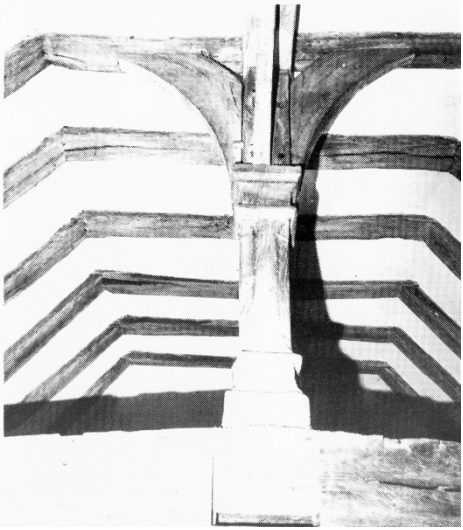
In 1840 Platt Farm and the land around it was owned by Colonel Thomas Austen. It was rented by Benjamin Watson, whose name was perpetuated in a small field in front of the farm called "Little Benjamins". He farmed mainly up at Crouch. Early in the 1850s Benjamin died but his wife Eliza Watson continued farming on her own for another ten years. After the Watsons there is no listed tenant for the farm until the early 1900s when two brothers, Roland and Norman King-Smith, were named in Kelly's Directory as farmers of Platt Farm; they were still there in 1914. Dales belonged to Thomas Fairbairn, and it was let to William Carter. All trace of Bell lands as a separate entity had now disappeared, there was one large field called Dalesfield, but William Carter was farming pretty much the same area as the Hubbles had, and he must have had several very good years, for in 1841 he built himself a fine big house at Crouch.

The Vicarage (now Glebe House)

The Almshouses

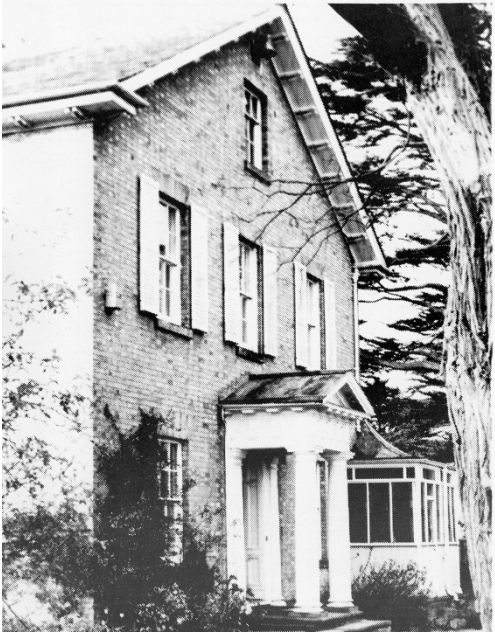


Platt Farm. Detail of jettied overhang and bracket pieces



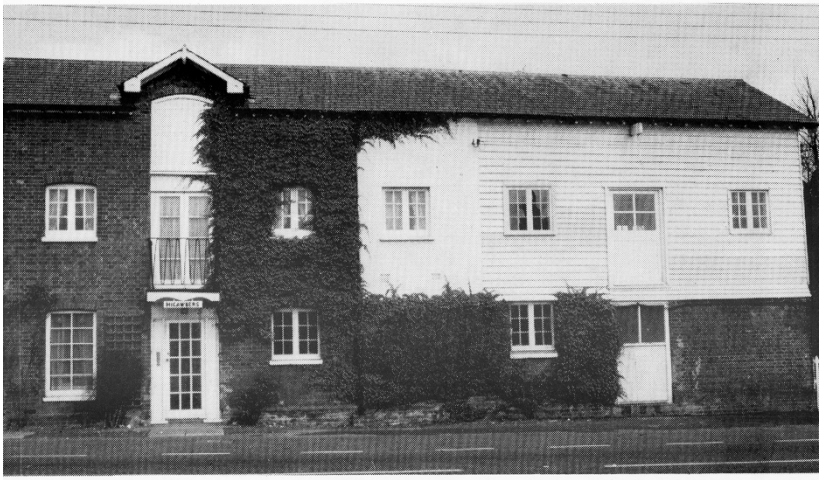
Platt Farm. Detail of King Post

Nepicar House



Winfield House

Foxbury.



Micawbers. (Grain store in 1850.)

CROUCH

In his History of Kent (second edition) published in 1798 Edward Hasted gives Crouch as part of the Manor of "Wingfield" which had belonged since the time of James I to Nicholas Miller Esq., who lived in the mansion of Horsenayles Crouch. Horsnayles is a medieval word for tadpoles, but this name had been dropped by the eighteenth century in favour of Crouch House. As far as we know there never was a Manor House of Wingfield and in Hasted's time the manor court had ceased to be held. Nicholas's eldest son, Nicholas II, resided at Oxenhoath in West Peckham, a house "he greatly augmented and beautified" and Crouch House passed to his second son, Nicholas III, the eldest son Humphrey inheriting Oxenhoath. Between them the Miller family owned all of Hurst Woods and land stretching down into Platt, Wrotham Heath and Basted. They had a carriage way made through the woods so that they could drive to Wrotham Church. Crouch House and lands continued in the possession of the Miller family until the eighteenth century when they were sold by Edwin Munday "a gentleman from Derbyshire", who had married the last surviving Miller daughter. The Mundays seem to have lived for some time in the area. In 1742 Edwin was paying manor rents for "lands in the manor of Basted, for Dale Dean and other land formerly Thomas Terrys", and "for lands called Hatchams and for Crouch House". He also paid on behalf of Lady Miller for Winfield Mount, (the only time we find The Mount mentioned in the old rent books) and Old Soar and other properties. There was a Mill at Basted lying just downstream from the paper mill, which was called Maundy's Mill, although by 1739 it was owned by Soloman Bowman, and in one old map the land now called Beech Farm lying between Platt and Crouch Lane was marked as Munday's land.

In 1756 Viscountess Falkland purchased the Crouch and Wing- field estates from Munday, and from her they descended to the Austens of Kippington near Sevenoaks. Crouch House was let to a farmer, William Dean, who was to become the guardian of young Robert Hubble of Dales. By 1840 it was rented from Colonel Richard Austen by William Simmonds, who was farming land stretching down Crouch Lane, (now the west side of Kingshill Farm), and also land around Crouch House and down into Platt. William was succeeded by Henry Simmonds and about this time the family must

have purchased Crouch House from the Austens. The period 1850-1860 was a time of high farming in Kent and, like their neighbours the Carters of Winfield House, the Simmonds prospered on hops and corn. By the 1860s they were buying land down in the Weald, and when they finally left Crouch House in the first decade of the twentieth century they went to Hadlow where they had extensive hop gardens. Crouch House became the property of Mr Charles Style. During the First World War it was a hostel for land army girls, later it became a boarding school and finally an old people's home. The house that was demolished in 1968 was entirely Victorian in character (though some timbers from a much older house were found in the interior) and presumably it was rebuilt about 1850. All that remains of this is the stabling, converted into a dwelling (now Horsenayles). Part of the original wall surrounding the property survives.

Opposite Horsenayles is The Old Forge, where a modern, rough-cast exterior envelopes a much older cottage. The field surrounding this cottage was called Forge Field, but the blacksmith's forge that survived until 1973 was in the corner of this field facing on to Basted Lane and had been there as long as anyone could remember.

Beside the field are the two Forge Cottages. There is no record of these being built. Their brick and tile-hung exterior, with casement windows, suggests late eighteenth century, but they are not marked on the tithe map of 1840. In 1739 the William Carr who bought land at Crouch from John and Penelope Beauman was a blacksmith. In 1773 on August 23rd "James, the infant son of Thomas Chapman, blacksmith at Crouch" was buried at Wrotham. In 1847 William Batey as well as being blacksmith was also the owner of the "Chequers" public house. This was the first mention of the present-day tavern. Throughout the eighteenth century there are frequent references to "a house called The Blackboy at Crouch". We know that the Beaumans had half an acre of land behind it which they later sold to Thomas Harris in 1764. In 1752 "Richard Heavers has alienated a tenement called The Blackboy at Crouch, in the occupation of William Killick, hath sold same to Sarah Barret". There had been a tavern on this corner since 1670, and probably before that. There is only one clue as to how it came by its original name. A William Blackboys, who came from a local family, opened an inn in Sevenoaks in the eighteenth century which to this day is still called "The Black Boy". It is not known why or exactly when the name was changed, but one might

hazard a guess that Batey the blacksmith was not keen on being publican of "The Black Boy" and accordingly changed the name. In the 1880's James Fuller was owner of the Chequers and he opened a grocer's shop at the side of the house.

Crouch Farm House has an eighteenth-century exterior built of ragstone with brick quoins and dressings. It incorporates a much older house of which little remains. There is a crown post in the attic. The porch and gabled dormers in the roof are nineteenth century. On the tithe map of 1840 this house was labelled Butts House, and the field in front of it lying between Long Mill Lane and Crouch Lane was called Butts field. At Middle Orchard, behind Crouch Farm House, Denton Welch, the writer who described so well the beauty of this part of Kent, died in 1943.

Morlands Cottages were a timber-framed sixteenth century hall- house, for many years two cottages. Walnut Tree Cottage (seventeenth century) and Winfield Farm (eighteenth century) are both marked on Hasted's map of 1796. The weather boarding on the former is typical of many cottages in south and east Kent, reflecting the growth of the trade between Scandinavia and the south east ports in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. High Crouch, dated 1721, also marked on Hasted's map, has a fine stone front with galleted infilling. It has been extensively renovated.

Winfield House was built by William Jonathan Carter in 1841 for his own occupation. The land was purchased from Colonel Austen and stretched from Basted Lane, with Long Mill Lane to the east and south and Claygate Cross to the west. This was land which Benjamin Watson had been farming; presumably he was compensated with land which Carter had farmed in Platt. The Carter family had been in the area for many years. A John Carter was a witness of the potter Nicholas Hubble's will in 1689, and on October 18th, 1791 a James Carter of Platt was buried at Wrotham. William Carter built the house on a small field "Little Isaacs" facing on to Basted Lane and developed the rest of the land as Winfield Farm. The house was of white brick, with a white stone pillared porch. It differs from the other buildings put up by Carter, which are of ragstone and include the six oast houses on the farm, Winfield Lodge next to the house and the pretty Bonhill cottage. This was discreetly known as the gardener's cottage when erected in 1864 but is believed in reality to have been built for the lady who also benefited from Carter's will after his death in 1875.

Carter's houses, which include the two villas in Platt already mentioned, are all soundly built solid structures, put up by a man who expected and obtained value for his money.

Perhaps rather out of character is the gazebo in the corner of the garden of Winfield. A quadrant of an oast, it has a fireplace and the remains of a fan vaulted ceiling. A shutter opens on to the farm, and it is thought that Carter used the gazebo as an office from which he paid his farm hands. After his death the farm and the house were separated. The farm became the property of Mr Septimus Little, the house was let to Mr Goodwin and later to Mr John Blundell.

Near the boundary of the parish, at Claygates Corner, is the building once known as Winfield Cottages. It is an excellent specimen of an old hall-house. It was left derelict for many years but has now been restored to habitable condition. There were Ifields and Hubbles living at Claygates or Claggarts, or Clacketts Cross as it was variously called, and William Baker, brother of George Baker III, farmed there.

BEECHIN WOOD

On the way from Crouch to Great Comp we pass Beechin Wood Farmhouse. In 1840 there was a small house standing on the north side of Beechin Wood Lane, opposite the oast houses and barn. There were two barns and a duckpond on the site of the present house. In 1859 John Hodges was listed as a farmer residing at Beechin Wood farm, and he must have built the original house. It was then two thirds of its present size; the west wing, slightly smaller than its opposite number, was a later addition. The house, with its Ruskinian overtones, was very typical of its period and in spite of being built of local ragstone and brick, it looks a little out of place in the Kentish countryside. In the 1880s Mr Pankhurst owned and enlarged the farm, and probably the house. In the first decade of this century Admiral Reilly bought it, and he built the distinctive water tower and barn opposite. His bailiff, Hugh Jenner, lived in one of the four cottages on Pigeons Green, which made up the original Baker house "Heaths"

GREAT COMP

The name Comp goes back at least to the thirteenth century and probably to the eleventh or earlier. It appears in a document of 1240 as "Camp de Wrotham", using the Anglo-Saxon word "camp" which meant a military site. In the absence of earthworks, as here, this was usually a large field in the outlying area of a settlement, probably used for assembling and training local troops. By 1461 the name was being spelt Compe. There are no known records of medieval buildings on the site, and the present house was probably built in the early seventeenth century by Sir John Howell, who owned over 600 acres by the time he died, in 1641. His heirs sold the estate in 1664 to Sir John Beale of Maidstone, who became High Sheriff of Kent a year later. After his death in 1684, his estate passed to the Lambarde family in 1695 when his daughter Mary married Thomas Lambarde, a descendant of the famous antiquary William Lambarde (author of A Perambulation of Kent, 1570). Thomas does not seem to have moved from his home at Sevenoaks Park, and in 1719 he agreed to lease Great Comp (with some 255 acres of land) to Isaac Tomlyn of Nepikar, to whom he had already sold over 50 acres. The Lambardes formerly lived at Greenwich, and in 1733, when the last of the old parish church of St Alfege was pulled down during Hawksmoor's rebuilding, they had the family monument moved to the parish church of St Nicholas at Sevenoaks.

The eighteenth-century tenants of one of the Comp farms, "Dodgers", were another branch of the Hubble family (see under Platt). Mark Hubble, quite possibly a descendent of the two Mark Hubbles, father and son, who were appraisers to an inventory and valuation of the estate of Nicholas Hubble in 1689, died in 1785 at the age of 82. He was succeeded by his son Thomas, who did not long survive his father, for he died in 1800. The name of the farm relates to the Dodge charity, where by his will dated 1597, Edward Dodge of Lechlade in the county of Gloucester gave £5 yearly to the poor at Wrotham, to be taken out of his lands there. The yearly sum of £5 was charged on Great Comp. Thomas Lambarde died in 1745, succeeded in turn by his son Thomas (died 1770) and grandson Multon. The Comp estate then passed to Jane Lambarde, who married the Rev. John Randolph D.D. He became Bishop of Oxford in 1789 and later Bishop of London (1808-13). Their third son, Captain Charles

Randolph R.N. (1793-1871) became the first churchwarden of St Mary's Platt. He was later promoted to Admiral, and his tomb outside the east end of the church was still visible in 1980. While the Randolphs lived at Great Comp, they had a clearance made in Platt Woods, and a garden of conifers and rhododendrons planted in preparation for a house for their god- daughter, Carolyn Nevill. However, the proposed house was never built; by the 1880's, Miss Nevill had inherited Great Comp and was living there herself. From her it passed to Ralph Nevill of Birling Manor, who kept the land but sold the house to Henry Phelps. The rear of the house had been much altered during the nineteenth century and the gabled porch is Victorian.

In 1903 the Heron Maxwells bought Great Comp, and Mrs Heron Maxwell's long reign began. This remarkable woman had considerable influence on the life of both the village and the county. A formidable athlete, she played both cricket and hockey, was chairman of the first English Women's Cricket Association and founded and played for the Pilgrims, a well-known women's hockey team which toured all over Britain. With her friend, Mrs Eva McLaren, she had a cricket ground laid out and a pavilion built at Great Comp. Teams from Dartford P.T. College were brought over regularly to play against All England Women's cricket and hockey teams. Visiting women's teams from all over the world were invited to play at Great Comp. When the women were not using the cricket ground, the men of Platt village used it. It surely must be one of those grounds so lovingly remembered by Siegfried Sassoon:

> "Uninterrupted cricket seasons were to come Beanfields were good to smell, and bees would always hum Kent was all sleepy villages, through which I went Carrying my cricket bag.''

But under Mrs Heron Maxwell there was nothing sleepy about Great Comp. Rather it was a hive of activity under a queen bee. Pottery and weaving were carried on and before the days of the W.I. she was running a club for the women and girls of the village. One lady still living in Platt in 1975 remembered with joy taking part in an open-air performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" produced by her and her companion, Miss Cox. During the First World War she helped to organise the Women's Land Army in Kent, and girls came

to Great Comp to learn dairy work. Over the course of the years a pedigree herd of Guernsey cattle was built up. In 1915 the first Women's Institutes were founded, the idea coming from Canada, where the movement had already started, and Mrs Heron Maxwell MBE was the first chairman of the West Kent Federation of W.I.s. Her friends Mr and Mrs McLaren made what must have been one of the first conversions in the county when the twin oast houses were made into a country cottage for their use. Much time and thought were given to laying out the gardens around the house, and in those spacious days three gardeners were employed to look after them. But with the Second World War it all had to stop: the pedigree herd was dispersed the pastures and the cricket ground were ploughed up and the gardeners went into the forces. After the war was over, the old glory could not return and with Mrs Heron Maxwell's death in 1955, an era ended.

Nobody at that time could have forecast that a new era of entirely different distinction would follow. In 1957 Great Comp was taken over by Mr and Mrs R. Cameron. Starting off, in their own words, as "two gardening innocents who confronted our 4V2 acres", they intended originally to revive what had once been a very fine Edwardian garden. Instead, as their growing experience brought increasing enthusiasm for the site and its possibilities, they became both more skilful and more venturesome. Within ten years, a neglected conventional garden was gradually transformed into one of the show places of Kent. It was enlarged to acres, and first opened to the public in 1968. Its superb vistas of heathers and flowering shrubs soon became well-known, in their gracious setting of fine trees and well-maintained lawns. An old stable was converted into a concert room, and since 1973 music recitals twice yearly have provided a further attraction for visitors, with such well-known groups as the Chilingirian Quartet.

WINDMILL HILL

To the north of Great Comp is Windmill Hill. The mill was a landmark in the district until it was burnt down in 1906. The Platt Society have in their archives a vivid description of this event taped by a man who was subsequently blinded in the 1914-18 war. Although the Wrotham Manor Court ceased in the 1780's, on 1st August 1800 a special meeting was called to establish the right of Mr William Luck to build a windmill "on a piece or parcel of land that had been enclosed on a certain common called Wrotham Heath". Mr Luck, in order to be assured of his possession, applied for manor rents, and paid ten shillings for the same. In the 1850s the windmill belonged to Mr Tom Fry, who built a warehouse for grain storage down on the Sevenoaks road, which is now known as "Micawbers". Before the windmill was built, the hill had been known as Galley Hill from the gallows that stood on the brow. On the 1974 Ordnance Survey map the hill is called Gallows Hill. The gallows served the double purpose of hanging wrongdoers, particularly highwaymen and smugglers, and deterring their associates from pursuing their unlawful trades. In the latter object it seems to have been singularly unsuccessful, for Platt was both the headquarters and the storehouse of a gang, who worked in association with a group of Sandwich fishermen. The latter brought the contraband ashore and it was the duty of the Platt men to fetch it, hide it, and distribute it. There were resident in the woods of Valley Fields and the Hurst at that time a number of families who made a living by cutting reeds and birches, making them into brooms, and hawking them around the countryside and in London. There were at least two farms in Platt with fields called Broom Reed field. The broom dashers' trade made them ideal carriers of smuggled goods, which could be easily and completely hidden under a cartload of reeds. Although the main operators were the broom makers, if a large load was to be fetched the whole village seems to have been "in the know", and extra men and horses were brought into service. The meeting place was Platt Common with the caves where The Grange now stands. An authentic and full description of the "Free Trade" was written down in 1879 by Mr John Terry, who built The Grange. During that year he had met an old man who as a youth had taken part in the runs and described his experiences in vivid detail. After being recorded by Mr Terry, they were published in the Kent County

Journal by his son Mr Sidney Terry. With the end of the Napoleonic wars, and the opening up of trade with the Continent, smuggling became both too risky and top unprofitable.

On the hill leading down to Wrotham Heath are some attractive ironstone cottages built in 1846. Known for many years as "Navvies' Dwellings", they were thought to have been built for the railway workers, but as this line was not opened until 1874, it is more probable that they were built for the workers at the windmill.

WROTHAM HEATH

Considering its importance at the junction of one of the main roads to London (from Folkestone and Maidstone), with the road coming east from Guildford and Winchester, Wrotham Heath has surprisingly few historic buildings. There was a toll gate here and the toll house is still standing opposite the Royal Oak although now decaying. This inn was a pleasing eighteenth-century posting house, until it was demolished in the early 1930's and the present building erected to cater for a different sort of coach traffic. In 1847 Bagshaw's Gazetteer and Directory of Kent says "Wrotham Heath consists mostly of modern buildings including thirty neat brick cottages in course of erection." Two terraces of these neat cottages are still standing, although they are of ironstone, or dark sandstone, not brick. At the time the landlord of the Royal Oak was William Hollands, and two coaches left there for London every morning (except Sunday), the True Blue at 8 a.m., the Tally Ho at 9.15 a.m. A later landlord, Thomas Styles, bought one of the terraces as a dowry for his daughter and named them Daisy Cottages.

NEPICAR

This name comes from the Anglo-Saxon naep — a turnip, and aecer — a piece of cultivated ground. According to Hasted "the borough of Neupiker has a handsome house belonging to Mr Tomlyn". Nepicar house by the motorway roundabout has a fine Queen Anne front of red brick, applied to an older Jacobean house, whose mullioned windows can be seen at the side. The main feature is a projecting semi-circular hood over the front door with a small shell ornament, and the figure of a boar in plaster relief.

In 1741 Isaac Tomlyn had died, and left his estate divided in a rather complicated manner between his wife Elizabeth, and his two daughters, Hester and Elizabeth, and his son John. This was one of the few times where an animal, a grey gelding, was taken as heriot. Heriot was a medieval custom whereby on the death of the farmer, the lord of the manor was entitled to take the best beast on the holding. By the eighteenth-century heriots were almost always fixed in money. In this case the gelding was compounded, i.e. bought back, by John Tomlyn. By 1746 both the widow and her daughters were dead and had left their houses and land to Isaac II, John's son, so all was safely in the family again. The Tomlyns eventually died out, and the house passed to the James family of Ightham Court. In 1888 it was purchased by the Rev. James Sandiford Bailey who lived there until 1900, when he handed it over to his son, and retired to Brighton. Col. Edmund Bailey sold the house in 1906. After that it had a chequered career. At one time it was the Nepicar Hotel, later a factory for light engineering, and finally left derelict. Later it was bought for offices by Wiltshiers, a building and property firm, who in 1974 restored the house with taste and care and erected an extension to the east side. The solution was not an ideal one, but we can be thankful that this beautiful house was saved from demolition. It is now owned by Acco Europe.

The other family which once lived in "Nepicar Burro" was the Gammons. They could be compared to the Bakers, hard-working yeomen, of some standing in the community. They attended manor-courts, did their turn as reeve in collecting quit-rents and heriots, and passed on their heritage to their sons and daughters. Sometime in the late 1730s, William Gammon "had by indentures" passed to his son Thomas during his life, "a tenement and tanyard and twenty acres of land, late Wybournes at Nepicar, occupied by Thomas Harris".

William Gammon was married to Ann Skelton, whose aunt Hannah Larkin, possibly a descendent of a Larkin farming in Platt in 1568, bought from Benjamin Maddox a tenement and tanyard at Basted which was managed by William Gammon. When Hannah died in 1744 she "devised" it to her niece. In 1913 a Mr Maddox built three cottages opposite Platt church and left his name on them; the remains of the tanyard can be seen to this day, half a mile downstream from Basted paper mill.

ALONG THE MAIN ROAD (A25)

Coming from Wrotham Heath back towards Platt one passes Millwood. This pretty Victorian country house was first occupied by the Dubost family. In the 1890s it was bought by William Lewis, M.I.C.E., who had married one of the daughters of the Rev. F.T. Gregory, lately vicar of St Mary's, and her two unmarried sisters, the Misses Gregory, lived at Millwood Cottage. The small housing estate of Pine View now covers Parklands which in 1739 Penelope Beauman sold to Thomas Scoones. Thomas died in 1764 leaving the land to his daughter Anne, who was married to John Puckle. Later Parklands became part of the Lambarde property.

To the west side of Parklands was common land. The cottages on Platt Common were almost certainly the homes of some of those broom-dashers and reed-cutters who supplemented their incomes by smuggling. On this same common land, beside the road from the village towards Wrotham, was the Drovers' Cottage — this was an overnight stop for the men who drove cattle or sheep to Wrotham market from the Weald, the animals being penned in the small field beside the house. In 1882 John Terry, who was born in Platt in 1835 and left it as a boy to seek a fortune, returned to his native village a wealthy silk merchant, and built The Grange. He preserved the Drovers' Cottage for his gardener and built another beside it for his coachman. After his death in 1902, his son Sidney continued to live at The Grange, which in those days with its stables and out- buildings was a good deal larger than the present house. A footpath called "The Slype" used to cross this land, and the Terrys moved the path to run behind their grounds up into Platt Woods. They fenced the path in, and later for privacy and to preserve their game, they enclosed it with a corrugated iron fence. The village promptly christened it "Tin Pan Alley".

The Brickmakers' Arms was built in 1825 by Harry Stiles. He and his son ran a carrier service to London from here. Twice a week a two-horse van set out loaded with fruit or hops according to the season, and it brought back stores for the small shops in the area. It also carried the occasional passenger. The Stiles family ran the Brickmakers' Arms for the rest of the century. It catered for the workers on the brickfields which the Pascall family started in mid-century on the north side of the road. The carrier service finished

when the railway came in 1874.

Next door to Mr Tom Fry's grain store (now Micawbers) the house now known as Foxbury was run as a boys' school by Mr Stephen Constable. Here in 1846 came young Benjamin Harrison, the grocer's son from Ightham, after a traumatic experience as a boarder at a sort of "Dotheboys Hall" in Seal. It is pleasant to record that in later years Harrison recalled his three years at "The British School", as among the happiest in his life. While under Mr Constable's scholarly guidance he developed that interest in geology and archaeology which was to make him world- famous. Later the house belonged to the West family who owned the mill opposite.

In 1840 three old families were farming on the north side of the Sevenoaks Road, the Julls, the Buttanshaws and the Eagletons. The Julls claimed kinship with the Wrotham potters, as they owned a "tyg" signed H.I. which they believed were the initials of Mr Henry Jull. (Mr Kiddell suggested that H.I. more probably stood for Henry Ifield.) In the late 1850s, Thomas Jull was in partnership with William Carter running a mill called Winfield Mill, a mile downstream from Basted. Later they built the mill on the corner of Long Mill Lane and Sevenoaks Road, installed boilers and advertised themselves as "Carter and Jull, steam millers". Five storeys high, the mill must have been an impressive piece of Victorian industrial building, but a disastrous fire in 1926 destroyed two top floors, and it was reduced to its present size. The Julls sold the mill to Mr Frank West early in the twentieth century, and it is now owned by Lillico's.

20th CENTURY

At the beginning of the twentieth century the population of Platt, which had been stationary at just under the thousand since the 1850s, when the first census was published, started to grow. The railway was bringing new residents to the parish. Mr F. Charlewood Turner, MD, FRCP, who in 1893 built Warren Wood at Wrotham Heath as a country house for his young family, and Mr Henry Wilson, artist and silversmith, who designed and built the Thatched House a decade later, were typical of the newcomers. The village itself was changing. The King-Smith brothers at Platt farm, one of whom, Roland, married the schoolmaster's daughter Marjorie Dover, introduced the growing of soft fruits on a commercial scale in the fields around Platt farmhouse. Mr James Todman, who converted three cottages into the one house, Oakbeams, that we see today, developed a nursery famous for its apples and pears, on land that had once been Dales farm. Hops still reigned supreme, but fruit had started the gradual takeover that by the nineteen-seventies was complete. In 1914 the bus service between Sevenoaks and Maidstone started and gave the village greater access to the outside world. After the First World War it continued to be the professional classes who came to Platt and had built for themselves detached houses enclosed in large gardens, such as Potters Hill which was built by Austin Charlewood Turner, ARIBA, son of the doctor who built Warren Wood. Austin Turner was born in London in 1892. He was educated at Wellington and Sandhurst and went into the Connaught Regiment. Severely wounded and taken prisoner in 1914, he was invalided out of the army in 1920 and studied architecture under Filmister in Birmingham. In 1929 he bought a plot of land from the Nevill family on Windmill Hill and built Potters Hill as a base for himself and a home for his growing family. Of brick construction, originally painted white, it is traditional in design following firmly in the wake of the domestic architecture of Voysey and Lutyens. The house stands happily on its wooded site, which when it was built had no services. Mains water had to be brought up Windmill Hill; gas and electricity were supplied by two small engines designed for this purpose. The windows are set under stone arches, while the skilful use of brickwork on the front chimney gives variety, with simplicity, to the facade.

The Hopfield was built in 1933 by Colin Lucas. He was born

in 1906, educated at Cheltenham, and studied architecture at Cambridge. In 1932 he married a daughter of Henry Wilson of the Thatched House and built The Hopfield in Comp Lane as a weekend cottage for himself and his wife. He was one of the first architects in England to exploit the new materials of concrete, glass and metal. Like many architects of that period he was much influenced by the work of Corbusier in France and Aalto in Finland. The Hopfield when first built was almost a cube in shape; it was later enlarged on the north side. Constructed entirely of reinforced concrete, the exterior was originally finished in cement of a subdued green colour to harmonise with the surrounding countryside. The main feature of the house is the outside staircase sweeping down from the upstairs sitting room to the garden. A year after he built The Hopfield, Lucas joined the firm of Connell and Ward. One of the most famous houses to come from this partnership, designed by Lucas himself and built in 1936, is at Frognal in Hampstead. It is interesting to compare The Hopfield with The Wood House designed by Gropius in 1936 and built in the neighbouring parish of Shipbourne for Lord Donaldson and his wife Frances. Gropius, by that time a mature genius, insisted that the house must be of wood to fit into its rustic site, and he used this material happily with the horizontal lines and wide windows favoured by contemporary architects

Since the Second World War, with the growth of public services, and the great increase in car ownership, Platt, in common with other villages within easy reach of large urban centres, has become, in the main, the home of people whose source of employment is elsewhere. This has corresponded with the greatly increased mechanisation of farming and the decrease in the number of those who work on the land. The result has been the development of the estates at Green- lands, St Mary's Close, Paddock Orchard, Windmill Park and Minters Orchard. Platt has been lucky in that it has been allowed by the county planners a low-density plot ratio, and the result has been unpretentious detached houses of brick and tile merging fairly happily into their environment. This is particularly so in Paddock Orchard, where contained within the three roads, houses have been built outward-facing, enclosing a central grassed area on which many fruit trees have been retained. Except for Pine View, built as early as 1929, and a few houses in Grange Road, there has been no state-subsidised housing in the parish.

The gift by Sir William Geary in 1935 ensured that once again, as in old Nicholas Baker's time, the Napps should be an area of common land dividing the village of Platt from the hamlet of Crouch. It was unfortunate that the main area of recreation in the village, the King George's playing field, was effectively barred from the majority of its inhabitants by the continuous stream of traffic along the A25. It was to solve this problem that a new playing field has now been developed at Stonehouse Field.

Above all Platt is fortunate that an act of enlightened vision by the parish council, the district council, and public subscription, obtained the purchase of Platt Woods so that, in perpetuity, the villagers should see the tower of St Mary's Church against the seasonally changing background of their own woodlands. And that is where this booklet began.

POSTSCRIPT

During the night of 16th October, 1987, the greatest storm in living memory devastated Kent and Sussex woodlands. Violent winds uprooted mature trees all through Platt Woods and ripped off hundreds of branches. Removal of the wreckage was still under way when a day of gales on 25th January, 1990, produced yet more damage. Clearing and replanting will take at least five years, but it is hoped that in time our woodland setting will be restored to its former glory.

We are grateful to the following for contributing towards the cost of reprinting this Booklet:

The Blue Anchor
Calor Engineering Ltd.
Cuckoobird Productions Ltd.
Naturin Ltd.
F.G. Pierce and Sons, Ltd.
Trusthouse Forte (U.K.)
Unigate Dairies Ltd.

ILLUSTRATIONS
The photographs are those used in the original edition. They are reproduced without change for their historical interest.

Printed in the Garden of England by Longmore Press Ltd, Otford, Sevenoaks, Kent

Published by St.Mary's Platt & District Society