The Landmark Trust

COOMBE

Hawkers Cottage No. 1

History Album

Written by Charlotte Haslam 1994

updated 2015

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KEY FACTS

Built	**Ford Cottage is probably the oldest construction built in 17 C.**
Acquired by Landmark	**1966 in a plan made in conjunction with the National Trust**
Restoration by Landmark	**1967 and ongoing**
Architects	**Paul Pearne of Plymouth**
Contractors	**George Bale and sons of Barnstaple; Littlejohns of East and West Putford for the thatching**

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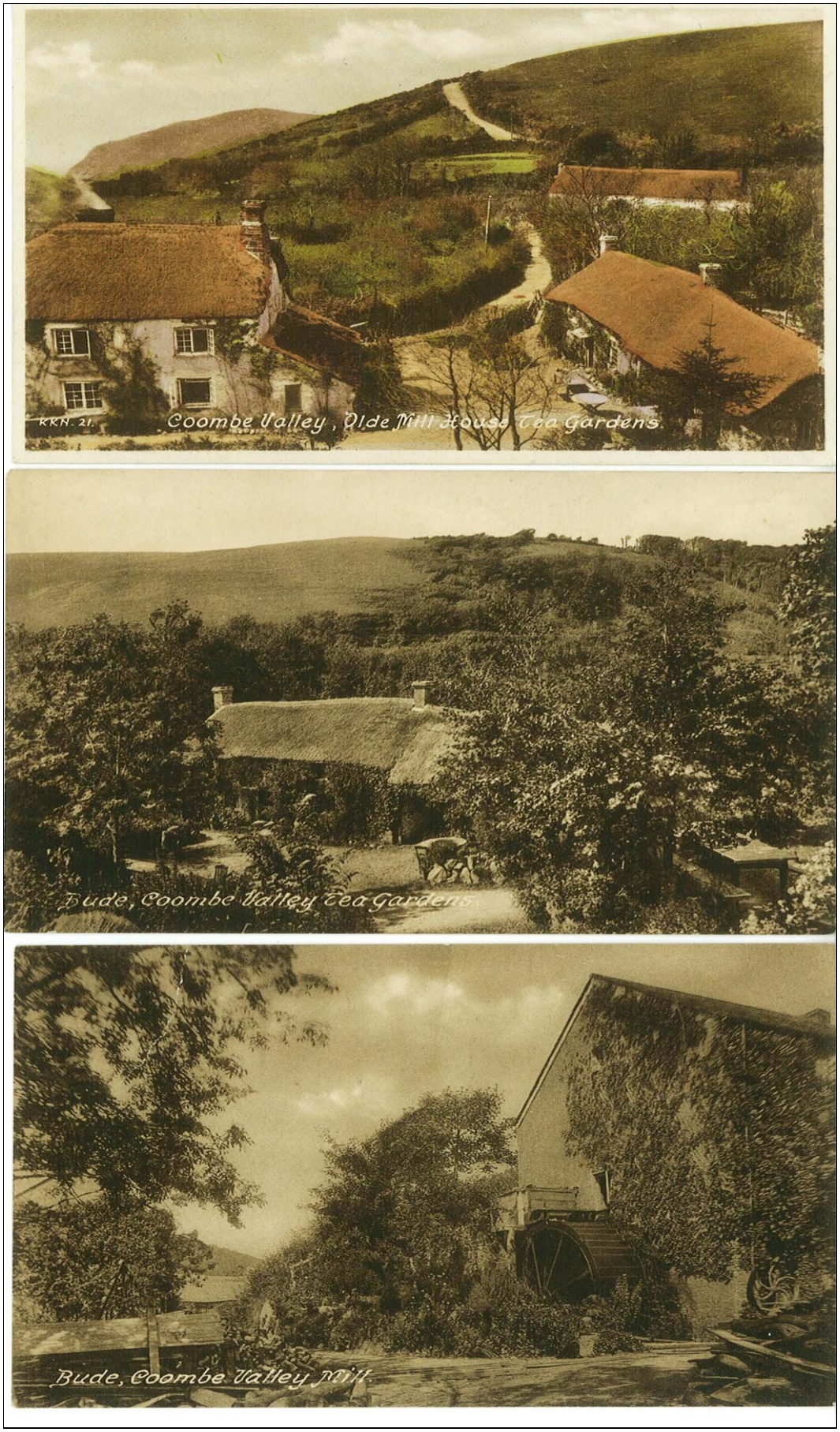
KKH. 21.
Coombe Valley, Olde Mill House Tea Gardens.
Bude, Coombe Valley Tea Gardens.
Bude, Coombe Valley Mill.

Summary

The first known reference to Coombe is in 1520, but the mile of sheltered valley running inland from Duckpool has been lived in continuously from very early times. A decayed earthwork in Stowe Woods at the head of the valley is an Iron Age fort and the hidden site of the hamlet is typical of ancient habitations in Cornwall. Although the earliest of the existing houses date only from the 17th century, they are likely to stand on older sites. The hamlet lies on the southern edge of the parish of Morwenstow. It was until recently divided between two landowners. The land west of the stream belonged from the 1540s until 1922 to the Duchy of Cornwall, as part of the manor of Eastway. The land east of the stream was originally part of the manor of Northleigh, or Lee, which until the Elizabethan period was owned by the Coplestone family, but soon afterwards passed to the Grenvilles of Stowe on the hillside above. It remained part of the Stowe estate until 1949.

Coombe is listed as one of the 'principal villages' of the parish of Morwenstow by Daniel Lysons in Magna Britannia Vol. III, published in 1814. This makes it sound quite big and indeed it was once much larger: in the middle of the 19th century there were between twelve and fifteen households here, but by 1891 these had shrunk to just three. By the beginning of the 20th century Coombe had become a favourite stopping place for walkers, gaining a mention in most Cornish guidebooks from the 1890s onwards. Official recognition of its landscape came in 1930 when the Council for the Protection of Rural England recommended that the whole Coombe Valley, along with the coastal path, should be preserved as a place of outstanding natural beauty. It was another thirty years before this hope was realised, but in 1960 the National Trust acquired the first of several holdings, on the south side of the valley. Between 1966 and 1969, the hamlet itself was bought by the Landmark Trust, as part of a joint scheme with the National Trust to preserve it and its exceptional setting.

The Mill and Mill House

Coombe Mill features in Charles Kingsley's Westward Ho, whose heroine, Rose of Torridge is sent to stay with her uncle here. There has been a mill at Coombe since at least 1694 and probably long before that, although the present one dates from 1842. Most of Mill House is earlier, the thatched part predating 1700 while that roofed in slate is an addition of around 1800. The plan is typical of small farmhouses in remote areas, from the Tudor onwards: one room deep, with two ground floor rooms. The main room has a wide fireplace on the back room (now No. 1) while the inner room has its fireplace on the end gable (now in No. 2).

Ford Cottage

Ford Cottage is long and low, its upper storey being little more than a loft. It dates from the mid 17th century. Both chimneys have cloam bread ovens from Bideford; the end chimney looks like an early addition. It has been much altered over the centuries, but originally had a parlour at the ford end whose partition was just to the left of the front door; a main room or hall in the middle for cooking and eating whose fireplace backed onto the entry or cross passage and finally a service room. The cross passage ran through the current bathroom. There were once stairs against the

back wall of the sitting room. Soon after 1914, a tearoom was run in Ford Cottage, which continued right up to Landmark's acquisition of the cottage in 1966.

The Carpenter's Shop

This appears on the 1840 tithe map as standing on land belonging to John Tape, a carpenter then living in Ford Cottage (Tapes lived in Coombe for generations, the last only leaving in 1968). Its roughly dressed stone and flat brick arches are typical of the early 19th century. The windows, with vertical bars and overlapping glass, are of the kind found in many workshops and industrial buildings. Latterly, the building was used as a store for many years and was becoming derelict by the time Landmark acquired it.

Hawker's Cottages

Being on the other side of the stream, Hawker's Cottages belonged to Eastway rather than Stowe and led a separate life until the 20th century. Although the two halves have been a single dwelling for most of their history, it is clear that the two ends were built at different times. No. 2 is the older half. With walls that are two feet thick, a pegged collar rafter roof and a cloam bread oven, it has much in common with Ford Cottage and probably also dates from the mid 17th century. Here, however, the living accommodation seems to have been on the first floor with a workshop or even a byre on the ground floor. The half that now forms No. 1 was probably added in the mid to late 18th century.

By the 1820s this Coombe farmhouse enjoyed a short phase as a gentleman's residence, home to Robert Hawker, famous as the writer and poet, the Vicar of Morwenstow. Hawker's own writings and many anecdotes about him provide much local colour and it was he who built King William's Bridge over the stream to replace a smaller one that often flooded. A succession of tenants passed through the cottage through the nineteenth century, including some ubiquitous Tapes, sometimes as one, sometimes in two households. Once Landmark became involved, our custodians lived in No. 1 until 1985.

Chapel Cottage

A Bible Christian chapel is marked on the OS map of Coombe for 1885 and it had probably stood there already for some 20 years before that. Rev. Hawker was often vehement in his condemnation of the Dissenters but the influence of the Church of England had declined steadily and the Bible Christians were a Cornish offshoot of Wesleyan Methodism that moved so effectively to fill the vacuum. The Coombe Meeting Room was also referred to as the Coombe Tabernacle, presumably because it was not only made of wood but also equipped with wheels. The congregation must have felt confident in a degree of permanence, however, since they gave it a slate roof. The chapel was sold in 1922 and the Tapes built the bungalow alongside it.

Coombe Corner

Coombe Corner was built in the 1930s, representing an altogether different approach to building, all light and views, compared to the hunkered-down solidity of the cottage sin the valley. The plot was the last piece of land in the valley not owned by either Landmark or the National Trust and as such its acquisition in 1984, though pre-emptive, was an important one.


Bude, Coombe Valley, Mill House.


Bude, Coombe Valley, Hawkers Cottage.


Bude, Coombe Valley, Mill House.

Historical introduction

"A commodious road ... leads with quick descent through an ancient wood, deeply shaded with spreading oaks, to the little village of Combe, charmingly situated in a hollow of unusual stillness, and surrounded by eminences clothed in a rich variety of foliage. A stream of water which runs through the centre of this little dell is crossed by a rustic bridge, and an opening chasm at the west end lets in a partial perspective of the ocean."

C. S. Gilbert *History of Cornwall II* 1820

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The History of Coombe

The first time that Coombe appears on a map is in Gascoyne's map of Cornwall of 1699. However, the odd mention of it in earlier documents, mainly to do with taxation and other official matters, shows that it had existed for up to two centuries before that, and almost certainly much longer.

According to Gover's *Place-Names of Cornwall* the first reference is in a Feet of Fines, or list of manorial payments, in 1520. Then, in the Muster of 1569, when all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60 were named, with the weapons they had at their disposal, a John Ching of Combe is recorded as having a bow and 6 arrows. An Anthony Chinge de Combe is listed in the Protestation Return of 1641-2 (one of several Chings in the parish of Morwenstow at that time). This was a national survey, requiring everyone over the age of 18 to sign an oath of loyalty to the Protestant Church, King and Parliament.

Twenty years later, in the Hearth Tax returns of 1660-1664 `the occupants of Coombe and Hollygrove' were assessed at 4 hearths, which could mean anything between two and four houses. In a formal sense, the name Coombe seems only to have applied to property west of the stream, belonging to the manor of Eastway. This was surveyed for the Duchy of Cornwall in 1790 by Henry Spry. The map exists, and shows a house on the site of Hawker's Cottages, labelled `Coomb'. The Tithe Survey of 1840 shows this to have had a small farm, although the house itself was then let separately. Almost certainly, this was where John and Anthony Ching had lived in previous centuries.

Interestingly, and a little confusingly, the entry after Coombe in the Hearth Tax states that the `occupants of Lee and Lee Mills' were assessed at 6 hearths.

One of these mills was what we know as Coombe Mill, because the east bank of the stream was part of the medieval manor of Leigh or Northleigh. This later became Lee Barton, by which time it belonged to the Grenvilles of Stowe and accordingly on some maps, such as Martyn's Map of Cornwall of 1748, Coombe or Lee mill is called Stowe mill.

The different names co-existed until quite recently. In the Tithe Survey of 1840, for example, it is called Leigh Mill, as it is again, spelt Lee, on the first 25in:1 mile Ordnance Survey map of 1885. At the same time, it must have been widely known as Coombe Mill, and is shown thus on the first 1in:1 mile map of 1813; and in most of the Census Returns from 1841-1891.

The Hearth Tax is one of several bits of evidence that point at there being a mill at Coombe by the mid-17th century, at least; one of the mills belonged to the manor of Leigh. Leigh had been the home of the Coplestones, an old Devon family, in the 16th century, and before them of the Wybburys, who, according to the Rev R. Dew in his *History of Kilkhampton* of 1926, were granted a licence by the Bishop to have an oratory in their manor house of Northleigh in 1416. Most manors had at least one mill, and Dew also mentions a Coplestone deed of the time of Queen Elizabeth in which mills are mentioned. While it is not certain that one of these was on the site of the Coombe mill, it seems likely. Another, also variously shown on later maps as Lee or Stowe Mill, stood further up the Coombe valley, east of Stowe wood.

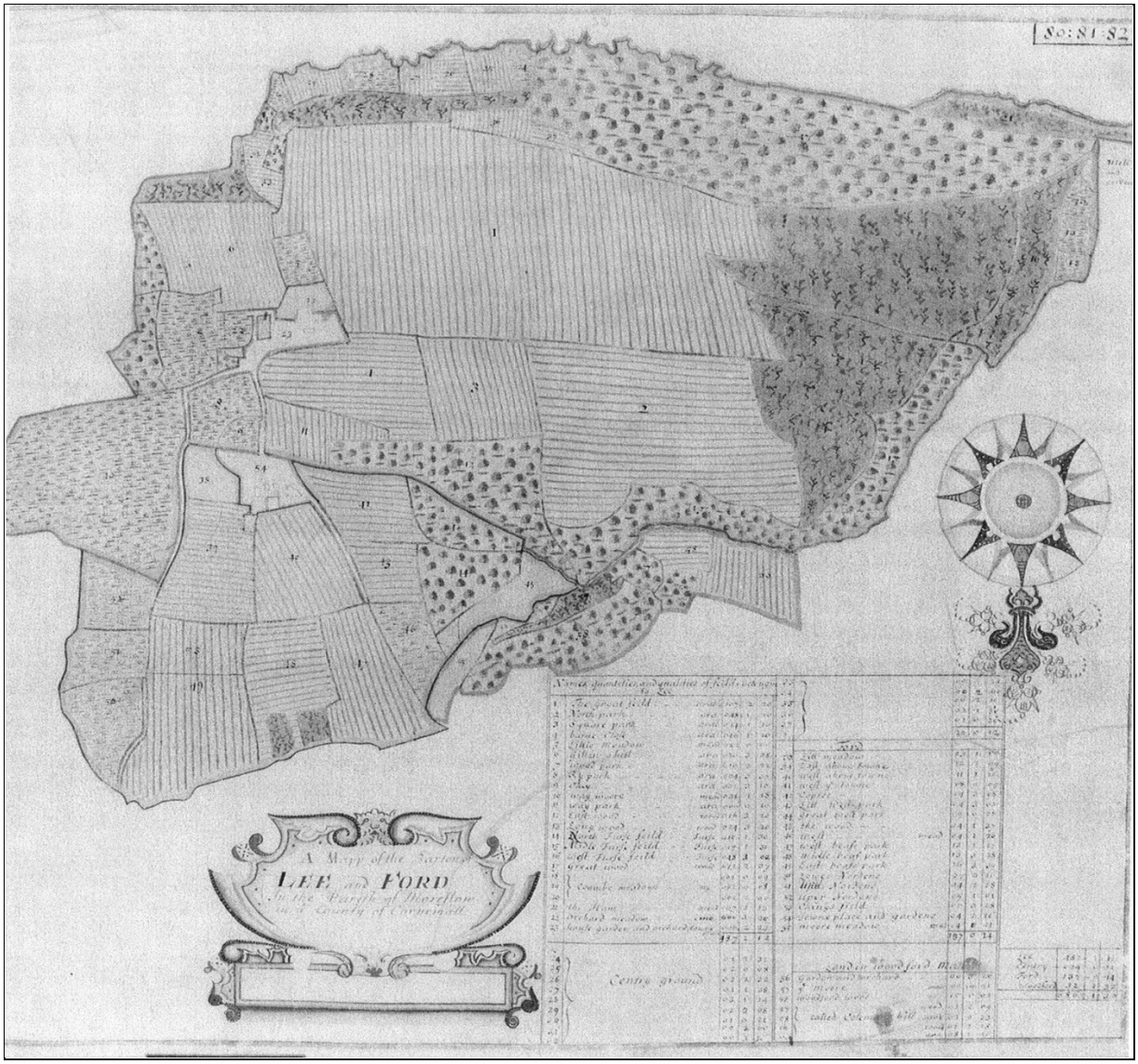
When the Coplestones died out with the death of John Coplestone in 1611, their land was an obvious temptation for the Grenvilles, lying as it did along the north border of their chief barton of Stowe. The Grenville papers were mostly destroyed in the 19th century, but R. Granville in his *History of the House of*

Granville of 1895 quotes a will of Bevill Grenville, dated 1639. In this the `*mannor, capitall messuage, Barton and Demesnes of Northleigh*' is now listed among his estates. Either Sir Bevill, or his father Sir Bernard, must have bought it from the Coplestone heirs. Furthermore, in a letter of 1642, Sir Bevill instructed his wife to `*make it known to all my neigbours and tenants of the west side of our Parrish [of Kilkhampton] that I shall take it ill if they grind not at my mill, and lett the tenants of Northlegh know that if they do it not, as they are bound, I will put them in suite [of law]*'.

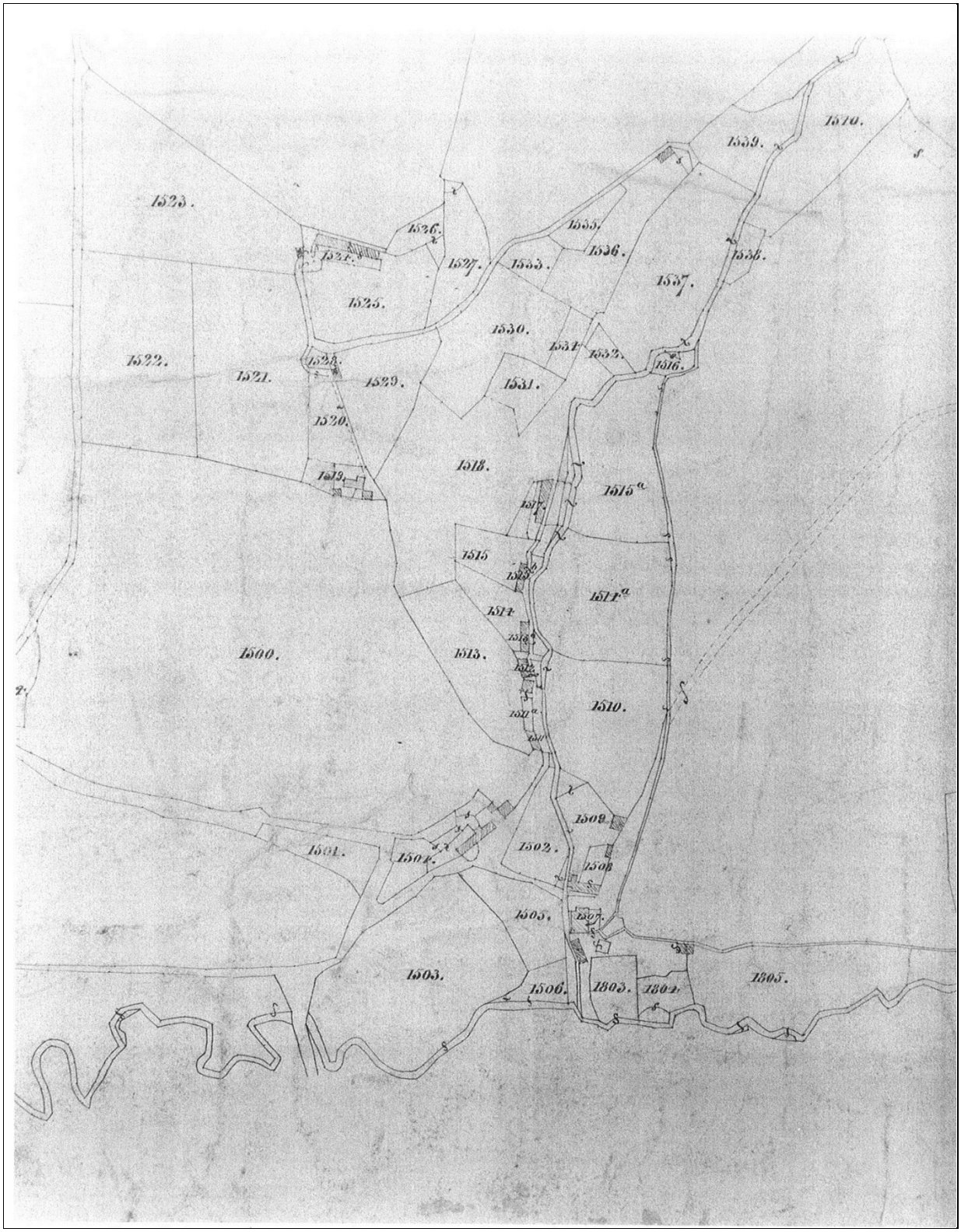
Again it is not entirely clear which mill is referred to, except that it was part of Northleigh. Dew also notes that after Sir Bevill's death in 1643, a claimant on his estate was a "*Mary Modiford of Exeter who begged the benefit of her lease of 1,000 years of the Barton of North Leigh, with the 2 grist mills in Moorwinstow which Sir Bevill demised to her on November 12th, 1641, for £1,000*", probably to raise a mortgage. There seems little doubt, however, that one of these mills is the Leigh Mill across the stream from Coombe Farm.

Firm evidence of Coombe Mill comes finally in 1694, when Joel Gascoyne was commissioned by John Grenville, Earl of Bath, to make a survey of his estate. This he did, most beautifully, in a volume called *The Stowe Atlas*, now preserved in the Cornwall Records Office in Truro. On the last page is `*A map of the Barton of Lee & Ford*'. Here, labelled simply mill and garden, two squares are drawn in. One is roughly where the Mill House stands now, the other where Ford Cottage is. The area shown as garden covers the present orchard behind Ford Cottage and the Carpenter's Shop, and beyond, between the stream and mill leat, are three `Coombe meadows'.

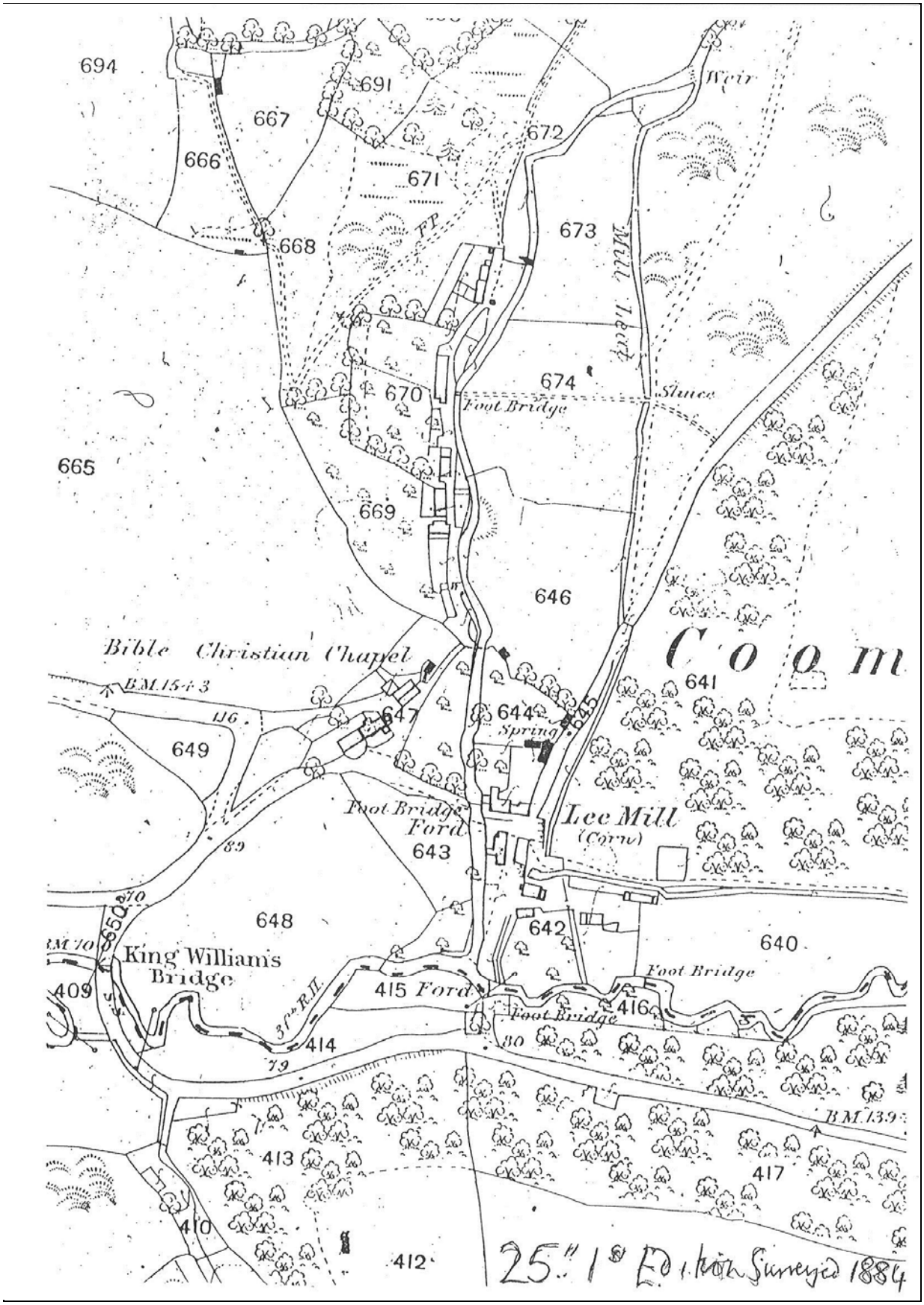
By 1700, therefore, Coombe had begun to look as it does now. Since the three main houses had all been built, either in whole or in part as they now survive, the best way to continue the story is by following them individually.



The Stowe Atlas: the mill and garden and 3 Coombe meadows (numbered 18-20) can be seen at the top right hand corner.



The Tithe Map, showing Coombe as it was in 1840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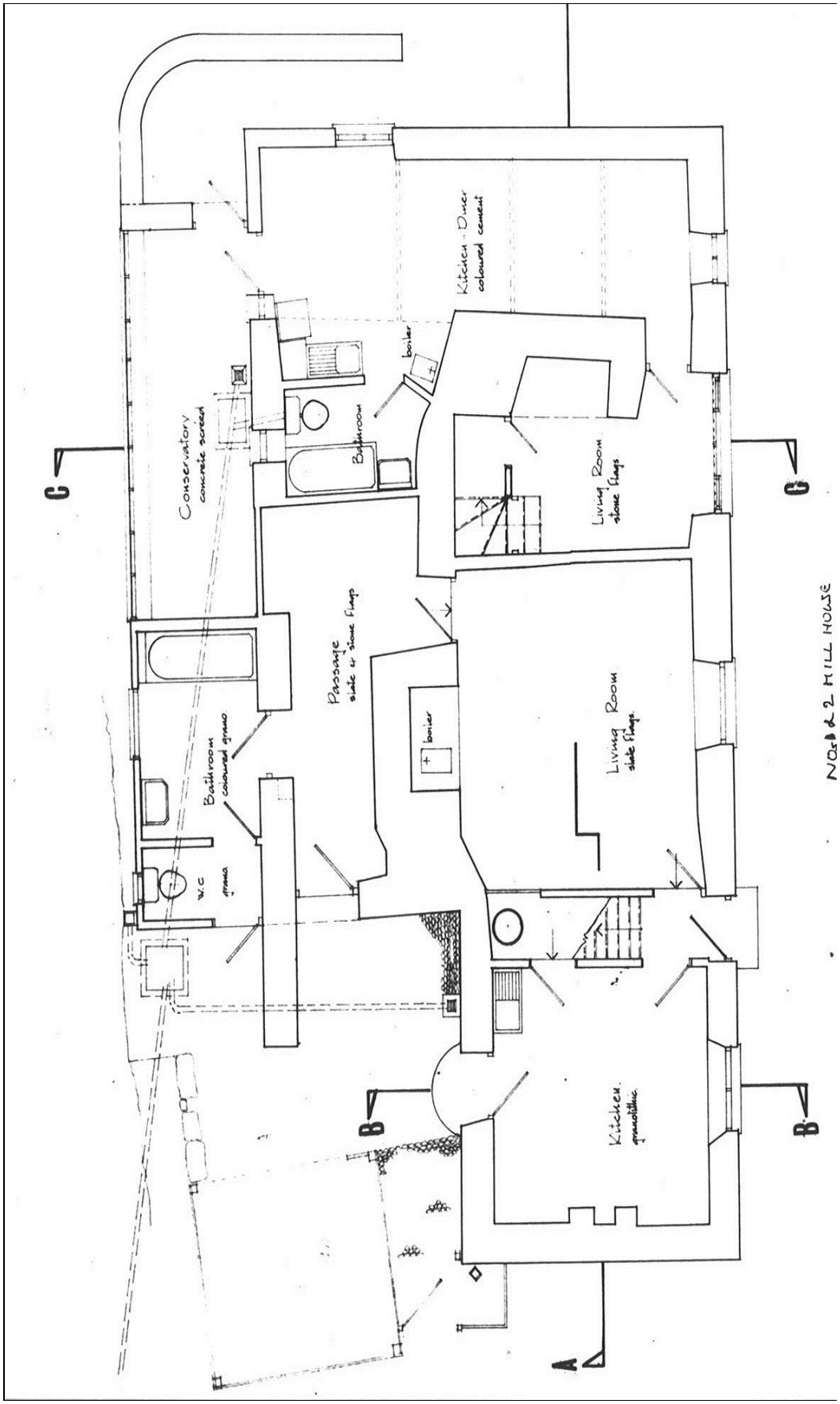
25" 1st Edition Surveyed 1884

The Mill and Mill House

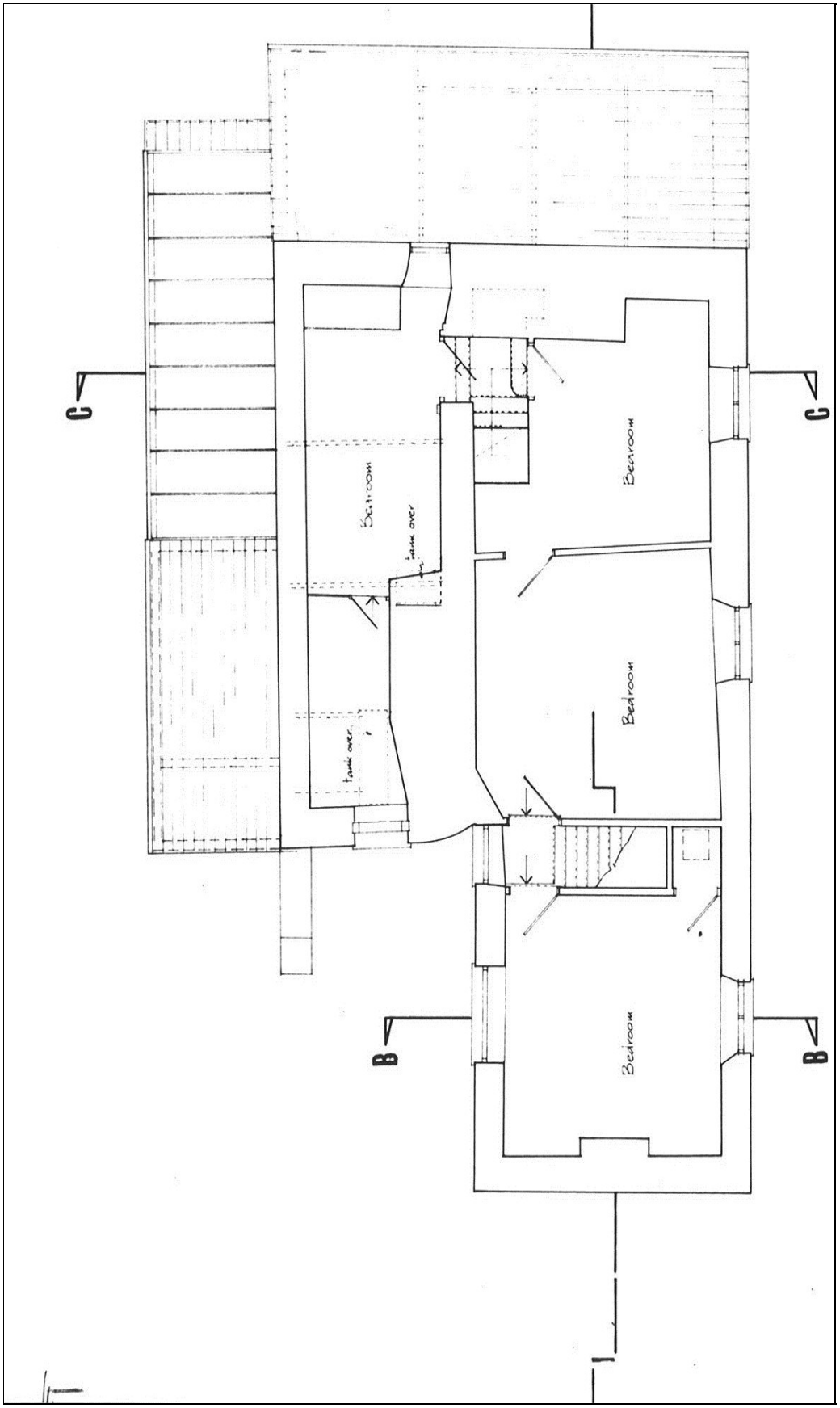
Coombe mill comes into *Westward Ho!*, Charles Kingsley's novel, published in 1855 but set in Elizabethan times. The heroine, Rose of Torridge, was sent to stay with her uncle who was miller here and she is described: `*Sitting in the little farmhouse beside the mill, buried in the green depths of the valley of Coombe*.' When she vanished, the miller rushed up to the great house in much anxiety to borrow the bloodhounds. The Stowe keepers put their dogs on to her, and followed her trail to Marsland, but she had already left for Lundy.

As already described, there was a mill at Coombe in 1694, one that had probably existed for at least fifty years before that, if not longer, first as a manorial mill to Leigh, and later to Stowe. House and mill must always, as now, have been separate from one another, being rebuilt at different times. As it stands today, the mill itself is the most recent, with a date stone of 1842. The Tithe Map of 1840 shows a building in outline in the same place, possibly its predecessor, or the foundations of this one. The simplified form of Gascoyne's earlier map, however, leaves the arrangement at that date unclear.

The new mill could have been paid for by the Stowe estate. Inside, there are three floors, linked by ladders and trap doors. On the ground floor, which is paved with slate, is the gearing for the machinery driven by the wheel outside - an iron overshot wheel with timber paddles, and a timber launder or channel. On the first floor are the millstones, a pair of French Buhr stones and a pair of Cornish granite stones, placed beneath grain hoppers. On the second floor are dressing and bolting machines. Grain went in through the hatch at the top, reached from the bank at the back, and came out as flour at the bottom.



The Mill House before repair and alterations: ground floor



First Floor

The main part of the Mill House itself, with its thick walls and thatched roof, dates from a bit before 1700 (it is probably the building shown on the 1694 map) but has been added to since. The part roofed in slate looks like an addition of around 1800, with its brick heads to door and windows. Other additions were made then or later, on the north and west. The timber gutter and down-comer at the thatched end, on the east side of the house, are traditional, although now rarely seen.

The plan is typical of small farmhouses in remote areas such as this, being basically a continuation of Tudor arrangements. Just one room deep, it had two ground floor rooms, a main room with a wide fireplace on the back wall (now the sitting room of No.1); and an inner room, also with a fireplace on the end gable (now in No.2). Beside this there is a stick-drying oven made of a barrel sunk into the wall. There does not seem to have been, as in many farmhouses, a third `outer' room, for storage, unless the southern addition is a rebuilding of something earlier, but there was always an upper floor.

The tenant of the mill in the 1840 Tithe Survey, with orchards, garden and two meadows along the stream in the Coombe valley, is Mary Lashbrook, who was described in the census of the following year as a miller, aged 70. She lived there with her servant, Elizabeth Vanstone, and William and Richard Vanstone, aged 15 and 9, and another child, James Cottle, aged 2.

Ten years later, in 1851, the mill had been taken on by a new, younger miller, William Wood, aged 24. His sister and brother-in-law lived with him, with a five year old son, being described as housekeeper and miller's servant. A second servant was also employed, William Cornish, aged 15. It seems likely that William Wood was part of a family business running the two `Lee Mills'.

The other Lee mill, at the head of the Coombe valley, was in Kilkhampton parish, and in the Post Office directory for that parish a James Wood, miller, was listed, perhaps William's father.

In 1861, however, William Wood had been replaced by John Wood, aged 27, presumably a younger brother. Living with him were Elizabeth Wood, aged 30, described as his sister and housekeeper, with James and David Stevens, 22 and 16, as miller's servants, and Jane Tape, 21, as house servant. Jane came from a family which took a leading role in the later history of Coombe.

The 1871 census still lists a John and an Elizabeth Wood, but they were man and wife, rather than brother and sister. They had in their household four daughters ranging from 7 years old to 11 months, a housemaid, a child's maid, an assistant miller, and a male servant. This prosperity is reflected in the fact that the Electoral Register of 1874 lists John Wood as the only voter in Coombe, in respect of Lee Mills, his property being of £12 rateable value.

Soon afterwards, the Woods must have moved away, because in 1881 the mill was occupied by Richard Badcock, miller and also a farmer of 70 acres, aged 46; with his wife Sarah, who is 52, and seven sons. Born at Clovelly, Mr Badcock had spent the early years of his married life at Huntshaw in Devon, and there his two eldest sons were born - John and William, 24 and 22, both millers. The family then moved to Parkham, also in Devon, where the next five sons were born - Henry, 17, who obviously helps with the farming side of his father's activities, describing himself as farmer's son; Richard, 16, another miller; George, 14, like Henry a farmer's son; and Walter and Charles, who at 11 and 9, post-Education Act, are still at school. They employ one general domestic servant, Elizabeth Short, 21, to look after them all.

That John Wood had left the district is born out by the Ordnance Survey map of 1885. While it calls this Lee Mill, it has the second mill as Wood's Mill, Corn, disused (it was back in service in the revised edition of 1905, and had reverted to being Lee Mill, while this one had become Coombe Mill).

The Badcocks did not stay long either. In 1891, mill and farm had been taken on by the Tapes, the only family to have lived in Coombe from the time of the first census of 1841, while others came and went. Henry Tape had succeeded his father at what is now Ford Cottage, and like him was a carpenter, so their story begins there. From now on they leased both properties, but made their home in the Mill House. The running of the mill itself was handed to the third of their four sons, Archie, 17. The youngest son, Claude, 14, is described as a horse carter, aided by the youngest of the Badcocks, Charles, now 18.

By the beginning of this century, Coombe Mill was the only one still working in the parish. Its life was perhaps prolonged by machinery salvaged from its neighbours, such as the one at Tonacombe when that closed. Archie Tape had two men working for him, and business was reasonably good. The miller's wagon would travel round the parish, collecting and delivering. Archie's small daughter, Vera, now Mrs Maurice Moore, went with it, and in this way soon got to know most people in the locality.

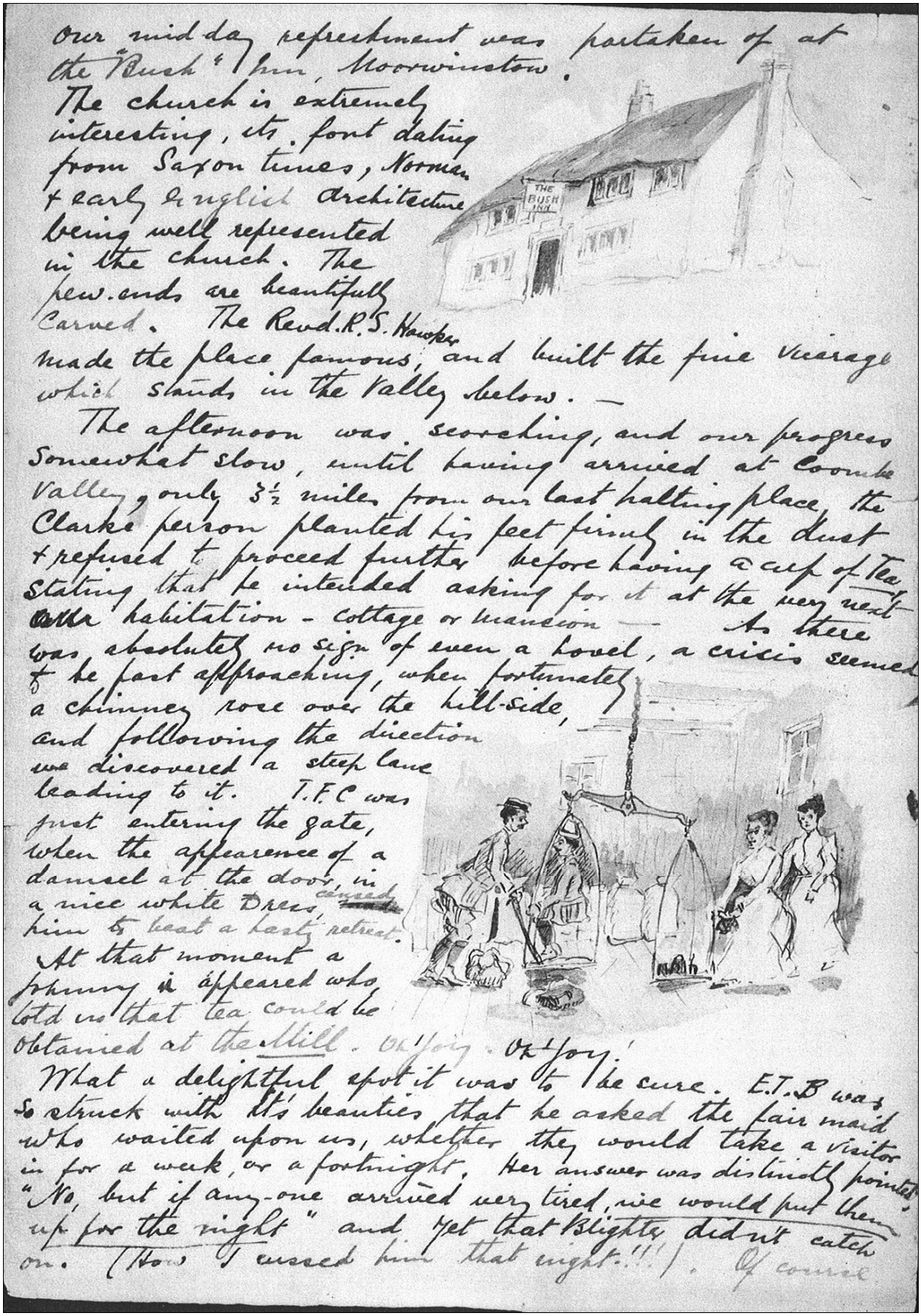
Meanwhile, Mrs Tape and her daughters were taking advantage of a new source of income: as three walkers found to their relief when on a coastal tour in the summer of 1906, teas were served at the mill. One of them, T.F. Clarke, was to become a regular visitor to Coombe. That same year he returned to stay at the mill for Christmas, taken in by the Tape family as a special favour. Many years later he wrote a vivid account of it in *The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street*, of

which a copy is included in this album [see annexes]. Later he took photographs, too, which show the hamlet as the working place it still was.

That era was coming to end. Archie moved away in about 1918. Of the Tape brothers, only Claude stayed on. Already running the other side of the family business, the sawmill and farm (he is remembered as a master cider maker), he now ran the mill too, until lack of business forced it to close around 1928.

Claude continued as farmer, with first his sister Amy and later his wife Irene doing an increasingly thriving trade in teas, and putting up a few farmhouse guests too (a guide of 1936 says that the mill `*may put you up out of season if it has nothing better to do*'). By the time of his death in 1961, he was the owner not only of the mill farm, which he bought from the Stowe estate in 1949, but of the whole of Coombe, bought up bit by bit from the 1920s on.

However, in 1962 his widow remarried and sold the farm, with her other property in Coombe, to R.A. Parker of Morwenstow, farmer. Mr Parker hoped to bring in more tourists. Mill House was divided in two, with what is now No 1 being let to summer visitors. Public loos were built beyond the mill. But in 1966 he sold it all to the Landmark Trust, which kept the buildings but passed on all but the central orchards to the National Trust.



T.F Clarke's travel diary of 1906, describing his arrival at Coombe

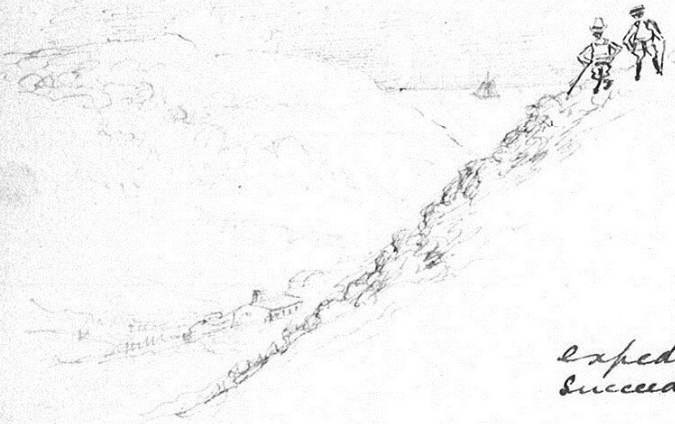
was all the answer to be got out of him. A sleepier place I've never been in. Through a private park to Stoke: (We had to climb over a gate at the other end); the Church is very fine, its tall slender spire forming a prominent landmark. Tids had been to Hartland Quay before, and when we had walked on for half an hour, and were well out of sight of any human habitation, he played a cruel, cruel trick on the half famished & much exhausted Thomas, by asking him in a most concerned voice whether he could see any signs of the Hotel. Thomas looked up and down the Coast, and nothing but the bare cliffs met his gaze - he looked behind & he looked in front, but all was blank. His knees gave way (See sketch) as he shrieked in a cracked voice "D— it all man, you don't mean to say you've missed it". Luckily for Tids Thomas in the next half minute we nearly stumbled over the roof of it.

T.F.C changes his plates in a lumber cupboard

"We make the acquaintance of the "lobster."

We got away from Eggs & bacon here. dividing a fowl between us for Supper. T.F.C was shoved into a lumber cupboard under the stairs to change his beloved plates, and on emerging found that E.T.B. had made the acquaintance of the "lobster" So called from his wonderful resemblance to that crustacean, (after boiling):—

"It was a fortunate thing, as our tobacco had run very low, and he replenished our stock."



Welcome bay. How the deuce are we to get down.—

The walk over the cliffs was a bit heavy. Welcome offered some difficulties, but the expedition eventually succeeded in over coming them.

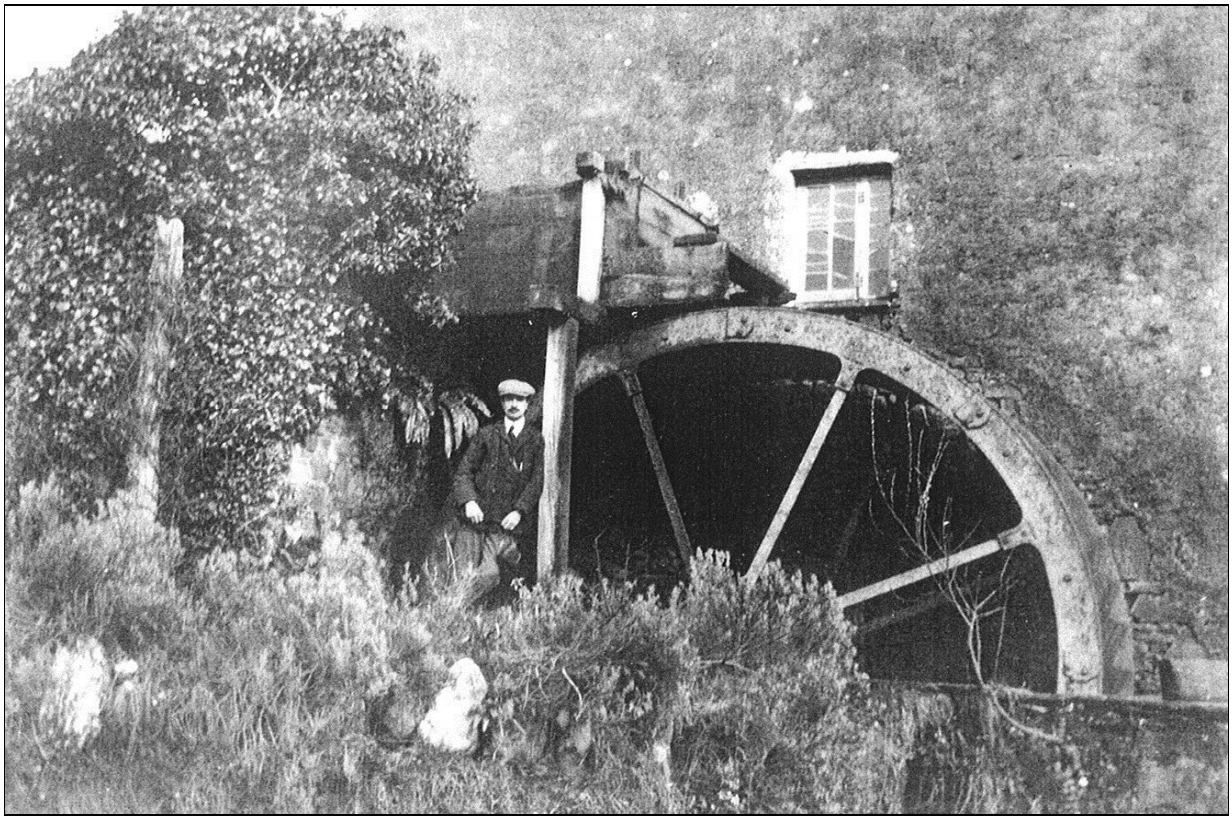
Did the gorse prick Mr Peel?

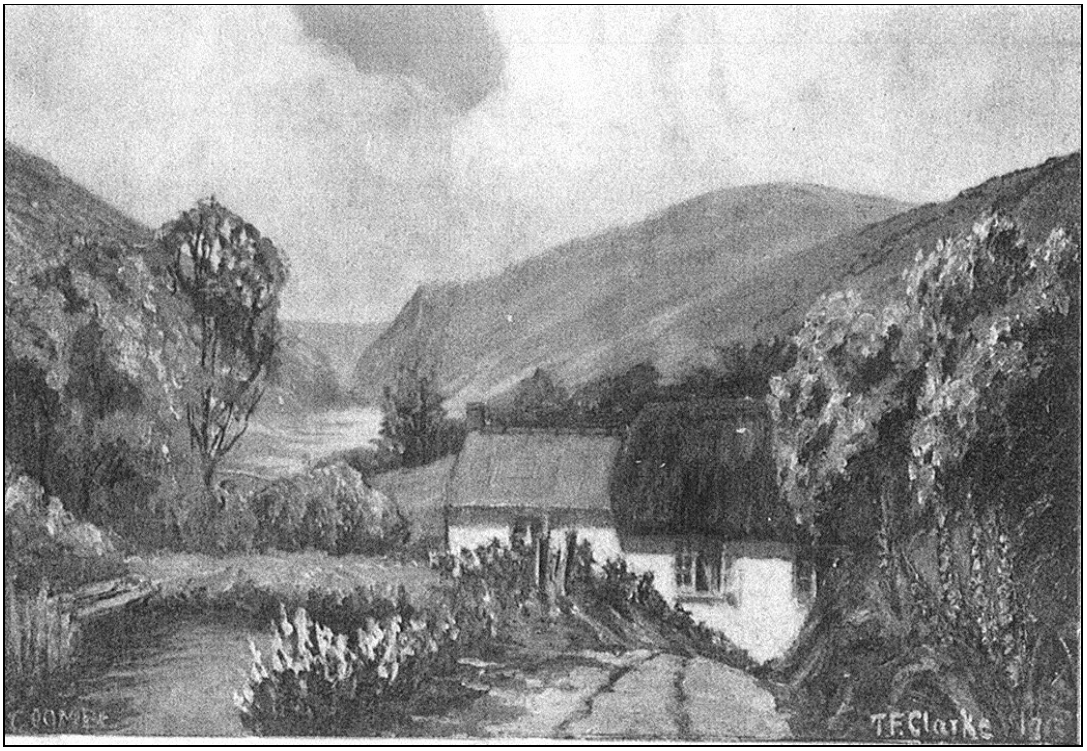
My knickers were very thin, Mr Peel! Very thin indeed.

overcoming the difficulties! (?)

Photographs taken by T.F. Clarke 1912-13

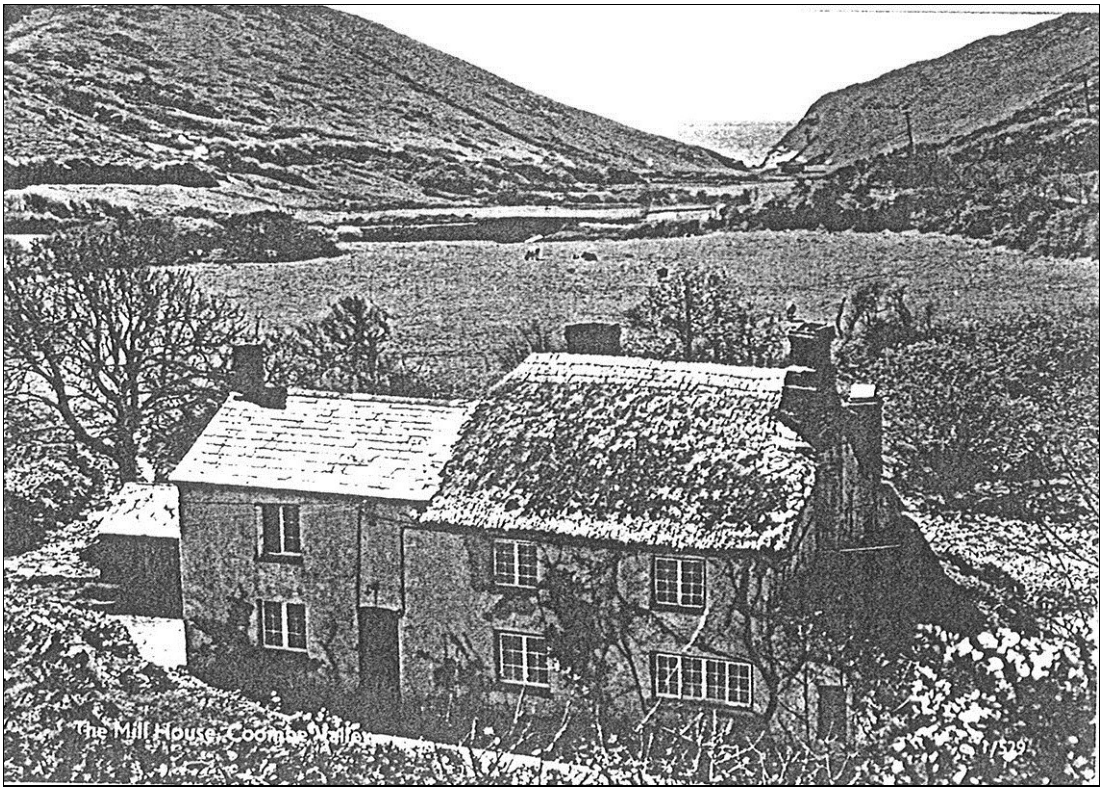
The Mill in 1912





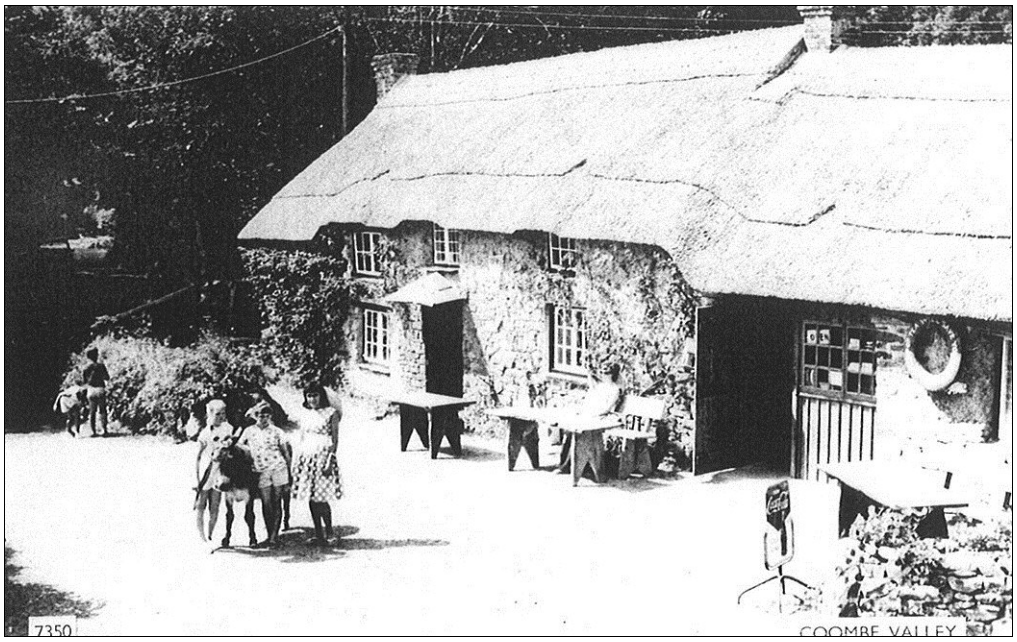
The Mill House painted by T.F. Clarke in 1913

The Mill House in the 1930s



The Mill House in about 1960

Postcards showing Ford Cottage as it was when owned by the Tapes, perhaps in the 1930s, and below in the 1960s, after alterations by Mr Parker



Ford Cottage

Ford Cottage is slightly older than Mill House, from which it differs in being longer and lower: three rooms when built instead of two but an upper floor that was little more than a loft. Its roof of pegged collar rafters and the chamfered lintel of the sitting room fireplace suggest a date well before 1700. Like the Mill House it has the thick walls of pre-Georgian houses.

It is difficult to say exactly when in the 17th century it was built; perhaps after 1650 from the fact that both chimneys have cloam bread ovens, from Bideford. Such ovens came in from about 1650, before that being brick or stone. The end chimney looks like an addition, but must have been an early one to judge by its fireplace lintel.

As originally arranged it had at the ford end an inner room (perhaps a parlour from its fireplace) whose partition was just to the left of the present front door; a main room or hall in the middle, for cooking and eating, with its fireplace (now in the kitchen) backing onto the entry or cross passage; and beyond that an outer service room. The passage, with doors front and back, ran through the present bathroom. In what is now a bulge in the back wall of the living room, there was a stair to the upper floor where, to judge from the windows, there were once three small bedrooms. The level of the ground floor has been raised, but the ceilings of both floors must have been very low.

Over time, the cottage has been altered inside and out. Outside, the limewash hides much mending and patching. At some stage, perhaps before 1800, the service room became a workshop. Later it had a cider press in it. Whether the main door was made wider for this, as has been said, or longer ago, is not known. The present front door may have been made at the same time, but the

two brackets holding up the canopy above it, although 18th century, were added later. It is said they came from a wreck.

As mentioned before, a building is shown here on Gascoyne's map of 1694. It may then have been part of the mill farm but by the 1840s it was a separate tenancy, which included the land between the stream and mill leat as far north as the weir - the three Coombe meadows of 1694. Interestingly, both the 1840 Tithe Survey and the 1881 census record its name as King's Cliffe. The tenant in 1840 was John Tape, whom the census of the next year shows to have been a Master Carpenter, aged 55, living with his wife Fanny, 35 and their 5 year old son, Henry. They have a lodger, George Cole, still a farm labourer at 75.

Over the next twenty years, the censuses record Henry growing up and starting in his father's trade. By 1861 he too was a Master Carpenter, had married and set up his own household (possibly under the same roof), with his wife Betsy, slightly older than him at 27, and a baby, George, aged 8 months.

By 1871, John Tape had died and Fanny was living with her son's family. This census reveals her contributing to the family budget as a dressmaker. For Henry and Betsy Tape, these had been years of expansion in all senses. Six more children had been born (Margaret, Sophia, Frederick, Tryphena, Archebold and Herbert), and the business was doing well enough to allow Henry to employ a journeyman carpenter, Henry Oke, to take his father's place. By 1881, George and Frederick, now 20 and 16, were old enough to help. The two elder daughters are not listed, perhaps having left home, and Archebold is also missing, but four more children had been born, Archebert, Tryphosa, Claude and Amy, who with Tryphena and Herbert were still at school.

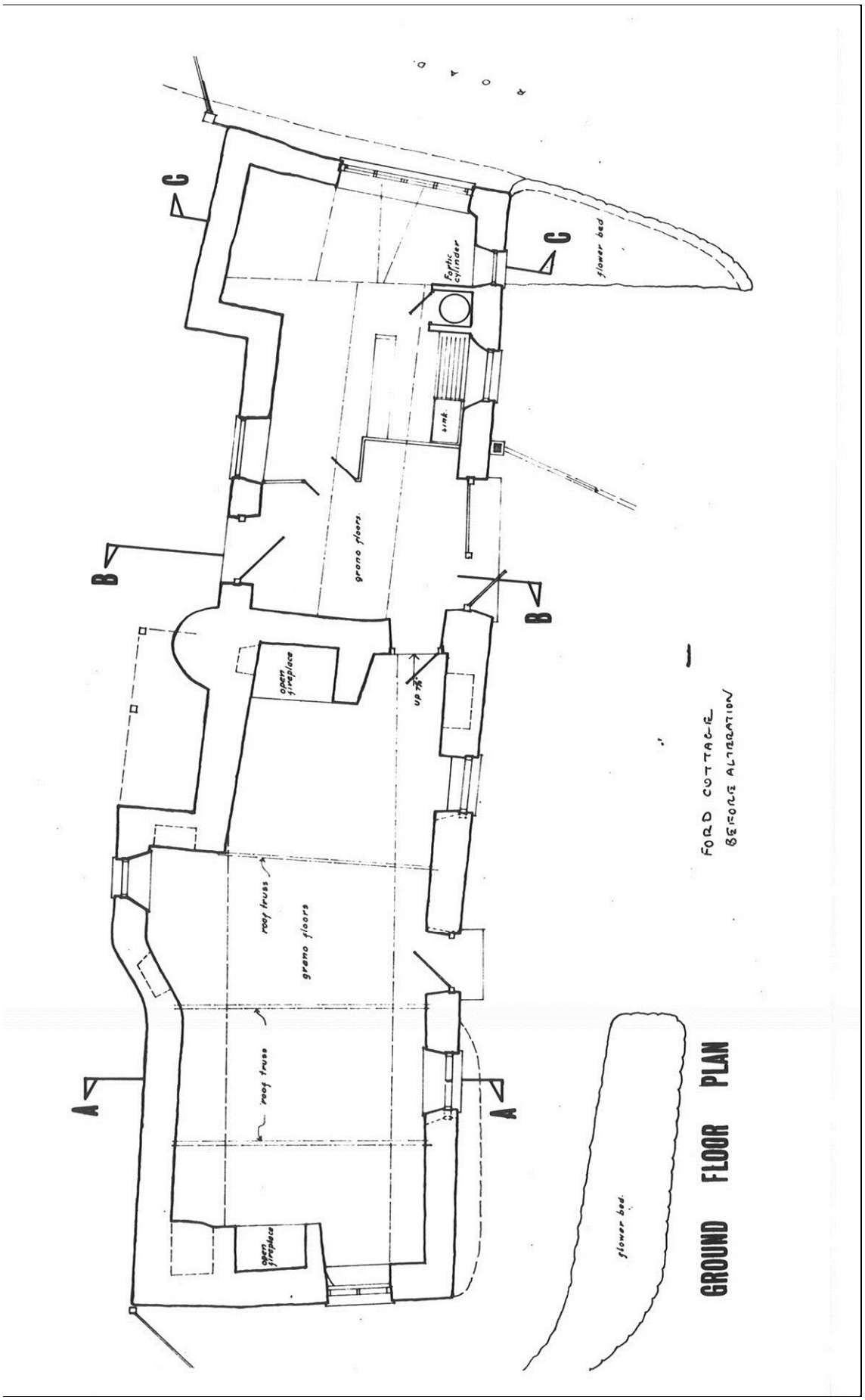
Henry and Betsy Tape and their family

In 1891, as we have already seen, Henry Tape had also taken on the tenancy of the mill, and moved into Mill House with those of his family still living at home. Frederick and Herbert were the carpenters, Archie was running the mill, while Claude provided transport. Tryphena, now 15, was perhaps helping her mother run the house, while only the youngest, Amy, was still at school. This flourishing family business features as Henry Tape & Sons, carpenters and millers (water) in Kelly's Directory of Cornwall of 1893.

When the family moved into Mill House, it seems that Ford Cottage was left to stand empty. Certainly this is how Mrs Vera Moore remembers it in her childhood just before the First World War. By that time, however, the business of selling teas to tourists was also beginning to thrive. A photograph of 1912 shows a table outside Ford Cottage. There were others outside the mill and on the high ground in front of it, known as "up slip". Amy Tape was in charge and turned the whole area into a flower garden, which she guarded jealously: one of the least favourite tasks of the nephews and nieces drafted in to help was to charge visitors seen helping themselves to a choice bloom.

Trade presumably died away in 1914, but after the War, the Tapes were back in business, and now Ford Cottage was converted into a proper tea room. The upper floor and all partitions to the left of the central chimney were swept away, to make one big room. This was simply furnished, the walls hung with a variety of objects, including musical instruments, for the Tapes were a musical family. There was a piano, too, with skittles and other games. The food was cooked in the Mill House and brought over. Views of it appeared as postcards, both before and after the Second World War. J.R. Hockin in *Walking in Cornwall* of 1936 notes that `*the mill makes a perfect tea garden*'.

The trade in teas continued after the sale of the Tape property to Mr Parker in 1962. He made some improvements to the Tea Rooms, turning the old cider shed into a shop, fitting the oak screen into the wide doorway. Thus it was when bought by Landmark in 1966.


GROUND FLOOR PLAN
FORD COTTAGE
BEFORE ALTERATION
flower bed
flower bed
Gothic cylinder
sink
grano floors
OPEN fireplace
up
roof truss
grano floors
roof truss
roof truss
OPEN fireplace
A
A
B
B
C
C

The Tape's tea room in Ford Cottage

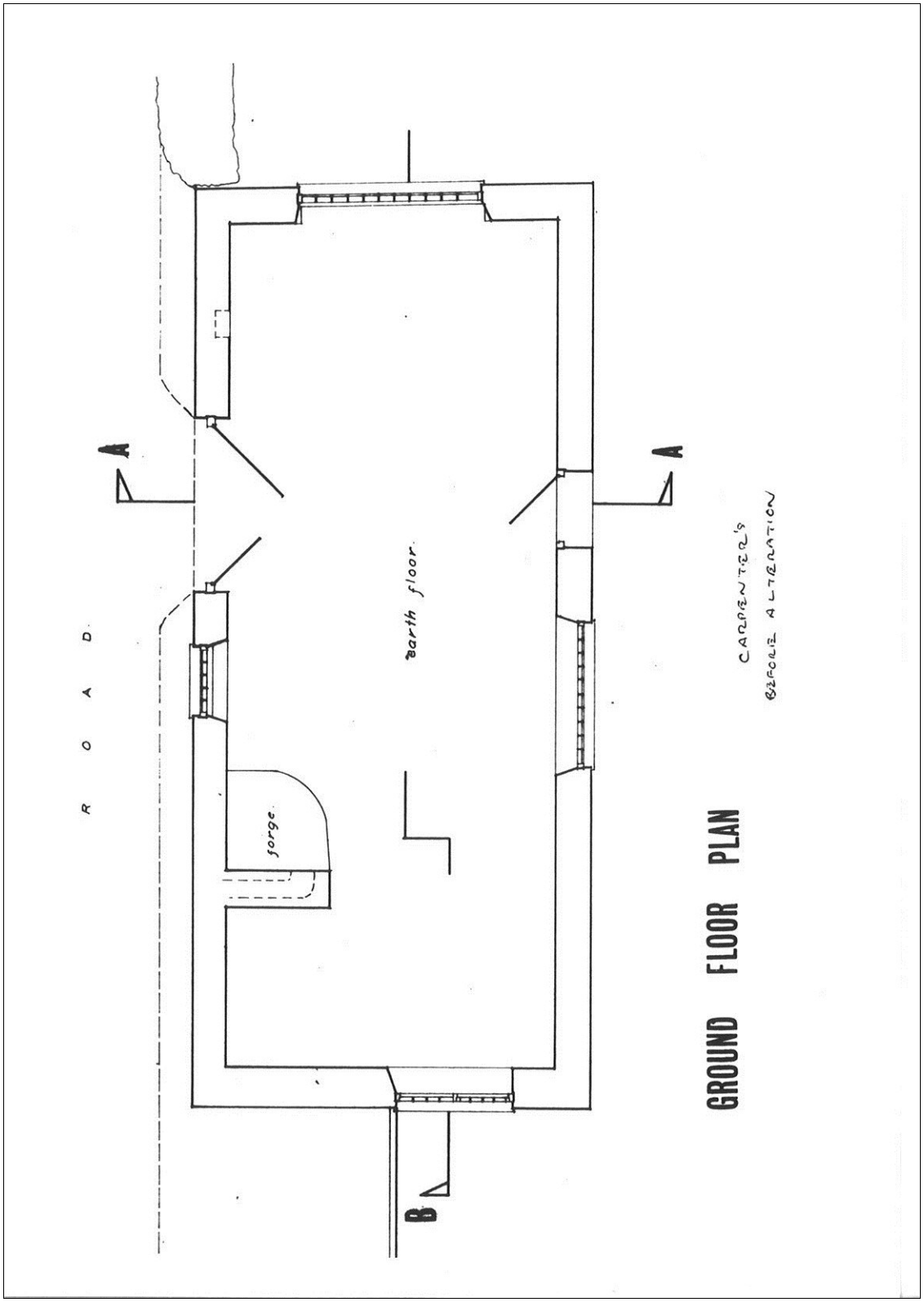
The Carpenter's Shop

This looks as though it was built at about the same time as the Mill; or some years earlier, since it is clearly shown on the Tithe map of 1840. Its roughly dressed stone and flat brick arches over the windows are typical early 19th century work. The windows, with their vertical bars and overlapping glass, are of the kind found in many workshops and industrial buildings - and elsewhere in Coombe. In 1966, some of it was old picture glass, an example of traditional thrifty recycling.

The Tithe map shows the building as standing on land belonging to King's Cliffe, now Ford Cottage, which was let to John Tape, the carpenter. It must therefore have been he who built it, perhaps with help from the Stowe estate.

Whether there had been a carpenter working in Coombe before John Tape, we don't know, but it is possible, since the right hand end of Ford Cottage seems once to have been a workshop, which would therefore predate the new building. Or they could of course have succeeded one another within the lifetime of John Tape himself, since he was already 55 in 1841.

One tradition says that this was in fact the workshop for the Stowe estate, but the Tithe map seems to indicate that John Tape was a tenant running his own business, as his son Henry was certainly to do later on, and not an estate employee. No doubt much of their business came from the estate, however, while timber from the woods all around was dragged down the hill to be sawn up there. Photographs taken earlier this century show piles of wood stacked up near the mill.


A
A
B
earth floor
forge
ROAD
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
CARPENTER'S
BEFORE ALTERATION

The Tapes were apparently wheelwrights as well as carpenters: the big weight on the floor of the present sitting room was used during the process of fitting iron rims onto the wheels. The iron itself was also heated here, the forge being the present fireplace. The forge bellows were where the W.C. now is. According to one tradition, long boats were also made here. The board with `George' painted on it was found here in 1968, before the alterations, and looks as though it came from a boat.

Even before the Tapes left Coombe, the Carpenter's Shop stood empty, having been used only as a store for many years. It was already becoming derelict when the Landmark bought it, with Ford Cottage and the Mill, in 1966.

Hawker's Cottages

Hawker's Cottages, being on the other side of the stream, and therefore belonging to Eastway in Morwenstow and not to Stowe, have until this century had a separate history to the houses round the mill. We have already seen that this is the likely site for the house lived in by the Chings in the 16th century. A quick look soon makes it clear that the two ends were built at different dates, although for much of their existence they have been one house.

No 2, at the northern end, is the older half, the third of Coombe's old houses. Like them it has walls two feet thick, and like Ford Cottage it has a pegged collar rafter roof and a cloam bread oven, all pointing to a date in the 17th century, as do the flat balusters of the oak stair, though these may have been reused from elsewhere.

Unlike Ford Cottage, however, the living quarters were here on the first floor, with, it has been suggested, a workshop or even a cow byre on the ground floor. The partitions forming the two northern bedrooms are later insertions: originally there was just one big room, a hall or kitchen, to the right of the stair, and another smaller one to the left of it. There is a kitchen similarly placed on the first floor at Neadon, near Bovey Tracey in Devon.

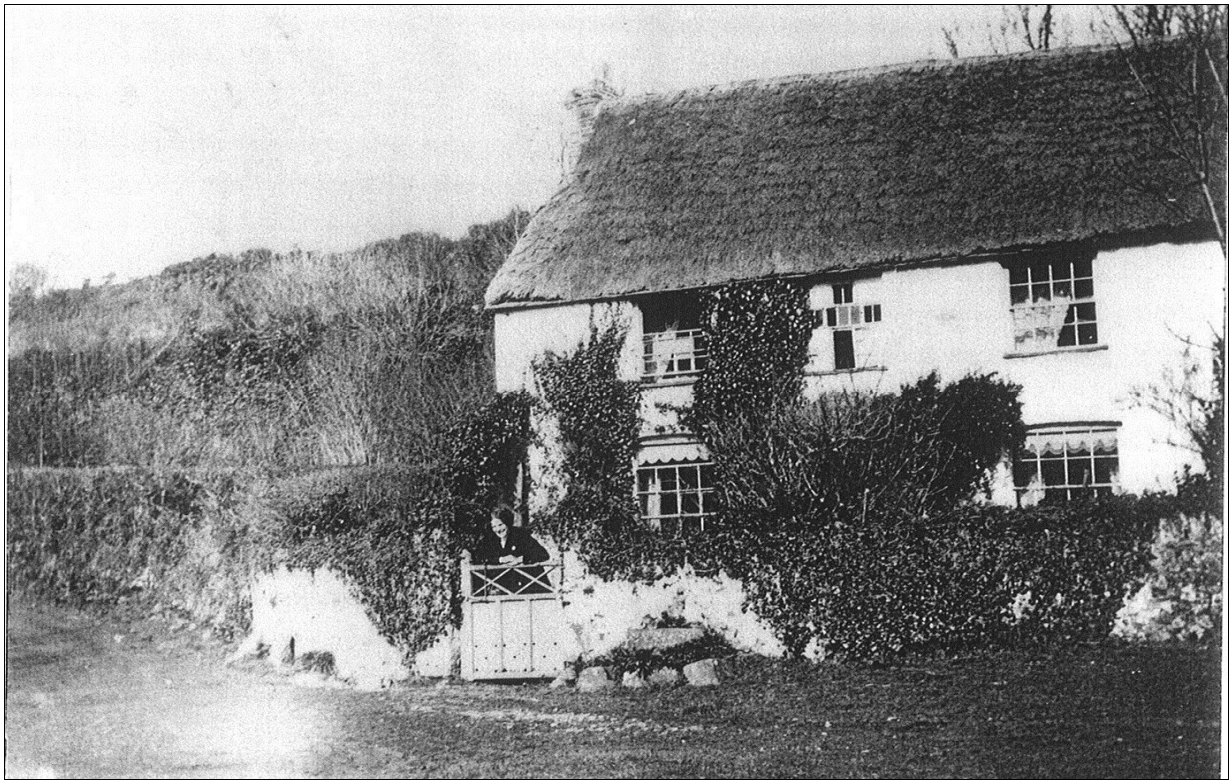
Access to the old kitchen may have been from inside the ground floor, or more probably through a door that is now blocked at the back, at the top of the stairs. The ground here used to come up against the wall at first floor level. Both the Tithe Map of 1840 and the O.S. 25in. to 1 mile map of 1885 show a projection where this blocked door now is, and there was a path leading to it, as though it

was a porch. More recently, the door just lead to the privy, which is still there, across the divide.

Another possibility is that there were steps to a door in the front, where the middle window is now. On the other hand, this might simply have been a loading bay at a stage when it has been suggested the old kitchen became a granary or hayloft, with the byre beneath.

If that is what happened, it must have been after the southern end was added, probably in the mid to late 18th century. Its plan of central staircase hall with room on either side and three rooms above reflects the next stage in farmhouse building after the Mill House type. Both front door and frame are 17th century, reused from a source unknown, like the pieces of 17th century panelling and remains of a leaded window in the stairwell.

Some support for this downgrading of the old house in the 18th century comes from Henry Spry's map of Eastway in 1790. Coombe Farm is shown as a house of three bays or windows, with a central door - exactly like No 1. Admittedly, all the houses on the map are shown thematically, in map-makers' code: seven bays for manor houses, with a chimney at either end, three for farmhouses, with no attempt to show wings or architectural differences. However, a farmhouse of one storey is shown as that, and farm buildings, for obvious reasons, are shown without chimneys. Coombe farmhouse is shown as described above, but on its right hand end, and in range with it, is shown a slightly lower, un-chimneyed (i.e. farm or service) building, just where No 2 is in relation to No 1. Further accuracy is shown by the presence of the stone barn now used as a store on the other side of the track at the north end.



Hawker's No 1 in 1912, taken on his honeymoon by T.F. Clarke

Below, the problems of horse-drawn transport

The Vicar of Morwenstow

By the 1820s, this Coombe farmhouse had entered a new phase. At about this time, in fact, it seems to have stopped being a farmhouse. Instead, it was to enjoy a spell as a gentleman's residence in a pretty setting, having acquired the properly picturesque name of Coombe Cottage. It was in this character that it was rented in 1824 or 1825 - possibly both - by the young Robert Hawker, who was to become famous as Vicar of Morwenstow from 1834 until his death in 1875, and as a writer and poet.

In his *Life of Robert Stephen Hawker*, the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould tells how Hawker spent his honeymoon in Coombe Cottage after his impetuous but fortunate marriage to his godmother Charlotte l'ans in November 1824, when still at Oxford; and records the story of the practical joke he played on two friends, Sir William and George Call (of Whiteford, where the Temple is now a Landmark). After much telling of ghost-stories at dinner, Sir William had declared his disbelief in `spectral appearances'. Goaded, Hawker ambushed them on their way home in a dark place on the hill below Stowe, disguised in a sheet, and, with the aid of a light and an old iron spoon full of flaming brandy, succeeded in frightening them out of their wits. They returned, shaking, to Coombe and knocked on the door:

"Hawker put his head with nightcap on out of the bedroom-window, and asked who were disturbing his rest. They begged to be admitted: they had something of importance to communicate. He came downstairs in a dressing gown, and introduced them to his parlour. There the iron spoon was examined. `It is very ancient' said Sir William: `the date on it is 1702 - just the time when Stowe was pulled down'. `It smells very strong of brandy' said George Call. Robert Hawker's twinkling eye and twitching mouth revealed the rest."

On the other hand, others, including A.L. Rowse in an essay on Hawker for the English Association's *Essays and studies* of 1959, say that Hawker spent his honeymoon at Tintagel, and rented Coombe Cottage for his long vacation the following year, 1825. Certainly, it was that year that he wrote his best known poem, *The Trelawney Ballad or Song of the Western Men "under a stag-headed oak in Sir Bevill's Walk in Stowe Wood"*, as he himself stated. Perhaps the Hawkers rented the cottage for a year, from shortly after their marriage, which would take in both visits. Hawker also spent time in Morwenstow in 1828, when reading for Holy Orders, perhaps again renting this cottage.

THE SONG OF THE WESTERN MEN.

A GOOD sword and a trusty hand!
A merry heart and true!
King James's men shall understand
What Cornish lads can do!

And have they fixed the where and when?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!

Out spake their Captain brave and bold:
A merry wight was he:—
"If London Tower were Michael's hold,
We'd set Trelawny free!

"We'll cross the Tamar, land to land:
The Severn is no stay:
With 'one and all,' and hand in hand;
And who shall bid us nay?

"And when we come to London Wall,
A pleasant sight to view,
Come forth! come forth! ye cowards all:
Here's men as good as you.

"Trelawny he's in keep and hold:
Trelawny he may die:
But here's twenty thousand Cornish bold
Will know the reason why!"

Hawker's legacy to the cottage, besides his name, is said to have been the odd cross-shaped window on the first floor of No. 1, a whimsical conceit of the same kind as his chimneys on Morwenstow Vicarage, modelled on Cornish church towers. He also benefitted Coombe in other ways, since he was responsible for building King William's Bridge over the stream below the hamlet, replacing a smaller one that was often flooded.

Hawker used the road through Coombe regularly, in spite of the steepness of the hills, as the shortest route from Bude to his Vicarage. On one occasion in 1856, his journey nearly ended in disaster, as he described it in a letter to a friend. With a carriage already suffering from two broken springs, and with failing lanterns on a dark and rainy night: -

"We arrived at Stowe. There we succeeded in negotiating a loan of another piece of candle, and moved on, a rare and rending headache meanwhile throbbing under my hat. Half-way down Stowe hill, the drag-chain broke suddenly, and but for extreme good behaviour on the part of the horses - shall I add, good driving on mine? - we must have gone over in a heap, to the great delight of the Dissenters in this district. We did at last arrive home, but it was in a very disconsolate condition."

The connection between Parson Hawker and every corner of his remote parish is close, but Coombe has a good claim to him even so, with this cottage named after him as well as the bridge. Moreover the Tapes were a `church' family, for which the vicar must have been grateful in a parish so strong in Nonconformity. Mrs Vera Moore, indeed, remembers being told of his unusual appearance by her aunt Sophy Tape who, born in 1864, could just remember him.

Whether Hawker's Cottage No. 2 was back in domestic use in the 1820s when the Hawkers stayed there is uncertain, but likely. Old doors link the two ends on both ground and first floor. The whole house was very probably repaired and smartened up at around this time. Here again the 19th century records help to throw a little light.

The Tithe Survey gives two tenants for Coombe Farm: the fields, including the orchards in the middle of the hamlet, were let to Richard Harris, also tenant of Cleave Farm. But the house itself was occupied by Rev. Oliver Rouse. Now this was the name of the vicar of Morwenstow from 1741-1781, the last one to be resident there before Hawker himself. He had married Honor, sister and heiress of Thomas Waddon of Tonacombe in the same parish, and through her acquired both Cleave and Eastway, which were leased by the Waddons from the Duchy of Cornwall.

Mr Rouse actually lived at Eastway, rather than the Vicarage, which was let to the parish clerk. Hawker used to tell an amusing story of this rather bucolic figure, a genuine squarson in his combined roles of Squire and Parson, who might have stepped from the pages of Henry Fielding. This was repeated by Rev Sabine Baring-Gould in his biography of Hawker, where he described how Rev. Oliver Rouse and his brother-in-law:

"used to dine alternately at each other's house. As they grew merry over their port, the old gentlemen uproariously applauded any novel joke or story by rattling their glasses on the table. Having laughed at each other's venerable anecdotes for the last twenty years, the introduction of a new tale or witticism was hailed

with the utmost enthusiasm. This enthusiasm reached such a pitch, that, in their applause of each other's sallies, they occasionally broke their wineglasses.

The vicar of Morwenstow, when Mr Waddon snapped off the foot of his glass, would put the foot in his pocket and treasure it; for each wineglass broken was to him a testimony to the brilliancy of his jokes, and also a reminder to him of them for future use. In time he had accumulated a considerable number of broken wineglasses, and he had them fitted together to form an enormous lantern; and thenceforth, when he went to dine at Stanbury, this testimony of his triumphs was borne lighted before him. The lantern fell into the hands of Mr Hawker, and he presented it to the lineal descendant of Mr Waddon, as a family relic."

The county histories describe how on his death, Oliver Rouse left his property to James Martyn of London, who in turn bequeathed Eastway to his niece, Miss Manning, and Cleave to Rev. John Rouse, of Tetcott in Devon, who was described as its `proprietor' in the 1820s. Old Cleave House was let to a Mr Tinney, the farm to Richard Harris, but Coombe Cottage was apparently retained by someone who must belong to the same family. It is possible, indeed, that there was in 1840 no Oliver Rouse involved at all, and that the name of the 18th century parson was taken from an old lease or family trust. Whether the Rev. John, or a younger Rev. Oliver was involved, one or other may have done up Coombe Cottage for their own use, and then let it to Hawker.

That the Rouses also used it themselves is confirmed by the census of 1841 which shows Coombe Cottage occupied by a Rev. Ezekiel Rouse, `*a clergyman of the Church of England not having the Cure of Souls'*. He is 33, and his wife

Elizabeth, born in Kilkhampton, is 32. They have two children, Priscilla, 5, and Ezekiel, newly born; and two female servants.

The family were still there ten years later. An older daughter, Elizabeth, had appeared, aged 18. She was born in Poughill, so the family may have lived there before moving to Coombe. The Priscilla and Ezekiel of 1841 are not listed, but there is a new daughter, Susan, aged 2. The family had been joined by a Rouse aunt, Jane; and besides two young maids, there is an errand boy, William Francis, aged 14. The two maids, Drusilla and Catherine Tredinick, provide a link with the Rev. John Rouse, because both were born in Tetcott, Devon, where he is said to have come from.

The Rouses make no appearance in 1861, and may have left. Coombe Cottage is not mentioned specifically, the households in the hamlet just being listed in order as the assessor visited them. But at about this time it seems that the Cottage may have been divided in two and let to poor families. Only in 1881 does the name Coombe Cottage reappear, and this time it is listed twice, for two households, who appear in the same order in the previous return, for 1871, suggesting that they were living in the same houses then.

The first household is that of Anne Kempthorne, the widow of a farm labourer; the second that of John Ham, a farm labourer, who is deaf, but apparently able to work and support his wife Mary and family of five children. The Kempthornes, whose name in true Thomas Hardy fashion is that of the ancient family which owned Tonacombe in the Middle Ages, had appeared in the earlier censuses, living at Lower Ovis. The husband had died between 1841 and 1851, leaving his widow Anne to be described as a pauper in 1851, supporting three small children.

They were clearly a resourceful family, however: in 1861, the two sons, now teenagers, must have been apprenticed, because when they reappear in 1871, possibly living in half of Coombe Cottage, one is a blacksmith and the other a cordwainer, as well as being a Wesleyan preacher. The daughter, Mary, who had stayed at home all the time, earned her living as a dress maker. In 1881, now definitely in Coombe Cottage, the two sons had apparently moved away, leaving Anne and Mary, with just a young nephew living with them.

In 1891, Coombe Cottage had gone back to being one house, once again lived in by the gentry: Jessie Woodgate, a widow of 43, born in Perthshire and living on her own means. Her son Francis, aged 26, who lived with her, was born at Norwood in Surrey, so here are early signs of the flight from the Home Counties to Cornwall that was soon to become widespread. The Woodgates had an exotically named visitor, Fardle Jepson, staying with them, and a domestic servant, a local girl called Mary Yeo, living in.

At the beginning of this century, Coombe Cottage, like the rest of Coombe, became part of the Tape domain. Archie Tape lived there from about 1910, and his daughter Vera was born there. She remembers the big upstairs room of No. 2 being known as Ann Cann's kitchen, which implies that it had been a separate tenement. Perhaps Ann Cann was in fact Anne Kempthorne, though there were other Canns living at Coombe. The Tapes used it for storing apples. They also let rooms in No. 1, and these were rented in 1912 by T.F. Clarke, for his honeymoon. He has already appeared in the story of Mill House, having first come to Coombe in 1906 on what his daughter called a `*Three-Men-in-a-Boatish*' walking tour with friends, which he recorded in an illustrated diary.

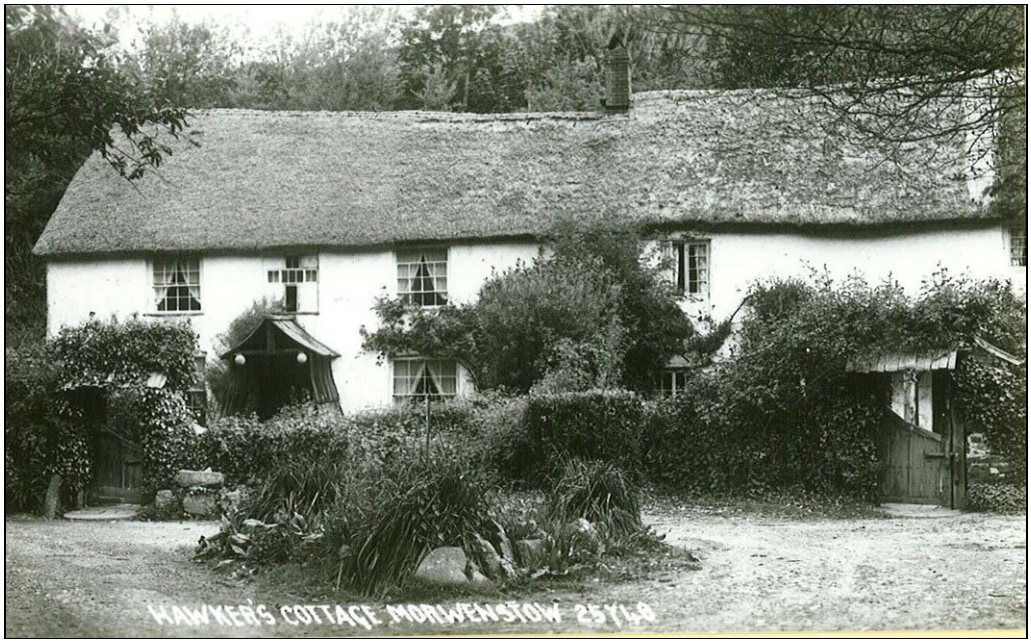
The Tapes left Hawker's about 1918. Soon afterwards the cottage was rented by a retired naval officer, Captain Huntingdon Waller, who lived there with his sister Ellen. He may already have been the tenant when Cleave and Eastway farms were sold by the Duchy of Cornwall in 1922 to Edith Allin, wife of Richard Allin, the tenant farmer at Cleave. Coombe Cottage and the land round it still formed part of this property, but in 1925, Mrs Allin sold it to Captain Waller, with the orchard between it and the stream, north of the road.

Mrs Moore remembers the Captain and his sister as great characters who filled the cottage with Indian rugs and other exotic things. It was they too who added the ornamental porches and lychgates. The Captain died in 1928, and his tombstone, with a suitably nautical inscription, is just by the lychgate into Morwenstow churchyard. Ellen Waller died a year later.

The Wallers had renamed the cottage Hall Barn, but in the deeds relating to its sale in 1929 to Claude Tape of Coombe Mill, its present name of Hawker's Cottage occurs officially for the first time. It had probably been widely used locally for decades.

Under the Tapes it was divided in two once again and let to new tenants. At one stage Claude Tape's two sons, Michael and John, lived there, but Michael later moved away. When a great flood swept through Coombe in 1958 (furniture was swept away and beehives were seen bobbing out to sea), the children had to be rescued from the first floor. On his death in 1961, Claude Tape left the cottages to his sons outright. John Tape was the last of his family to live in Coombe, but sold No 2 to Landmark in 1968, to move nearer the centre of the parish. Michael Tape sold No l to Landmark a year later, but his tenants, the Lisneys, stayed on there as custodians for Coombe until Mr Lisney died in 1976. They were

followed by the Hopgoods. Mrs Hopgood became under-housekeeper, helping Edna Brown, chief housekeeper of Coombe for many years. When they left in 1985, No 1 was let as a Landmark.



Hawker's cottage before restoration

Chapel Cottage

A Bible Christian chapel is marked on the Ordnance Survey map of Coombe in 1885, but for how long it had then existed is not entirely clear. It is hard to believe that it could have been put up so close to Coombe Cottage while Rev. Ezekiel Rouse was living there, and indeed, other evidence points to a date around 1860 for its arrival.

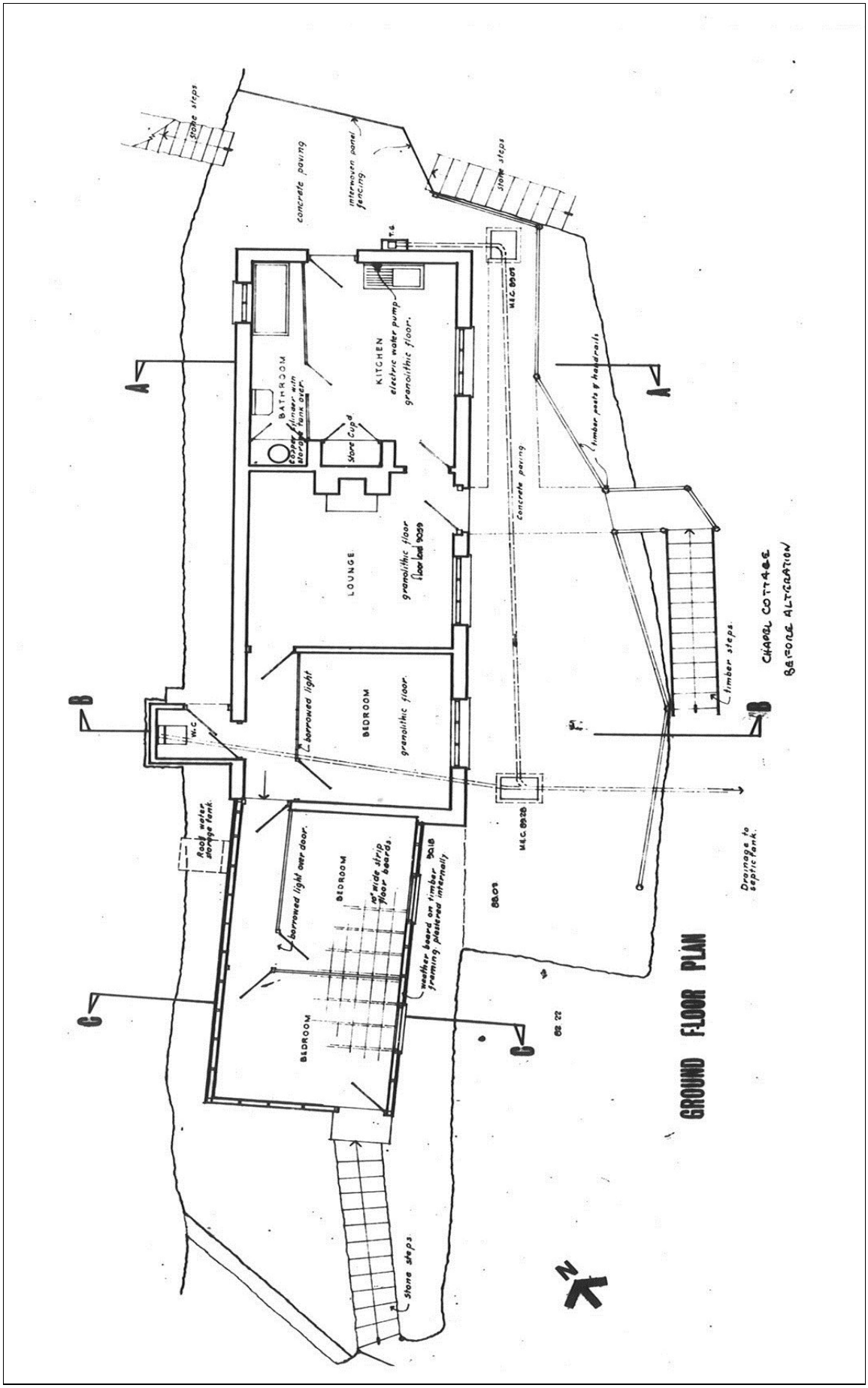
The subject of Dissent was known to cause wrath in Parson Hawker: when he became Vicar in 1834, Nonconformist worship was widespread in the parish. Even under his devoted care there was little sign of a return to the established church - he wrote in a letter in 1864 that `Morwenstow is, as it always has been, Wesleyan to the backbone'. If Hawker exaggerated in saying that there had been no resident vicar for a century (Oliver Rouse was resident in the parish if not in the vicarage itself until 1781), the influence of the Church of England had undeniably been weak for a long time, and in the decades before and after 1800 the vacuum had been filled by Methodism. This came in two forms, pure Wesleyan or its Cornish offshoot, Bible Christian, known as Bryanite after its founder, in 1815, William Bryan of Luxulyan.

The strongly revivalist and ecstatic Bryanite preachers appealed strongly to the Cornish poor, giving them a sense of purpose and brotherhood; and horrified the established clergy like Hawker, who saw them as demoralizing the people. In the words of his near contemporary, Baring-Gould, "*the Cornish Bryanites profess entire freedom from obligation to keep the law, and the complete emancipation from irksome moral restraint of those who are children of God, made so by free grace and a saving faith*".

By 1838, a Bible Christian ‘circuit' was established in north east Cornwall, based on Kilkhampton, and covering the neighbouring parishes as well as those over the border in Devon, such as Clovelly and Hartland. Local congregations raised the funds to build and maintain their own chapels, and would then be visited by itinerant preachers. These chapels were usually plain and simple buildings, not unlike the farm buildings and cottages among which they often stood.

Two registers of Baptisms survive for the Kilkhampton circuit, starting in 1838 and continuing until 1895. These are not entirely reliable evidence for the existence of chapels at a certain date, since it was common practice for babies to be baptised in their parents' homes. However in the first twenty years there are regular mentions of chapels in Woodford, Eastcote and Gooseham, all hamlets in the parish of Morwenstow. Only in 1861 does the baptism take place in the Coombe Meeting House of Ann, daughter of Daniel Cornish, a farm labourer, and his wife Sarah Jane. There is then silence for another six years, until in 1867, Emma Jane, daughter of John and Elizabeth Cann is baptized in ‘Coombe Tabernacle'. For the next ten years, one or two baptisms took place there most years, quite a number of them being additional Canns. Each time it is referred to as the Tabernacle, as distinct from a chapel.

Thereafter, mentions of it are rare, but this seems to be because the practice of home baptism had become almost universal, and was adopted by several inhabitants of Coombe, including the Hams who may have been living in Hawker's. However, the chapel was clearly still there in 1885; and in the 1891 census, there is a note that there is a Bible Christian chapel at Coombe. It must have been given up soon after, however, and it is not named on the revised edition of the OS 6 inch map, of 1905.


GROUND FLOOR PLAN
CHAPEL COTTAGE
BEFORE ALTERATION
KITCHEN
electric water pump
granolithic floor.
BATHROOM
LOUNGE
granolithic floor
BEDROOM
granolithic floor.
BEDROOM
BEDROOM
W.C
Store Cupd
borrowed light
borrowed light over door.
Roof water storage tank.
Drainage to septic tank.
timber steps.
timber posts & handrails
concrete paving
stone steps
Stone steps.
weather board on timber framing plastered internally
A
B
C

The term `tabernacle' may have alluded to the fact that it could be moved, being not only made of timber but being equipped with wheels, which are still visible. Some explanation of this is given in an article by Roger Thorne on *The Last Bible Christians* which appeared in the Transactions of the Devonshire Association in 1975. This deals with the Bible Christian church in Devon at the time of its merger with the Methodists in 1907, but also describes the categories of chapels then in use. One of these was temporary buildings:

"Economy and lack of security sometimes made a temporary building the best choice, and these were widely advertised in the religious press in the form of `iron chapels'.... A wooden structure or vehicle was used at Yarnscombe from 1861 until 1908. Happily this small wooden hut still survives in the village, but minus its six wheels."

The Bible Christians of Coombe must have felt after a while that their temporary chapel was there to stay, since they gave it a slate roof, with a tile ridge. Inside, it was very much as it is today: the rafters nicely moulded at the base; the walls lined with Scandinavian deal, imported to Cornwall from the 18th century; with a floor of pine boards. Mrs Moore can remember it as still having its pulpit in her childhood.

The chapel was bought in 1922 with Hawker's Cottages by Mrs Allin, but was not sold by her to the Wallers. This plot was bought in 1937, for £17, by Claude Tape of the mill, rounding off his ownership of Coombe.

It was the Tapes who built a bungalow onto one end of the chapel, and made the chapel itself into two bedrooms, using it to accommodate tea room helpers and other visitors. The Bungalow was later given by Claude Tape to his wife, Irene,

who sold it to Mr Parker in 1962 together with the Mill House and Ford Cottage. Its new owner christened it Pixiewood Cottage and let it to summer visitors. When bought by the Landmark in 1966, the chapel was described as "*a substantial building constructed of perished timber*".

Chapel Cottage before restoration

Coombe Corner

The plot of land on which Coombe Corner stands is shown on the Tithe Survey as part of Coombe Farm, an arable field called No Man's Land. With the surrounding land, this was sold by the Duchy of Cornwall in 1922 to Mrs Allin. In 1934, Mrs Allin sold the plot to Mrs Rosamunde Boycott of Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire, for £100, with permission to build one house. The house was Coombe Corner.

With its painted weather-boarding and large windows it represents a completely opposite approach to building, and to living, to the old houses of Coombe. Here life is all about enjoyment, of the weather, the view, the Cornish coast, in a way that could scarcely be imagined by ordinary people even fifty years earlier. The influence of imagined places in sunnier climates pervades the building. At the same time it was made with discretion and taste, forcing itself on no one and providing an agreeable foil to its neighbours.

Mrs Boycott sold it in 1950, and it changed hands twice more - and was slightly enlarged - before the last owner, William Lawrence, sold it to Landmark in 1984. This was the last piece of land in the valley not owned either by the Landmark or the National Trust, or higher up, by the Forestry Commission. As such it was an important acquisition.

Coombe building materials

It is easy to think of Cornwall in terms of stone and slate, and see cob and thatch as belonging to Devon. In fact for the ordinary run of buildings, cob and thatch were widely used in Cornwall too, until the eighteenth century at least. Coombe is thus typical of many old settlements in the county. The old houses that have survived here were built and lived in by yeomen or small tenant farmers, built of materials that came most readily and cheaply to hand. There is little sign of any extra money being spent on decorative flourishes, because this was not a prosperous area, but the houses were solid and have lasted well. The poor cottages of farm labourers have melted away.

The cob of which the walls of Hawker's Cottages and Ford Cottage are partly built is a mixture of clay and straw, usually with some rough grit added, rammed hard in the process of building. The clay would have been dug nearby, or from the site of the house itself. To keep them waterproof, cob walls are generally rendered with a lime plaster and regularly limewashed.

Very often, as with Hawker's No. 2 and Ford, the base of the wall was built of stone, rough rubble quarried locally. This gave a firmer and drier foundation. The same rubble was very often used at later dates to patch older cob houses, so that the walls can be something of a muddle, as with Ford.

Where a farmer or landlord could afford it, rubble stone was used for the whole house, as it was for Mill House. The gable nearest the ford is still cob, however. Here and there, too, dressed stones can be seen. These may have come from the great Grenville house of Stowe after it was pulled down in 1739. Although

built mainly of brick it had stone quoins and window surrounds and provided the estate with building materials for many decades.

Brick was too expensive for general use here until the railway age (which came late to North Cornwall), and only appears in the chimneys. These are probably early 19th century re-buildings of old rubble stone chimneys.

The mill and the carpenter's shop are both built of rubble stone, but in their square lines and proportions belong recognisably to the industrial age. Their slate roofs would have come from Cornish slate quarries, probably Delabole or Trebarwith. Delabole Quarry was active in 1396 and is still worked. The slate flags on the floors of the Mill House and Hawker's No.2 would also have come from these quarries.

The thatched roofs were originally wheat straw, but in repairs since 1968 this has been replaced with reed, because it lasts longer. A thatched roof should last 50-100 years if well maintained, with its ridges kept in good repair, but may need to have the top layer renewed more often.

Living and working at Coombe

Just as their houses were built of materials found in their immediate surroundings, the people of Coombe were closely connected to the land. In the nineteenth century, apart from occasional gentry in Coombe Cottage, and apart also from the miller and the carpenter - whose business was at least dependant on farming - almost all the inhabitants were farm labourers - and if you believe Hawker, smugglers and wreckers too. They lived in what was known as `the village', a row of some half-dozen cottages on the west bank of the stream, beyond Chapel Cottage.

The reason why a hamlet grew up here at all was presumably because it was a sheltered and convenient place to live for those who worked on the old Coombe farm and others in the neighbourhood. Whether such labourers, and labourers' cottages, existed before the plentiful records of the nineteenth century are there to tell us about them, we don't know, but it is likely that there were a few cottages here by 1700 and more certainly by 1800. Of one or two rooms, mainly built of cob and thatch, with only a stone chimney, such buildings quickly vanish without trace. Only the occasional fruit tree in the middle of a wood tells of a cottage garden.

The pattern of farming in which these labourers worked changed little between 1600 and the nineteenth century. As early as 1584, John Morden wrote of the Hundred of Stratton, in which the parish of Morwenstow lies:

"It is the last hundred in Cornwall, but as frutefull as anie; both of Corne, Cattell, fish and other victualls; and the inhabitants to be commended for planting orchards, which yeldeth great store of Apples, Peares, and such like frute,

whereof they make Syder and Perye, healthsome and profitable drincke. There is also great aboundance of Garlick, the use whereof the Countrye-man holdeth salutarie, whereof they also make a comodious vente into many other shyres."

So it is likely that there were orchards in the centre of Coombe from an early date, as there certainly were by the time of Henry Spry's map of Eastway of 1790, or the Tithe Map of 1840. These two maps show much the same mixture too of arable, grazing and meadow in the fields around as was shown by the Stowe Atlas of 1694.

Some inkling of the poverty in which many of the cottagers lived comes through even the bare bones of the census returns. It was pointed out forcefully by Parson Hawker in a paper of 1861, in which he demonstrated that the practice of paying labourers almost the whole of their wages in corn left them with almost nothing after their rent for fuel, shoes, clothing and other groceries, let alone any extras.

Most survived, however, so long as there was work - and as Hawker pointed out, in a parish of six thousand acres of arable land, rented by seventy farmers (forty large and thirty small) there was plenty of work for the sixty able-bodied labourers living there, and for twenty five "half-men, at roads etc". But once the agricultural depression of the 1880s began to take effect, the choice for the labourer was a simple one: migration or starvation.

The census returns show that most took the former option: at its most crowded, in 1851, Coombe had contained 17 households; by 1881, there were 12, with one house standing empty; in 1891, in addition to the Tapes in the Mill House and the Woodgates in Hawker's Cottage, there was just one labourer, William

Vanstone, living in the village. Possibly he was the same as the William Vanstone who had lived at the mill in 1841, but was now accompanied by a wife and six children.

Even families such as the Tapes were having to diversify their activities in order to survive. In addition to being carpenters and millers, they were running a farm and, as we have seen, beginning to farm tourists too. They sold apples (by the gallon) and also earned money from `rending' the practice of tapping the sap from oak trees as it rose in the spring, to be used for tanning.

Remoteness and hardship led to a close-knit community. It would have been hard to find someone in Morwenstow who wasn't, at least, the cousin of most of his or her neighbours. The Morwenstow Band at the turn of the century, for example, consisted entirely of Tapes and Cholwills, all related to one another because Mrs Betsy Tape was a Cholwill. The odd one out was an Oke, but it transpires that his mother was also a Cholwill.

Mutual support was another feature. The Tapes were a church family, but would provide extra voices for a chapel choir at a wedding or special occasion, and George Tape would play the organ in both if required. Resourcefulness went hand in hand with this. Ernest Francis worked for the Tapes and indeed owned the first lorry in the parish. The fact that this lorry could not get up the steep hills on either side mattered not at all: a horse was harnessed to tow it up, and then let loose at the top to find its own way home, while the lorry went about its business, perhaps to the small market at Kilkhampton or the main one at Stratton. Small surprise that the Francis family has succeeded the Tapes as principal guardians of Coombe.

The Coast

The rocks that make the dramatic coast of north Cornwall were pushed upwards at the same time as the Alps were being pushed up out of Central Europe. Around Coombe they are made of blackish Carboniferous Shale and Sandstone, which is grey, brown, or yellowish. Occasionally there is a thin seam of coal, a centimetre or so thick; far too thin to be worked. Geologically speaking they are not very old. The coastline is being eroded all the time by the sea and the weather.

It is a notoriously dangerous coast for seafarers. Up till the middle of the last century, although the local inhabitants did not exactly live off the wrecks, it was the wrecks that provided what little jam there was. The carved brackets supporting the porch of Ford Cottage are reminders of this, and driftwood provided a useful source of fuel.

Parson Hawker wrote several accounts of smuggling around Morwenstow; but the difficulty of the coast must have made it hard even for smugglers. There are no harbours or fishing villages along the twenty miles of coast between Bude and Clovelly; on the other hand there were no preventive stations either. An easterly wind was the most favourable for landing and when it blew the Bude Coastguard's boat was told to pay attention "*particularly to that part of the coast about Duckpool*".

In spite of its inhospitable character, C.S. Gilbert in his *History of Cornwall*, published in 1820, wrote that the inlet known (from before 1600) as Duckpit or Duckpool "*appears to have been formed by nature for the most useful purposes, and by dint of human labour, we conceive a fishing cove might easily be*

established here, and a refuge made for small vessels that traverse the Bristol channel".

This was not to be. There is no sign that the people of Coombe ever took to the sea in boats, although Mrs Vera Moore remembers collecting mussels on the shore. The farmers would also come down with carts to collect sand to put on the fields. The sand of this coast is particularly rich in lime, as it contains up to 60% of ground up sea shells, and since the 14th century it has been valued highly as a fertiliser. In 1851, indeed, the inhabitant of Duckpool Cottage, Richard Ham, described himself as a Sand Dealer.

Communications

Roads

An old Ridge Road, which follows the line of the watershed, runs north and south inland from Coombe. North of Kilkhampton the A39 follows its line and south, the B3254. It was used as a coaching road in the mid 19th century.

Several of the footpaths which are still rights of way were probably once roads. According to a map of 1853, for example, a road then went past the Carpenter's Shop, direct to Woodsford, along the line of the track through Hollygrove wood, from there to Eastway and along the line of the present road to Marsland.

When Parson Hawker came to be vicar of Morwenstow in 1834, his first public work was to build the bridge below Coombe. Until then there was only, according to Gilbert, `a rustic bridge' perhaps little more than a ford. In heavy rainfall, the stream used to rise rapidly, as it still does, making it dangerous for men and cattle. Hawker's inscription on a slate slab, still to be seen on the bridge, reads:

"Towards the erection of this bridge, built by public subscription in the year of Human Redemption, 1836, His Most Gracious King William IV gave the sum of twenty pounds.
Fear God, Honour the King."

The Bude Canal

The canal was built in the early 1820s to take the plentiful lime-rich sand from the beach at Bude to the inland farms. The canal was designed by James Green, an engineer who did a lot of work in the west country. It was 35 miles long and had three branches, one going south west down the valley of the Tamar, another going west to Blagdon Moor, and a third, nearest Coombe, going north to the Tamar Lake, 5 miles from Coombe as the crow flies. The lake is now the reservoir for Stratton and Bude, but it was originally made to provide water for the canal.

This most northerly stretch of the canal must look very much as it did when it was first built. You can see where it comes out of the lake on the far (east) side of the dam from the car park, and then from several small road bridges that cross it. Unfortunately the tow path is not a right of way. Farm buildings that used to be warehouses can be seen at Virworthy Wharf. It was too narrow for barges, as was the whole of the canal, except for the first mile or two from the coast: instead tub boats were used. They were 20ft long by 5ft 6ins wide and 3ft deep; a horse could pull a string of four.

The lowest stretch of the canal, from Bude Haven to Whaleborough, is still in use for pleasure boating. You can walk along the tow path for a mile further still, to beyond Marhamchurch.

Sadly, the most interesting part of the canal is now completely overgrown. The Tamar Lake is 400ft above sea level and James Green achieved this height mainly by using inclined planes. The canal stopped and was replaced by rails up which the tub boats were hauled, attached to an endless chain. The boats had wheels

fixed to their sides which ran on the rails and the chains were usually turned by big water-wheels, 50ft across. At Hobbacott, however, which was the first and longest incline of 225ft, it was turned by a device which was thought to be - and was - so amazing that it was described in detail in the Murray's Guide of the day. Two wells were dug to the same depth as the incline and over each was suspended a giant bucket, 10ft wide by 5ft 6ins deep containing 15 tons of water. As the full bucket descended into the well it raised the boats to the top of the incline in the surprisingly short time of 4 minutes. When it reached the bottom of the well a stake pushed out a plug and let out the water, which drained away into the canal lower down. The now empty bucket was then raised by the other bucket which was starting to go down. Not infrequently the chain broke and the 15 ton bucket fell to the bottom of the well making a most fearsome noise. When this happened there was a 16 h.p. engine to take over, but it was far slower.

The Bude canal never paid. The Cornish farmers were the only users and they were not enough. The final blow came in 1898 when the railway arrived in Bude; the canal was closed down in 1901. The railway was a cross-line from Holsworthy. It closed down in 1965.

Coombe in 1969 when Landmark's repairs were in progress. The Mill House, Ford Cottage and the Carpenter's Shop are complete, work is underway on Chapel Cottage.

Coombe and the Landmark Trust

When the Landmark Trust was founded in 1965, some notable buildings, such as Tixall Gatehouse in Staffordshire, were known to the trustees as being in need of rescue. But they were also keen to take on humble buildings in beautiful surroundings, and thus protect places, as well as architecture, from careless alteration or development. To this end, discussions were held with other bodies, such as the National Trust, to identify suitable cases.

By the end of 1965 the National Trust had already suggested the Coombe Valley as a place where a joint project would be desirable. It was known that Mr Parker, who had bought the hamlet and remaining land in 1962, wanted to sell. The National Trust was anxious to complete its holdings in the valley, but could not afford to take on and repair the buildings.

Coombe was just what the Landmark trustees were looking for. Once a working hamlet, it was sliding into a combination of decay and over-improvement. The orchards were becoming overgrown, banks and walls were falling down, and there was a danger that the whole place would go down the road of piecemeal development. Whether resulting in insensitive additions or self-conscious prettification, the simple character of the buildings and their setting would soon be lost. While Landmark meant to let the buildings for holidays and to modernise them inside, it would respect the original appearance of the hamlet, even though it could not bring back the life that went with it.

After the sale was completed late in 1966, some time was spent deciding what work to do and in what order. Meanwhile, the Bungalow, renamed Chapel Cottage, was let as before. An early visitor there in 1967 was the late Paul

Pearn, the Plymouth architect appointed to oversee the repairs and improvements. One of the few with a conservationist approach to buildings in those modernist days, he was to do much work for Landmark in years to come.

The letter he wrote about his stay in Chapel Cottage conveys what little was expected of holiday cottages in those days. After suggesting that a pepper pot, a large jug or pot for coffee, a rolling pin and a sink basket "*would be nice*" he proposed that "*if the electricity slot meter could be adapted to accept 2/6 as well as 1/- it would be a considerable convenience - I am told that shillings are in very great demand in the locality during the summer months and I understand that the alteration to the meter can be simply made*". The slot meter was soon done away with altogether.

Building work started that same year. The main contractor then, and for the next few years, was George Bale and Sons of Barnstaple, with the Littlejohns of East and West Putford doing the thatching.

First to be tackled was The Mill House. This had already been divided into two, the main house and an annexe at the north end which had one bedroom at the back. It was decided to keep this arrangement, but to give No 2 two bedrooms and a better sitting room. Outside, the back of the house had become rather a muddle of lean-to and conservatory. This was remodelled and the wall raised to give the west bedroom in No 2 its glimpse of Duckpool. The front was freshly limewashed, and windows and doors repaired. The thatched roof was recoated, and has had minor repairs to ridges and gutters since.

Inside, new kitchens and bathrooms were fitted, but otherwise the rooms were left as much as possible as they were. In No 2, the former sitting room, with the

stair leading out of it, became the hall, with a new front door in the east wall, in the place of an extra-long window. To light the new sitting room, a window was made in the north wall, with a new fireplace backing onto the old end stack. In the kitchen, a door in the north end, where the sink now is, was turned into a window. The Mill House was furnished and ready for letting in 1968. In 1990, after more than twenty years of hard use, both No 1 and No 2 were given better bathrooms, and their kitchens renewed.

In 1967, emergency repairs were also carried out on the Mill itself. Its end wall and the wall and bank supporting the mill leat had both been weakened by the flow of water and were in danger of collapse. The wheel was repaired too. Thereafter plans to restore the mill to working order surfaced every few years, but none has ever progressed beyond the initial idea. Meanwhile, the structure has been repaired as necessary: a new roof in 1989/90 and new workshop windows, of unpainted softwood to bleach quickly, in 1993.

There are at present no plans to do anything more, since no funds are available. To restore the mill wheel would be a very expensive job, and even more so if the flow of water needed to keep it in good order was to be reinstated: the mill leats are very overgrown and have become filled in with earth in places. A suitable solution might be for it to be adopted by a group of enthusiasts who would put it back in working order, but not try to run it commercially. Empty buildings like this are becoming rarer in the countryside, and provide valuable homes for bats, of which there is now a fine colony.

Ford Cottage, or the Tea Rooms as it was in 1966, had been re-thatched by Mr Parker, the wide door filled in and most of the windows renewed then or a year or two earlier - one window had been washed out in the flood of 1958, leaving a

gaping hole. Although the Tea Rooms were much loved, to make money they would have had to attract more business, and it was doubtful that this would be to Coombe's long-term benefit. The general feeling was that it was now time for the building to become a cottage again.

Ford Cottage after restoration

This was done 1968-9. Some repairs were needed to the walls, after which they were limewashed like the Mill House, with care being taken not to damage the Japonica. The haphazard arrangement of windows and doors in the front was preserved: while there was a temptation to simplify, the character of the building, as evolved over time, would have been lost.

Inside, a new kitchen was made at one end of the tea-room, roughly occupying the position of the original hall-cum-kitchen; and the main living room was given a lower ceiling. New bedrooms and bathrooms were fitted into the other end, but keeping the old workshop windows where they survived.

No amount of work can defend against the forces of nature, however. The occasional tendency to flood remains: in 1993, new electrics and decorations

were needed after a thorough soaking, thankfully a less serious one than in 1958. New drains have been dug round the building, which we hope will divert the water in future, but it may be another 25 years before they are tested.

Unlike the mill with all its machinery, The Carpenter's Shop was just an empty structure and was therefore a good candidate for conversion. Paul Pearn wrote of his proposals, all of which were followed:

"I have tried to retain the functional industrial character of the elevations - you will see that the existing type of window [the big workshop windows with their overlapping glass] is suggested and that the opening sashes would be similar to those now installed. Unfortunately the majority of the frames will have to be replaced because the wood is rotten but I have told the builders that when the time comes to work on the building, the existing windows must be copied."

The carpenter's shop in 1967

The same approach was taken to the arrangement of the interior: by tucking the bedrooms at either end, reached by a new cast iron spiral stair and a gallery, it was possible to keep something of the feeling of space which the old workshop had. Work started in 1968 and was finished in 1969. The roof, which had originally been slate but had been repaired with corrugated iron, was now re-done in slate. The bargeboards, fascias and doors were painted the rusty colour found on the old doors, painted with red lead or iron oxide.

The main door opened onto the road, which would have made the living room both awkward and draughty, with the back door opposite. So it was blocked with old bricks salvaged from Dunsland, near Holsworthy, a manor house with Jacobean and Restoration plasterwork which was tragically burnt down while work at Coombe was in progress. A door was added from the orchard as this option was safer and more private in any case, so the small addition was made at the north end, to double as porch and bathroom. In the main room, the old forge provided a fireplace.

Hawker's No 2 was made ready for letting as soon as it was acquired by Landmark in 1968, but improvements were made to it over the following winter. These consisted mainly of redecorating, and improving the kitchen (then in the wing on the front; it was moved to its present position in the former sitting room in 1993) and bathroom - a new door was made into the latter, which before that could only be reached from outside. The lean-to roofs were tidied up, but the main roof of thatch had been renewed not long before by John Tape. The Tapes had also dug the ground away at the back, to make the cottage less damp. This had left two doors stranded in mid-air, which were now turned into windows. Inside, little was changed, particularly in the sitting room with its polished slate

floor, and the grand old dark pine press, which has been in the room as long as anyone can remember.

Hawker's No 1 was in a rundown state when Landmark bought it in 1969. Extensive repairs and improvements were carried out in 1970: the ground was dug away at the back, an addition was made for a bathroom, the walls were re-plastered and limewashed, windows and doors repaired. The roof had to be completely re-thatched, because the under layer, which can usually be left, had gone soft. The existing tenants then moved back in and No 1 remained a permanent home until 1985 when, after minor improvements to kitchen and bathroom, and redecoration, it too became a Landmark. The garden walls, porches and lychgates were repaired at the same time.

Re-thatching at Hawker's cottage

Canopy at no 1 Hawker's before and after 2004

1970 had also seen the completion of work on Chapel Cottage. After three summers of letting, its turn for improvement came in the autumn of 1969. The idea was to reverse the existing arrangement by putting the bedrooms in the bungalow and making the chapel, restored to one space again by the removal of partitions, into the living room. To keep the older building distinct from the newer one, a bit of the bungalow's front wall was taken down and the present glass fronted hall put in its place. The old front door became a window. A small W.C. at the back was enlarged to contain the kitchen and bathroom.

Much of the weatherboarding on the chapel had to be renewed. Inside, some old matchboarding survived, but elsewhere had been replaced with plaster. It was decided that it would be cosier, and more in keeping with its original design, to line the whole room with matchboarding which was then painted and grained. In the bedrooms, Landmark's founding trustee, John Smith, insisted on raising the heads of the windows slightly, to give to the tall as well as the short the full benefit of the cottage's elevated view of Coombe.

While the buildings were repaired and altered between 1967 and 1970, much other work was in progress. A lot of this was unglamorous but nonetheless essential - the provision of drains, piped water, electricity supplies (with wires underground when possible) and so on. But the gardener, Mr Briant, was also busy rescuing the apple trees from their coats of ivy, planting new trees, repairing banks and walls (some stone for these was taken from the old cottages beyond Chapel Cottage), mending old gates or providing new ones. All of these details play a major part in establishing the character that Coombe has today.

Paul Pearn wrote in 1967:

"I do appreciate that we must beware of perpetuating the `romantic fallacy' and that we are endeavouring to simplify the character of the group of buildings ... It was my intention to achieve this by altering the surrounding details of enclosing walls, gates, paving etc. and to keep these elements within the local functional tradition."

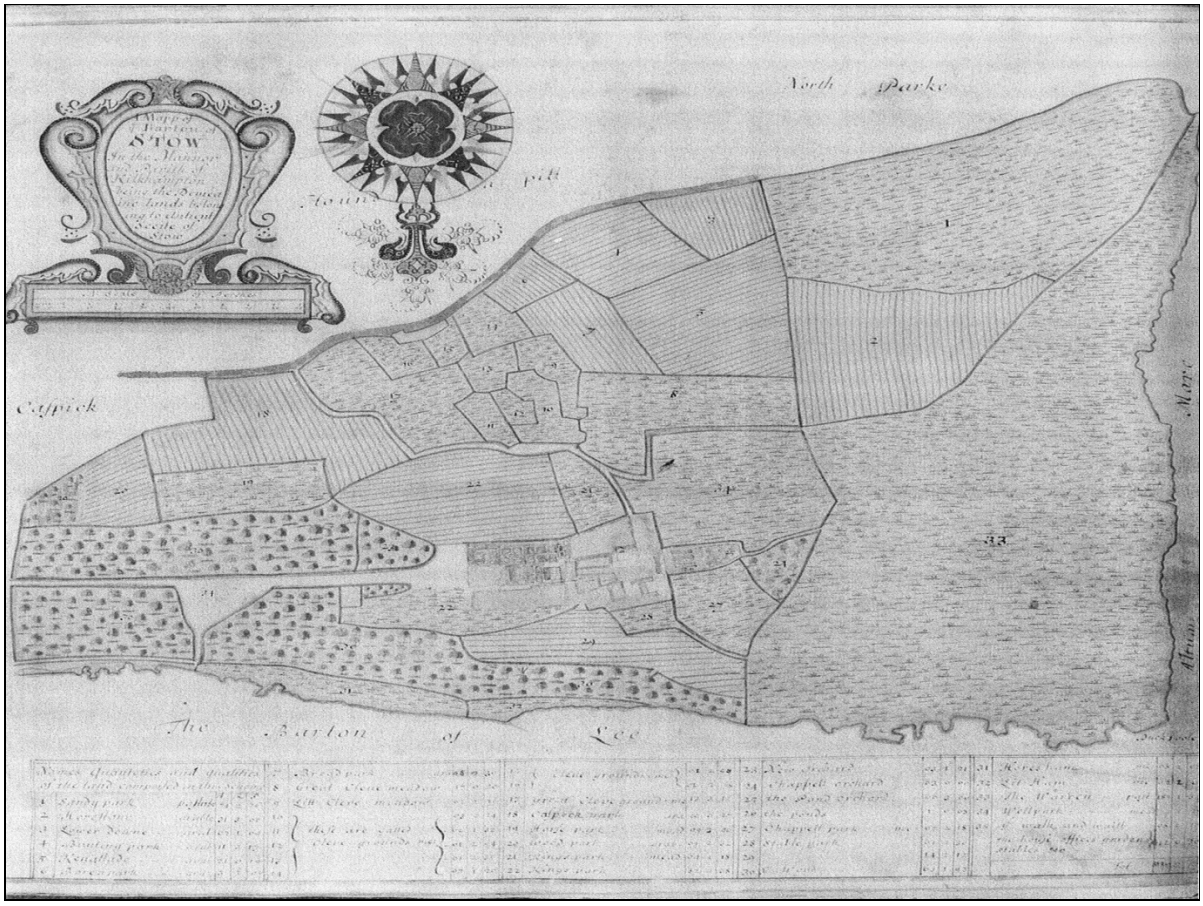
It is all too easy to slip away from that tradition, but Coombe is a living reminder that it is the spaces between buildings that matter, as much as the buildings themselves.

Grand Connections – Stowe and the Grenvilles

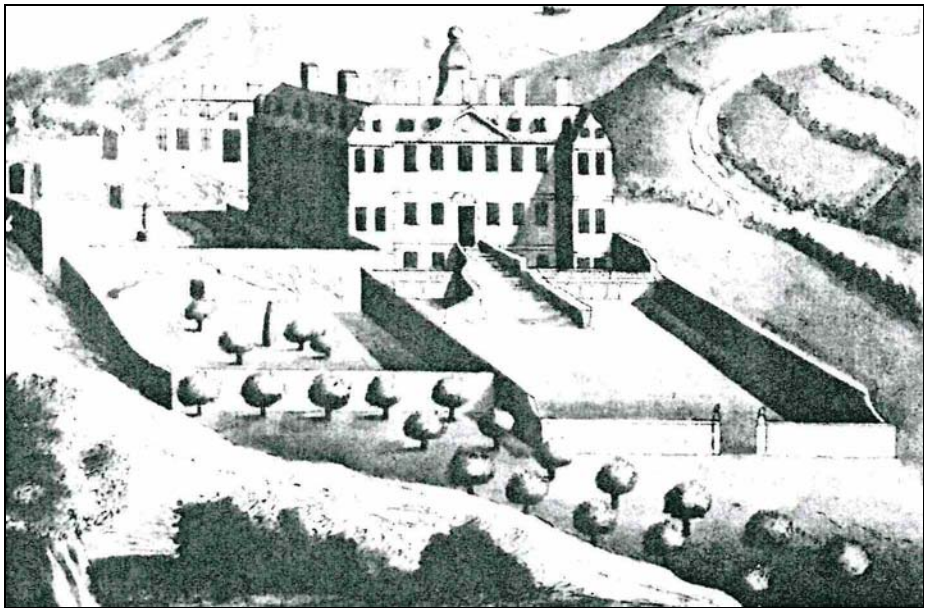
Coombe may never have been a very grand place itself, but in the Grenvilles of Stowe it had some very glorious neighbours. The story of the house built above Coombe by John Grenville, Earl of Bath, between 1676 and 1679, and of its demolition fifty years later, was told by Michael Trinick in *The Great House of Stowe* published in the *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* in 1979 and 1986. A copy of this is in a separate folder.

The first Grenville to come to Cornwall was Robert Fitzhamon, 5th Earl of Corbeil and Lord of Granville in Normandy. His daughter, Mabel, married Robert, Earl of Gloucester, said to be a natural son of Henry I. The lands of the Honor of Gloucester lay in many counties, and among them were the manors of Bideford and Kilkhampton, in Cornwall. Robert of Gloucester granted these manors to his father-in-law, from whom they passed to Richard de Granville, Fitzhamon's brother. He was the first to be called Lord of Bideford and Kilkhampton, and from him descended the Grenvilles who lived at Stowe for the next 600 years.

The historian A.L. Rowse tells us that Stowe was one of the five great houses of medieval Cornwall. In Tudor times Sir Roger Grenville was renowned for his hospitality and was referred to as the Great Housekeeper. The first Grenville to make the name famous was Sir Richard of the Revenge. He commanded the fleet that went out to colonise Virginia; he organised the defence of the west of England at the time of the Armada; he commanded the Azores fleet under Lord Thomas Howard and was killed on board the Revenge when fighting a great battle against the Spaniards in 1591.



The Stowe Atlas: Stowe itself, with garden and demesne



The main front of Stowe, by Edmund Prideaux 1716

Thirty years later his grandson Sir Bevill Grenville made Stowe a centre to which the aspiring youth of Cornwall was drawn, to learn the gentle arts along with his own children. He was "*the glass wherein they did dress themselves"*. Tender, charming letters between him and his wife, Grace, survived the burning of the Stowe archive by Lord Carteret in the 19th century, and contain references to improvements to the house (new granite windows) and garden, and the buying of furniture and fabrics.

Sir Bevill was active in other fields as well. He was involved in the tin industry, the foundation of most Cornishmen's wealth. As MP for Launceston he was deeply concerned in the political troubles of King Charles I's reign. When these troubles resulted in the outbreak of war, Sir Bevill was one of the leaders of the Royalist forces in the south-west. But in 1643, only a few weeks after defeating a Parliamentary army on home ground at Stamford Hill, near Stratton, he was killed in the battle of Lansdowne, above Bath.

It was Sir Bevill's eldest surviving son, John, who, with his cousin, George Monck, helped to restore Charles II to the throne. In acknowledgement of this he was made Earl of Bath, and given several important and lucrative posts. The income these brought him, together with the useful contacts, enabled the Earl, in 1676, to set about rebuilding his family seat.

Richard Polwhele, in his chatty *History of Cornwall* of 1808, noted:

"At the Restoration, most of the seats of gentlemen in Cornwall were either newly built or materially repaired. During the Usurpation and the persecution of their owners (almost all loyalists) they were greatly dilapidated and almost went

to ruin. This accounts for the general renovation of so many houses, on the joyful return of the owners to their estates."

Inevitably, Stowe, "*a noble edifice*" was the first example quoted.

A fuller description was given by C.S. Gilbert in his *History of Cornwall* of 1820:

"*The buildings are said to have occupied about three acres and a half of ground which were surrounded with elegant gardens, fountains and statues. The whole was seated on a pleasant eminence, on the southern side of which was carried along a noble terrace, overlooking a richly wooded valley; and in the distance, was an expansive sea. The park was stocked with fallow deer, and bounded towards the east, by an elevation of umbrageous woods, interspersed with clumps of firs, which still flourish in great luxurience."*

By that time, the house had gone, pulled down in 1739. A.L. Rowse called it an "*improbable house - sophisticated red-brick grandeur in a wild and exposed setting of Cornish shale and slate*". Wonderful though it was, and as unexpected to visitors and locals alike as the radio dishes of Cleave today, it was wholly impractical - it must have leaked like a sieve in a storm. But it might have survived, with the walls given a shelter-coat of plaster perhaps, but for family circumstances.

Tragedy played its part: the old Earl died in 1701, and before the funeral had taken place, his son shot himself by accident, leaving a nine-year- old son to succeed him ("*three Earls of Bath above ground at one time*"); a son who died of small pox ten years later. Then came years of costly dispute over the inheritance between the old Earl's daughters, Lady Jane Leveson-Gower and Lady Grace

Carteret, and his nephew, Lord Lansdowne (a playwright and patron of poets, of whom Pope wrote: *"But why then publish? Granville the polite And knowing Walsh would tell me I could write"*). Finally, Stowe passed in 1720 to Lady Grace, who had been created Countess Granville in her own right.

Financial troubles also loomed. The family, it is said, lost money in the disaster of the South Sea Bubble. Moreover, besides legal fees, the two sisters had to pay their cousin £30,000 to give up his claim, a large sum to raise. On top of this, the new Stowe was hugely expensive to maintain.

So it went, and in Polwhele's resonant words:

" Stowe and the Granvilles are now no more. The residence of this illustrious house, once the pride of Cornwall, and the resort of the western gentry, hath been laid even with the ground `so that corn may grow and nettles sting where Stowe once stood' ... A man of Stratton indeed lived long enough to see its site a cornfield, before the building existed, and after the building was destroyed, a cornfield again."

Stowe did not disappear altogether, however. It was dismantled, and its fittings, as well as much of the furniture, were bought by anyone with a sense of history or an eye for a bargain. The craftsmanship of the Restoration lived on in other houses, in an area that had already benefitted from its existence, in the training and inspiration it gave to local craftsmen. Drafted in, as many doubtless were, to help the masters of woodcarving or plasterwork employed there, they had carried the new styles to the townhouses of merchants and the manor houses of the gentry, to the great enrichment of an area with a strong tradition of fine

plasterwork, in particular. One surviving example of this can be found in a house now owned by Landmark: 28 South Street, Torrington.
More humble materials came in handy for builders for miles around, and the unsold surplus probably kept the estate in supply for decades. Nor was everything pulled down. C.S. Gilbert reports that the kitchen and out-buildings were made into a house for the steward; but in 1793 these too were demolished and a `respectable farmhouse' erected instead, with the Grenville arms over the door. This is the present Stowe Barton.

When Gilbert was writing the steward was called Mr. Shearm, of an old Kilkhampton family, and he had done his best, giving "*a partial feature of cheerfulness to this scene of waste and desolation, by planting in the most injured spots firs, laurel and other evergreens; but it still wears in its general outline the sullen aspect of dejected dignity*".

All that remains of the great house are the green mounds in the field south east of Stowe Barton. But beside the road to Coombe is the old carriage wash, still in remarkably good condition; and if you walk past the farm house, along the footpath marked as a right of way on the map, down to the Coombe valley, you see brick walls, descending in carefully built gradients, which must have been garden walls.

Lady Grace was succeeded by her son and grandson and then by the latter's nephew, Henry-Frederick Thynne, younger son of Lord Weymouth, who was made Baron Carteret in 1784. For some time, the title of Lord Carteret and the Stowe estate became a useful endowment for younger sons of the Thynne family, by now Marquesses of Bath. Finally, in 1849, the estate but not the title

went to the Rev. Lord John Thynne, DD, Canon of Westminster, of Haynes Park in Bedfordshire, younger brother of the 3rd Marquess of Bath.

The pull of Cornwall was strong, however. Lord John's youngest son, Arthur, became Rector of Kilkhampton, and his grandson, Algernon, also settled in the parish, at Penstowe. He was killed in 1917 but his widow lived on there until its sale in 1963. Meanwhile the estate was inherited by his brother, George, who lived in Poughill. However, after George Thynne's death in 1945, sales followed, and over the next twenty years the Stowe estate was dispersed.

Mrs T.F. Clarke in front of Stowe Barton 1912-13

When Stowe was demolished, Edward Moore, a friend of Lord Lansdowne's, composed *An Elegy, written among the ruins of a nobleman's seat in Cornwall*:

Amidst these venerable drear remains
Of ancient grandeur, musing sad I stray
Around; a melancholy Silence reigns,
That prompts me to indulge the plaintive lay.

Here liv'd Eugenio, born of noble race,
Aloft his mansion rose, around were seen
Extensive gardens, deck'd with every grace,
Ponds, walks, and groves, thro' all the Seasons green.

Ah! where is now its boasted beauty fled?
Proud turrets, that once glitter'd in the sky,
And broken columns in confusion spread,
Amid mis-shapen heaps of ruins lie.

Of splendid rooms no traces here are found;
How are these tottering walls by time defaced:
Shagged with vile thorn, with twining ivy bound,
Once hung with tapestry, with paintings graced.

Where too is now the garden's beauty fled,
Which every clime was ransack'd to supply?
O'er the drear spot, see desolation spread,

And the dismantled walls in ruins lie.

Dead are the trees, that once with nicest care
Arrang'd, from opening blossoms shed perfume;
And thick with fruitage stood the pendant pear,
The ruddy colour'd peach and glossy plum.

Extinct is all the family of flowers:
In vain I seek the arbour's cool retreat
Where ancient friends in converse passed the hours,
Defended from the raging dogstar's heat.

Along the terrace walks are straggling seen
The prickly bramble, and the noisome weed;
Beneath whose covert crawls the toad obscene,
And snakes and adders unmolested breed.

Annexes

Letters between Bevill and Grace Grenville, copied from '*The History of the Granville Family*' by Rev Roger Granville, Rector of Bideford, 1895

The First Cornish Mole, source: *The Dictionary of British Folk Tales* by Katharine M Briggs

A Cornish Hero Remembered from *The Countryman*

A West Country Christmas by *T.F. Clarke* From *the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street Vol XXV no 116 December 1949*

Letters between Bevill and Grace Grenville, copied from 'The History of the Granville Family' by Rev Roger Granville, Rector of Bideford, 1895

The Grenvilles were married 1619/20 and to begin with lived at Tremeer, another Grenville house. This undated letter was apparently written in the early months of their marriage when Bevill Grenville was probably in London to attend Parliament.

To my best friend, Mrs Grace Grenvile, at Tremere

Dearest, of all my misfortunes this is my greatest that now encountreth me to have you sicke & in my absence when I neither can be present to do you service my selfe, nor am in place to send for Phisicions that might do what were fitting. My broken lines expres the fracture that these tidings to make in my heart and sinews. Yet they have not so farre deprived me, but I can rsolve this, that if you canot send me better news by this bearer (whom I have expressly will'd to be with me before too morrow no one) then I will be with you by god's helpe before I sleepe, though I leave all the rest of the business undon & for god's sake make not the matter better than it is. Yrs B. Grenville

In 1621 or 1622, Bevill moved his family (consisting at this stage of Grace and one son) to Stowe. Another undated letter seems to belong to the beginning of their life there, when their second child was expected.

To my best Frend Mrs Grace Grenvile at Stowe

My dearest, I am exceedingly glad to heare from you, but doe desire you, not to be so passionat for my sbsence, I vowe you canot more desire, to have me at home, then I do desire to be there, & assoone as I can dispatch my business, I will instantly come away. I am yet so new in the towne, as I have beene able to do nothing. I hope you will not have child so soone as you feare. I will as fast as I can, send downe those provisions. I have left no order with any boddy, for the Moorestone windores but Pomeroy; I would have him to get them to be well wrought up, against my coming downe, & then I will take course for the fetching of them. You shall do well to send to yr mother for that money, assoone as you can, for feare you want, & if you have need of more you may entreat Nat: Gist, to lende you some of my rent before hand. I would have the masons, to goe on as fast as they can, about the stable, that if it be possible, the walls may be up and finished against my coming downe. I am afraid as Allen is, that the Ploughs will not be reddy soone enough to bring home the Timber, tell him make what shift he can with that at home, but be sure he cut none elsewhere but out of that Plott I appointed. They may take all that is there but spare the rest. Bid him be sure to putt in none, but strong & sufficnient stuffe. Have a care that the People want no provision & let my co: Tremayne take up Oxen & sheepe enough to serve all the yeare& make his Bargain so as I may pay for it after my coming home, which shall carefully be perform'd ..I will come away before whitsontide if I can. So god keepe you & yrs. You shall hear from me as often as I can, but I

confesse I find it much more difficult to send to you now than when you were at Madford.

Yrs faithfully Bevill Grenville

Make all the haste you can to thresh out your corne for feare it be spoild & observe how many bushels it is at let Charles the joyner make a board for the Parler as soone as you can, as plain and cheape as possible he can make, only 2 or 3 deale boards joined togather & tressels to stand on, & so long as to reach from the bay windore to the little dore, but not to hinder the going in & out.

By the time of the next, badly damaged letter, there are two children, Richard and Elizabeth.

To my best Frend Mr Bevill GRenvile at Ye signe of the Raynbow between ye two Temple Gates these with speed, March 13 1623

My ever dearest…My mother will'd me to remember her to you, and to tell you that she is much against my going to London, and that is very true, for you can not imagine how vehement she is against it. I doe every day wish that coach were come, that I might sooner be with you and (illegible) of hearing the perswasious that are us'd aginst it. Dick hath been very well ever since you went till (…) he hath now gotten a colde, yet I assure you he hathe never (…) his cloth with his neck with (…) out to see the lambs, and the weather hath been very sharpe (…) jocund and so busy as tis 2 or 3 peoples work to play with him, and Bessy grows a lusty girle and I thinks eats more meate than I, for I have gotten a colde as well as Dick, and can neither taste nor smell with it, and before you went you know my hearing was somewhat defective, so you may well imagine you have a very (…) wife, but yet pray send for her, for if I were oonce with you I thinke to be sooner cured (…) only by that than by taking any Phisicke, for had I not hoped to have come to you I had been dead by this time. So Dearest, farewll, and God give me life no longer than I am yours in all constancy, Grace Grenvile.

Grace Grenville's next letter, written two years later, comes from her old home of Madford, near Exeter:

To my best FRend Mr Beville Grenvile at ye Rainbow in Fleet Street, July 4 1625

Dearest, as yet I have not yr later boxe of Glasses, the reason why they are not deliver'd you mayh perceive by my lre: written last Saturday by the Car: I heartily wish you home both for my own content and that you may have a share, for I vowe to keep one Pye till ur coming, but if it offend ur nose, the faulte be yrs. Yr servant Wil. Way is gone and is now servant to my cosen Dick Remayne out of a dsire to goe in this fleet, my mo: servants are so few myne none, now he is gone I cannot send a message to Towne. Freeston is still very sick and keeps his bed altogether, I thinke you must not depend too much on him, his weaknes is such. My sicknes hath made me a poor woman in body and purse, and yet I have been

a borrower since yr going: my mo: commends her to you and the little crew are well and I am better than I have been God keepe you Yrs ever Gr. Grenvile

The fleet mentioned was that assembling at Plymouth for an expedition planned by King Charles I and the Duke of Buckingham, to revenge themselves on the Spaniards after the failure of their escapade to Madrid. In July that year, Parliament was adjourned early, because of an outbreak of plague. Bevill returned to Stowe, and the Rev R Granville suggests that this undated letter was written then, while Grace was caught at Madford by illness. However the reference to 'boys' implies that it dates from after the birth of their second son, at least, which was not until 1626.

To my best Frend Mr Bevill Grenville at Stow, Sunday evening

Dearest, I do very much long to be at home with you, and am sorry that it was not my happiness to have been at home before you, but indeed it was not my desire that kept me backe, but wante of health. I give you many thanks for yr care and sending to me, and I had know'd how, you should have heard from me, but I was loath to send away Stanbury or Joseph, because I intended, as soone as my strength would give leave, to be at home. The Plaisters you sent me, I trust in God hath done me much good. They came in a happie time, I hope, for I was then extraordinarily ill, and had they not come at the instant, I had been in ill case, but I heartily thanke God and you for them. My lady will bring me home, and to-morrow night we intend to be at Trebersy, and ye next day with you, if it please God. You may assure yr selfe that I am very ill if you see me not on Tuesday night, then I hope you will come to me. I am sorry Bessie mends no faster, I long to see you and our Boys. God keepe you all well, and I am, whatever happens, yrs immoveably Gr Grenville

I preay charge Grace Winslade to fit things as handsome as she can. My ladye desyres to come EFford way, because she would call there with my cosen if she be there, and if your leasure serve I should be glad to meet you there.

Parliament reassembled the following month at Oxford, and Bevill joined it there, while Grace returned to her mother at Madford. The plague was spreading, however both in Oxford and Exeter.

To my dearest & best Frend Mr Bevill Grenvile, August 10 1625

Dearest, I have received yr letter by Dowrish am glad to heare you are well but I am in much feare & griefe to heare that the plague is in Oford, would god but grant you are home, till which my heart will never be quiet, O pray as you love yrself, yr children, & me be carefull of yr health, otherwise we are all lost. The sicknesse increases heer apace & is much disper'd abroad in the Citty, & where it comes, it goes through the house, & ends all wherefore I beseech you, be not displeas'd with what I have done, you will'd me to send the linen in yr absence to Stow, but not to stirre my selfe till you came, but seeing that the poor people would not be kept away, & that the servants went still into Town, & Exeter people come to us dayly, so as we are in as much danger, as those of Ye Citty,

wherefore I have adventur'd to remove thither also with ye children which I fear will not well like you, & which hath much troubled me & still doth, my dearness & care of the children hath made me adventure, & I hope ur tendernesse will be my best frend, to perswade you not to dislike it. My Cosen D: Tremayne & Jo: are heer, & have brought horses for me, for myself, my sister Denis hath lent me her mare & tomorrow, we begin our journey. G Winslade came last week, to Stow & there upon this necessity we will make a bad shift, till you come which pray let it be, as soon as you can: yr beds are brought to Stow, but your linen you left with Geo:Membry my fa: sent for & had it away, before they came. God be prays'd we are all in health yet you may the better excuse my removing, because so many others do it, Mrs Bampfilde is gone & her children, & Mrs Isack with sons daughters & children are gone from Portlow, & all the Citizens that can possible get horses doe remove. But my mother will by no means stir which I am very sorry for; she hath given me a good bed & Boster 3 paire of Pillows 2 or 3 paire of blankets & Coverletts some which she had of you & she will speedily, send another Bed after me, I cannot get the Bedsteed Chaire, & Stooles from Plimouth by no means. Yr case of Picturs was loose & almost open, before I had it, & ye Kings & Sr Jo Eliot hat received some hurt in carriage but none since it came hither, I pray you make haste & come home, so God keep you well & not be angry with me. However I am & still will be Yrs ever & only Grance Grenvile

I pray you let yr Coate which coms from Fawcetts be well aired & lye abroad a while before you weare it.

In April 1626, Bevill set off for London to attend Parliament

To my best Frend Mrs Grace GRenvile at Stowe, April 20 1626

My Dearest. I hve rested all this tursday here, & doe intend too morrow, to goe onwards in my journey yr sister Smith hath you heartely remembered & saith shee will see you, when you lye in, therefore I wish you make as good provision as you can, & pray doe not neglect to make speed in preparing a midwife, be careful of my business at home. I have desir'd your mother to make wt shee can of the oxen & to send you the money…if you see my co: Tho: Arrundell, urge him to make wt hast he can in paying the other 100li to R Billing, that he may r eturne it to me. I have will'd juell to call att ArchDeacon Cottons for a couple of cheeses that he gave me, if he bring them home let them be kept safe for me &if he bring home also my civell Picture, I would have the same care had of it likewise. Tell Pomeroy I would by any means have my moorestone windor's bespoken speedily & in the same Forme we agreed of, but let him get a good workman to so them, wt shift soever he make. I feare I have forgotten to take with me the Acquittances which Ja: Walker is to have from my father' if I have pray send them after me if you can. They be in some of the black Boxes in my study windore or Board, they are 3 in all, send all if you can, but be careful to hurt no writing or seal in ye boxes & to putt everything just as you finde it. There is one round boxe on the edge of the Bord, wherin are the writings of Treley, with that you need not meddle, for I am sure they are not there. Be sure to send them by a trusty messenger as my brother Denis if you can & for god's

sake be carefull to disorder none of the writings. The acquittances are, one for 500li, another for 1000li & the other for 1500li. Yrs B. Grenville

While in London, Bevill busies himself making purchases for Stowe:

To my best Frend Mrs Grace Grenville at Stowe, May 6 1626

My Dearest. I have receav'd yrs by Mr Browning and Dicks. I canot expresse myjoye for all your healths, but shall pray for the continuance. Yr Bedds are a making, and some Turkey worke for stools and chaires I have seen, but not yet bargain'd for' it is verrie deare,but if money hould out I will have them. I have lighted upon a pretty commodetie of Damaske and Diaper and am told it is so cheape as I shall not meet with it soe ordinarily, therefore I ventur'd a little money in it. There is of brode table cloth Damask 12 yards, 3 quartrs in one peece, and of Narrow Napkin Damaske suteable 40 yeards & halfe in another peece ther eis 8 yards halfe of Diaper in one peece for bord cloth and 2 peeces of 12 yards in a peece for napkis, tell it when it comes home to se ewhether it be right. I do now send it to the carriers with this lre, but forebeare cutting of it till I come Downe that wee may consider togeather. I hope it is verrie good. Yr shooes & the childrens are a making. I wold gladly understand how my worke goes onward, how farre they have brought the walls to the height, and how many beames be in etc. I hope my co: Tremayne hath long before this sould my Topps and rindes at Lancells out of which money I would have him to be paid that rootes them up. Tell my co: Tre: he must make the fellowe to fill the holes after the trees be up...I shall not possibly com away before whitsontide but will assoone as I can. I have bespoken 4 plumes of Feathers for yr bed. You must be carefull to make reddy the bedstead. So I commend you and yrs to God resting yrs ever Bevill gRenville

Charge Postlett & Hooper that the keepe out the Piggs & all other things out of my new nurcery & the other orchard too, let them use any means to keepe them safe, for my trees will be all spoild, if they com in which I would not for the world.

Bevill's next two letters refer in passing to the imprisonment of his fellow Cornishman, Sir John Eliot, for speaking out in Parliament against the Duke of Buckingham, favourite of the new king, Charles I.

To my best FRend Mrs. Grace Grenvile at Stowe May 18 1626

My Dearest, Since myne by Stanburie, I have receav'd yrs by my co: Trevillians man, wherin you say you ave not heard from me, which I wonder at, for surely I have written often unto you, both by way of Exeter, & otherwise. But you doe much amaze me, to tell me you are soe much distress'd for want of a midwife; for godssake, be sure to have one under hand, whatever it cost, and you cannot excuse ur fault, in neglecting is soe long. Howsoever have myne (Aunt) Abbott by, if all else faille, shee I hope will do her bst, & I assure my selfe can do well

enough. There is little hope of having any of the Plate home as yet, but all that can be don shall be. I am glad you have fetch'd some of the timber, to keepe Allen aworke, for I desire the worke should goe on with all possible speed. If my co: Arundell be at Efford when you have child it will be very fitting shee should be a godmother too, therefore though it be a boy, entreat both her & my sister too; it is noe more, then we have don formerly. My bro' Dennis is the man, whether it be boy or Girle, & I hope Sr Jo: Eliot shall be there too if it be a boy: though the King hath lately sent him to the tower, for some words spoken in the Parlmt but we are all resolv'd to have him out againe, or will proceed in nowe businesse. & if ye child chance to be borne before my coming downe stay the Christning till we can heare from one another. I will write shortly to you againe, in the meane time doe rest Yr owne Bevill Grenville

Remember my duty to ur Mother & forget me not to my sister

To my best frend Mrs Grace Grenvile at Stowe, May 20 1626

My Dearest, how all the things, that at severall times, I have, & shall send to you from hence, will now come unto you, I know not, because they are to passe through so many hands, but I will hope the best. I have this weke sent you a boxe of Dried sweet meats, ass many sortes, & those not verrie good, though the best that can be gotten too: there were fewe or none don the last yeare because of the sicknes, & that makes the scarsety, The note of perticulars is herein closed, wanting only one boxe of the Quidiniock, which I have eaten. I hope my lady be now with you, therefore remember my duty to her. We have Sr Jo: Eliot at liberty againe: the House was nevr quitet, till the King releas'd him. If God send us a boye, I have a good minde to have him called John, for my poore brother Johns sake: if it be a Girle, Grace: but I would faine perswade my selfe, that I could be ther at it, though I am now in some doubt, & therefore will heartely pray for you if I canot be present. Keepe my Aunts and my sister by any meanes with you, & remember me to them. So I hastely commend you to God resting Yrs ever Bevill Grenville

To my best frend Mrs Grace Grenvile at Stowe, May 26 1626

My dearest I wrote (hastely) by my brother Dennis concerning the Gossips, as for the name, if it be a boy, let it be John, if a mayd Grace & I will not trouble Sr Jo; Eliot's Deputy, then make use of ur sonne Richard for that office. I would not have any boddie, but my cossen Arundell or Dick to be Sr Johns Deputies. I have received yr letter by Tringoe whereby I am much joyed to find you so well, but am sorrie my lady is not yet with you. Remember my humble Dutie to her & tell her I had written once or twice more to her if I had not thought shee had been gonne from Madford. I do humbly thanke her for her great token of Salmon and Lamprey Pyes. You say you have receav'd but 2 letters from me. I have written many more. I pray God my ladys saddle fit her, it is the best I could get for money. I am very glad some of the healing stones are home & no losse, for my two mares good increase but if they be not putt to the black horse beforew this come to yr hands, give strckt charge that they come not neere him or any horse

till my coming down for they & all the mares I have shall have the Stallion which I bring downe, which is a goodly horse & as handsom as one as any is in England, for gods sake be careful hereof, but if they have had the horse already then ther is no remeddie. I know not what newes to write to you & you know I do not much love to trouble myselfe with writing of newes. Remember me most heartely to my Aunts & my sister & I doe much rejoice to heare that they are wth you & do hope you are provided of a midwife long before this & so god keepe you & send you a good time

Yrs immovable Bevill Grenville

I have sent home by this footpost French 6 paire of bootes & 3 paire of shoes. Let Stanbury put them up safe for me.

Fortunately, the child was not born until the middle of June, a week after Parliament was dissolved, so Bevill was home in time. It was a boy, who was in the end named Bevill, not John, but died when he was only nine.

1627 saw the first serious clash between King and Parliament over taxation. Several Cornish members, including Bevill, refused to countenance a levy which had not been authorised by the Commons. For this, some were called before the Privy Council and afterwards imprisoned. Bevill was not among them, but expected a similar summons at any moment, as, clearly, did Grace:

Stowe Fryday night

Sweet Mr Grenvile, these letters I have receive'd in yr absence, & did make bolde to open Mr Billings because I imagined I might find some news of the Pursivant of whose coming heer I stood in much feare of, but Ihope now e shall hear no more of this businesse; and that I shall be so happie as to have your company heer at home, though it be much against ur will. The Soape Boyler came this day, because I know not whether you would be home tomorrow or not he would needs goe to you. Ihearily wish you home, for I have scares slept since I saw you, so desiring to be remembered to all mhy frends with you, & beseeching God to encline yr heart to lover her who will in psite of the divill ever be yrs immoveably Grace GRenvile

My mother commends her to you & I have given a shilling to Mr Billings man

There was no further trouble that year, and to solve his financial difficulties after Buckingham's disastrous expedition to relieve the French Huguenots of La Rochelle, the king was forced to summon parliament again in 1628, and to release his opponents from prison. Nearly all were at once elected, with the support of friends such as Bevill, who was now firmly marked down as a member of the opposition party.

Meanwhile Bevill had problems at home, as the next letters show. The reasons for Grace's distaste for Stowe are not clear – there does not seem to have been a

tragedy such as the death of a child – but it may have arisen from a combination of illness, worry about her husband and, indeed, long-running building works. From the last she had obviously escaped on a visit to her mother at Madford and then to Bevill's sister Gertrude, who had married Anthony Dennis of Orleigh Court near Bideford:

To my best Frend Mr Bevill GRenvile at ye signe of ye Rainbowe in Fleet steet between ye two Temple gates, London, Aril 4 1628, from Orley

Dear Mr Grenvile. I thake GOD I am acome back well hither & doe long to heare of your health, in London which pray let me knowe of, so soon as you can. I heare that our young Crue at Twoe are well, I came from Madford, on Tuesday last, where I would willingly have stayd longer, had it not been to have been with my sister, at her lying downe. I can gett no hope from my mother, to see her at Stowe till Whitsontide be past, & were it not to see my Children & that ur occasions are such as will of necessity, call me thither I should not for some reasons much desire to see Stowe, till yr returne, for the Place hath not been so fortunate to me, as to drawe my love much to it. I have received of my bro: Denis 29l-10s which he says is all that is due from him to you & from my Co: Osmond I knowe not wither I shall have any or no. for he says you appointed him to pay a 100l & to returne you ye other, & that he heard not of any I should have. I am sorry you did not please to remember me, for knowe not what to doe in this case. Ihave entreated earnestly for 60li which must be payd away as soone as I have it, there was above 80li due before ur going & I have payd 20li and better, & I shall dayly have use for money to keepe the house besides what is to be payed. I beseech you consider of this, & let me knowe yr minde in it. My sister yet holdes out & heartily commends her to you & so I rest Yrs ever & only Grace Grenville

Bevill's reply came promptly, written April 8 1628

My Dearest, the sadde aspect of your ltre, purporting nothing but ur griefe & sickness, fills me with infinite sorrow& anguish yea more than all other worldy crosses whatsoever, could occasion. I beseech you disquiet not yr minde & use wt means you can to preserve & continew yr health. I am sorry to heare you did remove so soone from Madford, where you might best have settled that, but if you have need, get Mr Flay unto you with his Phisick & give him content wtever it cost. I hope you will get in yr money & follow my directions in my last lre concerning yt. I desire to have all things paid at home if it be possible & when Vanston hath finish'd the house, let him make out the wall at either end, for to keepe the garden more privat, but let him be careful to carry it just as I directed him before Chibbett & foot it wth stone just as he doth the house, rhe rest Cobbe. You must make a new bargain wth him for the wall, wherin take some advice, if he doe not perfectly remember my directions for the carrying of it then let him forbeare it, for I would not for a world have it do otherwise than I intend; but if they be sure not to mistake me, I wish it were don wth all possible speed. If you be at Orley pray remember me heartily to the master &mistress there and to my Aunts. I hope my sister is pass'd her Plundge if she be not I do hartily pray

to god for her I thanke god I have had my health reasonable well since I parted from you & so I conclude as I begun beseeching you to be comforted in minde & carful of yr bodie, as you love me, or will have me live a happier hower in this world as I rest yr owne. Bevill Grenville

All is not quite forgiven:

Orley April 11 1628

Sweet Mr Grenvile, I have receav'd two lrs from you since yr going & did according to yr directions sende the inclosed heer I returne you the aunswer as it was sent me. I have written to Mr Osmond to pay yr Fathers Rent to Mr Billing & 10 lr to Mrs Broooking if she deliver yr bond, but how much is due to Mr Billing yr lre doth not expresse, & for yr home occasions that require money I did aquaint you in my last & I have already received 10li of my co; Osmond & doe desire to have 50li more or else I knowe not what to doe, perchance you will blame me & thinke I take too much but yr Scores were so high before yr going as all this if I have it will but cleare them & not leave me 10 li for all weekely expences in yr house and workmens wages. I am yet heer for my Sister hath not childe, but she desires to be remembered to you and so doth my Brother & my Aunt Abbott, my unt Bridgett is at Sherwell & I am in no better health or minde or body then when we parted but GOD keepe you well however I am that will never be other than Yr Faithfull wife Grace Grenvile

If you please to bestowe a plaine black Gownd of any cheape Stufe on me I will thanke you & some black Shooes I much need.

The next ten years saw the birth of more children, eight out of thirteen living beyond childhood. Great care was taken over the education of the sons, at least in a note concerning the delivery of some wine, Bevill reminded Grace '*that you would not let the boyes loose time from their scooling*'. Their grandson, Lord Landsdowne, wrote that indeed Bevill turned Stowe into a kind of academy for all the young men of family in Cornwall. He provided the best masters for all kinds of education, and the children of his neighbours shared the advantage with his own. '*Thus in a manner he became the father of his county, and not only engaged the affection of the present generation, but laid the foundation of friendship for posterity which has not worn out to this day.*'

His success with his eldest son appears not to have been total, however. In 1638, Richard was sent to Oxford with many instructions to study hard and behave himself. Even on the journey there he gave rise to some concern, having splashed out on new clothes and a saddle in Exeter, which his father considered unnecessary extravagances. Reports soon came back from Oxford of neglected studies, followed by the timeless consequences of anxious letters, a paternal visit and maternal pleas not to enrage his father.

Bevill Grenville's political position changed in those years too. Although he disapproved of the king's policies, he would not renounce his loyalty to him by following the extremist line of some of his colleagues. A wish to remain neutral

was prevented by the death of his father, Sir Bernard, in 1636. This forced him, at his father's special wish, to succeed as Deputy-Lieutenant for Cornwall and colonel of the local militia, made up mostly of men from the Grenville estates.

1639 brought war in Scotland. Bevill raised a troop of horse and marched north in support of the king, collecting a possibly relieved Richard from Oxford on the way. That the campaign should turn out bloodless was not to be predicted: Bevill had made his will and prepared himself for his fate, as he showed in this letter to his friend, Sir John Trelawney:

Most honoured Sir

I have in many kinds had trial of your nobenes, but in none more then in this singular expression of yr kinde care & love. I give you also & yr excel: Lady humble thanks for yr respect unto my poor Woman, who hath been long a faithful and much obliged Servant of yr Ladies but Sr for my journey it is fixt. I canot contain myself wthin my doors when the Kg of Englands Standard waves in the field upon so just occasion, the cause being such as msut make all those that dye in it little inferior to Martyrs. And for myne owne pt I desire to acquire an honest name or an honble grave. I never loved my life or ease so much as to shun such an occasion which if I should I were unworthy of the profession I have held, or to succeed those Ancestors of mine, who have so many of them in several ages sacrificed their lives for their Country…I am not without the consideration (a you lovingly advize) of my wife and family, & as for her I must acknowidge She hath ever drawne so evenly in her Yoke with me, as She hath never prest before or hung back & hindered me, nor ever oppos'd or resisted my will, & yet truly I have not in this or any thing else endevor'd to walke in the way of power with her, but of reason, & though her love will submit to either yet truly my respect will not suffer me to urge her with power unless I can convince with reason. So much for that, wherof I am willing to be accomptable unto so good a frend. I have no suite unto you in mine own behalf, but for yr prayers & good wishes…So I beseech God to send yu & yr noble family all health and happiness, and while llive I am, Sir

Yr unfailing loyal & faithful Servant, B.G.

The main troubles of the campaign proved to be illness caught while waiting to advance on Berwick-on-Tweed; and more worries about their eldest so.

To my best Frend Mr Bevill Grenvile, from Stow May 30 1639

O my Dearst, I have reeaved yrs dated the 15 May from Newcastle, bringing me the glad tidings of yr recovery before I heard of yr sickness, which I praise GOD for & shall long to heare the same of Dick, whose sickness being so foolishly gotten, I feare may prove dangerous, & must confesse till I heare againe shall remayne in much doubt. I am both sorry & ashamed he should err so much to his own prejudice, having had so many warnings, but I shall & doe beseech GODto restore him & blesse him wth judgment & grace to serve GOD truly & obey your precepts. Imust beseech you though at this distance, that you will pardon

ordinary errors in him, hoping that by degrees they will be reform'd though not so instantly as our desires are…I am willing to give you a full accompt of all things I can remember. Yr corne propers wll & yr young trees & r stable affaires proceed ccording to yr order. Yr Coults thrive very well also. Since yr going M Welsh hath buryed his only sonne & now hath only one daughter between 12 or 14 years olde & I am tolde, that they wish a match between you & themif you sould incline therto. Though at such a time it may be unseasonable, yet I canott but acquaint you with what I heare that if I should heare any more if it I might the better know what to say or thinke of it. The Parents conditions doth not take much with me, but the Estate is good. Pray let me know yr inclination herein, if Dick be well but many times I am in doubt that his sicknes was more than yr lre expressed, & that you might by degrees prepare me for worse news, God grant my fears to be vaine & deare Mr Grenvile pardon my infirmity in doubting the worst if there be no cause. My mother is now returnd and I praise God we are in the state of health though very unhappie in yr absence. Besse besought me to present her humble duty to you when I wrote. She is now at Orley with yr sister all the rest according to their knowledge both often enquire for you & finde you wanting. Byddie complaines you have stayd very long already, & Jone & Denisare allwaies prattling of you. These are my poore companions which doe passe the tedious howers away…I will trouble you no longer but doe continually pray for you and will ever remayne Yrs faithfully Grace Grenville

For the king this was an abortive expedition which ended in him granting the demands of the Scots to avoid a battle. But he did not neglect to honour with knighthoods those who had supported him, among them, Bevill Grenville, who wrote home at once with the news, addressing his wife in the new style:

To my best friend the Lady grace Grenvile at Stow, from Berwick June 25 1639

I have this morning sent Dick away to Ox in the conduct of my bro: & some servants. The King hath been gratious to me both in words & Actions, yet one thing I wish had been forborne, but it canot now be helped. I see it was a plot between my lord Genreall & my lord Chamberlain before I thought on't. As I was on Saturday last in the Privie Chamber among diverse others, upon a sodaine my Lord Genreall (being within a inner roome with the Kg) came to the doore and call'd for me by name. I went to him & he took me by the hand before all that were present, and ledd me in where the Kg was, and he, after gratious words upon a sodainedrew my lo: Genl's sword and gave me a dubbing. I value all his favours ver pretiously, owhterwise I should have wised this forborne, but it canot now be help'd. my lord Chamb: hath made me promise to spend a week or two with him at his residence of Wilton as I returne, so I reste Yrs in all faithfulness Bv GRENVILLE

The following winter brought more misbehaviour from Richard, rousing Bevill to new fury. Once again, Grace had to intercede between a father's high expectations and a son determined to choose his own way:

To my best Frend the Lady Grace Grenvile at Stowe, fromLondon Feb 16 1640

Deare love, In yr last letters you do farther use that power which I will not resist. You will not have me take exceptions to yr son for small matters, but as I have forgiven what is past, so I should not be over sensible for the time to come. You shall prevaile in all, I will use few words to him in any kinde; I pray god to guide & bless him. He shall stand or fall by his owne judgment formine is dispis'd by him. The way I props's was a path would assuredly leade to wealth and honour, but he likes it not, and calls my advice the severest rigour. I tooke it not to be so when I gave it, but I thought seeing I was prevented of leaving him a great estate, I should have done as well in putting him into a way to have gain'd one. If he otherwise conceave I cannot helpe it:I shall be sorry to see him live in want, but I hope some of his brothers will fine a way to raise their fortunes by this concourse which he dispises. So I leave all to God, resolving to trouble my selfe as little as I an hereafter. Pray let him spend his time as well as he may while he is in the Countrey, & aassoonas I can I will call him thence. The directions he hath from me for the country will do him no hurt to follow the, what course soever he take. Young Mr Chichester doth sometimes ask kindly for him & wish for his company pray bid Dick to write a handsom complement to him, taking notice from me that I have let him know, how kindly that gent remembred him, & therefore he could do no lese than present his humble service to him by his pen; with what other expressions his witt can fall upon. You say the hopyard will not hould all the trees: I know you are misinform'd for ther is grownd enough for many more trees, if they sett them where I us'd to till beans as I would have them to do & preay let all be removed if possible this yeare, that we may the sooner have good of them. I am willing some of yr syder should be kept for me especially that which had bags putt into it, & if you have usd any of it I desire to know how it proves. You have sent me a good note of ye mares; I pray god so many of them hould, & let none of them be us'd or putt to labour hereafter, for I would not have them miscarry for a world; let great care be had hereof. Let the gates with gapps of ye Orchards be made so strong as nothing breake in to hurt the trees. I am sorry I heare no good news of my Barb: mares but let them be well usd, notwithstanding. I sent some direction to you concerning my Span. Ducks, wherofI have heard nothing. Present my duty to yr mother; I pray for her health & would gladly heare of it. So I end, resting ever Yrs faithfully Bevill Grenvile

The rest of the story is a sad one. Richard died in 1641 leaving both parents ill with grief, from which Grace, in particular was slow to recover. John their third son, now became the heir, at the age of thirteen. Money became an over-riding worry, on an estate apparently drained by 'wasteful predecessors' as well no doubt with the cost of bringing up his own large family, and now burdened with the expense of the Scottish expedition – though worse was to follow with the Civil War itself. Bevill sought to solve the more immediate problems by raising a mortgage on some of Grace's property, and asked her for the deeds. In the words of their editor, Rev Roger Granville '*the only embittered feeling to be found in all the correspondence that is extant between husband and wife, reveals itself over this matter*.'

However, their letters thereafter tell mainly of ill-health and then, after the outbreak of war, of her anxiety and his desire to reassure, along with a preoccupation with military matters until his death at the Battle of Landsdowne in 1643. So it seems fitting to end these extracts from their correspondence with the husband's reaffirmation (even if it is written in slightly chastened tones) of what is already clear from their previous letters, of the Grenvilles' great affection for each other:

To my best Friend The Lady Grace Grenvile

Dear Grace, I have with sadnesse received yor two last letters because with so much passion & sharpness you do fall upon me, while I conceave I did not deserve it. Tis true I exprest in my former leter grief that you should distrust me & that you should think I would so endgner you as to leave a necessity upon you that should force you to sell your land. Truly love I have no such designe, I have had some conferences wth you to contrive what may be best for our estate & some resolutions we have fallen upon, which seeing you dislike I will never presse more. You neednot exersize yr pen so much to satisfie me, I am in no way displeas'd, nor can be wth you. I have nothing in the world pleasing delightfull or contenting to me but yr selfe, in you my love did begin and must end wher with I end, leaving the rest to our conference and resting entirely yrs B. G.

The First Cornish Mole

Alice of the Coombe, of noble birth, the only child of her mother, lived among the hills of Morwenna, near the Severn Sea. She was tall, blue-eyed and very beautiful, but she was proud. She would pass whole days in choosing rich apparel, jewels and gold.

She rejected many suitors, for her heart was set on one man - Sir Beville of Stowe, a Granville and one of the most renowned and faithful of the followers of the Stuart cause.

At last Sir Beville was to give a ball and a banquet. For this, Alice spent many hours in front of the mirror, and when all was prepared, she descended to the hall, where her mother was spinning, praying, as ever, for her daughter's success: for she longed to see her wedded, and to hold her children on her knee.

Alice's robe was of rich dark velvet, jewels sparkled in her dark hair, and on her hand she wore a great, shining ring. But she felt no need of her mother's prayers, so secure she was in the power of her own beauty. "I lack no prayers", she said scornfully. But at the words, a burst of wild music and a flash of light filled the air: the girl shrieked in terror and was gone.

No trace of her could be found; until one evening a gardener, leaning on his spade, noticed a small heap of earth at his feet, and on its loosened surface gleamed the very ring Alice had worn. The priest at Morwenna translated the Cornish inscription on its inner surface. 'The earth must hide both eyes and pride'.

At their feet was a small dark creature, clothed like Lady Alice in soft velvet: but sightless, her blue eyes sealed forever. For her pride she became a mole - the first ever found in Cornwall.

(Source: The Dictionary of British Folk Tales. Katherine M Briggs.)

A Cornish hero remembered

Stuart Fraser on Parson Hawker, who wrote Cornwall's national anthem and once excommunicated a cat

PARSON Hawker came to lonely Morwenstow, a tiny parish clutching the fierce cliffs of the North Cornish coast, in 1834. There had been no priest for a century; the church was deserted, the vicarage, partly used as a barn, in ruins, the graveyard over-run by brambles and nettles. The people, Hawker wrote, were 'a mixed multitude of smugglers, wreckers and dissenters of various hues.'

Forty years later, all had changed. The Church was restored, a new vicarage – complete with chimneys in the shape of his favourite church towers – was built.

Robert Stephen Hawker had achieved fame as a poet ('he has beaten me on my own ground' said Tennyson, ruefully), a minister to the ship-wrecked, a lover of animals – and a man who ranks very high indeed in the pantheon of great British eccentrics.

Donning a fisherman's jersey and hessian boots the more to identify with his farmers, fishermen and labourers, Hawker set about Morwenstow, shepherding his new

A rare photograph of Parson Hawker. 'It is difficult to picture him living anywhere but at Morwenstow in that lonely valley by the cliffs within sound of the sea.'

flock by example.

Prowling the cliffs, he spared no effort in helping the victims of shipwreck; if sailors could not be saved, Hawker went to extraordinary lengths – and braved no little danger – to find their bodies and give them Christian burials.

Between 1824 and 1872, there were more than 80 wrecks on the North Cornish coast; Parson Hawker wrote:

From Hartland Point to Padstow Light
Is a watery grave by day and by night.

In surviving letters, he recounts some of the details of his relentless obsession with the sea: 'the poor dissolving carcass of Adam, 17 days dead, has so filled the surrounding air that it is only by a strong effort of my own, and by drenching my men with gin, that I can fulfil that duty (burial) which must be done.'

Once a woman parishioner brought him a man's foot salvaged from the waves. He gave it a funeral: 'This we have laid in the ground, til perhaps its body too may come; and now with 12 bodies still unfound ... you will understand the nervous, wretched state in which we listen all day and all night for those thrilling knocks at the door which announce the advent of the dead.'

When the *Margaret Quayle* was dismasted in 1863, Hawker called out the Bude lifeboat at his own expense and rode miles along the cliffs, following the ship's one lifeboat until it put safely in to Clovelly. When the 200-ton sailing ship *Caledonia* sank in a terrible gale in 1842, with only one survivor, Hawker located all the bodies of the lost. Their graves can be seen in Morwenstow to this day – near the strange white figurehead of the ship, which Hawker salvaged and erected in the churchyard as a memorial.

Dissenters (those who preferred other denominations to the Church of England) were sharply dealt with; when one came to ask for a relative to be buried, Hawker snorted: 'Bury a dissenter? I shall be delighted. I should like to bury the lot!'

By 1837, Hawker had built a new vicarage. His successor, the Reverend Hugh Breton, wrote in 1927 that Hawker chose a spot near the Church that he thought would be good for shelter because he noticed how sheep and lambs would lie there. Over the door he inscribed:

A house, a glebe, a pound a day;
A pleasant place to watch and pray.
Be true to Church – be kind to poor,
O Minister, for ever more.

Its five chimneys are in the shape of church towers he particularly admired – save for the kitchen chimney. That is in the shape of his mother's tomb.

Hawker was born in Devon in 1803, and educated at Cheltenham College and Pembroke College, Oxford. Though already noted for

National Trust

The Church of St Morwenna, Morwenstow. Here Hawker would pinch children 'to let the Devil out' and at weddings he would toss the ring into the air, convinced this would bring the couple luck.

his poetry (he had won the Newdigate Prize), he took the living of Morwenstow three years after he was ordained priest.

Morwenstow is remote even today; then it must have seemed the very edge of the world. Yet Robert Stephen Hawker never left – though he felt the isolation keenly.

Of his most famous poem, he wrote: 'All these years the Song has been bought and sold, set to music and applauded, while I have lived on among these far away rocks unprofited, unpraised and unknown.'

That song was 'Song of the Western Man,' today better known as Cornwall's national anthem, 'Trelawny', sung with passion and pride wherever the Cornish gather:

A good sword and a trusty hand,
A merry heart and true:
King James's men shall understand
What Cornish lads can do!

And have they fixed the where and when?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here's 20,000 Cornishmen
Will know the reason why!

And shall Trelawny live?
Or shall Trelawny die?

Here's 20,000 Cornishmen
Will know the reason why!

Its fame today is a mark of the growing fame of Hawker himself: the driftwood hut he built on the cliffs at Morwenstow as a refuge in which to smoke his opium and write his poetry is the smallest property owned by the National Trust. (The vicarage is privately owned, though its amazing architecture can still be seen).

Hawker has been described as comparable to St. Francis of Assisi in his devotion to animals. He talked to the birds, gave them names and could be seen with feathered friends fluttering round him to be fed; his nine cats would accompany him into Church (though he is said to have excommunicated one of them for killing a mouse on a Sunday); he kept a pet pig called Gyp, who would travel with him, and two deer, named Robin Hood and Maid Marion.

His dog Berg would carry the Church key for him. Fires were banned in rooms in the vicarage when jackdaws nested in the chimneys. When a parishioner shot rooks which had nested in the churchyard, Hawker – possessed of a rich, loud voice – preached his sermon on the text: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father.'

His writings included the Arthurian romance *The Quest of the Sangraal* (1863), favourably compared with Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*; he wrote poetry and prose, wrote fiction and chronicled legend. In *Footprints of Former Men in Far Cornwall* (1870), he wrote about his native land's rich vein of myth and legend, an expression of his own life-long obsession with superstition and the supernatural. He claimed to have seen Saint Morwenna, to whom his Church was dedicated, and blamed the death of nine suckling pigs on a witch's curse.

But his writings by no means earned enough to keep him out of lifelong poverty – the cost of his vicarage and his building and continuing support of a village school in nearby Shop kept him a poor man.

Perhaps his most enduring legacy was the creation of the Harvest Festival – a service Hawker made for the mainly poor farmers and labourers of his parish, feeling that a successful harvest was a life-or-death issue for them.

He was an eccentric priest, too. Dressed in High Church pomp, he would pinch children during Baptism to make them scream and 'let the Devil out'; at weddings he would toss the ring in the air and catch it 'for luck for the happy couple.'

Yet he remained little known until another rural priest, the famous Dartmoor novelist, hymn-writer and folklorist the Reverend Sabine Baring Gould (1834-1924), wrote a biography a year after Hawker's death in Plymouth in 1875 following a stroke. Of the twice-married father of three daughters, Baring-Gould lamented:

National Trust / Andrew Besley

Hawker's Hut on the North Cornwall coast – the smallest property owned by the National Trust.

'Restricted to so narrow and isolated a sphere of action, his powers to some extent were perhaps wasted.

'With more scope he might have done greater things. As it was his originality, independence of mind and eccentricities were contained and it is difficult to picture him living anywhere but at Morwenstow in that lonely valley by the cliffs within sound of the sea.' ■

Tailcorn

Deaf villager visited by Mormons:
'Who are you?'
'We're Mormons.'
'Oh aye, well you can go back where you
came from, we had enough trouble from you in 1066.'

To Miss Amy Tape with best wishes —

A WEST COUNTRY CHRISTMAS

By T. F. CLARKE

December 10th, 1906. Have just finished Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree*. The first chapter about carol-singers has fired me with a desire to spend Christmas in the West Country. My people will be away so why not?

December 12th. Have searched my sketch books for the address of the Mill at which we had tea one day when walking down the coast of Devon and Cornwall last summer. Luckily I made a note of the name which was on the mill cart and have written asking if they can put me up for a few days as one of the family.

December 15th. A reply from the Mill. Although they don't make a habit of taking guests, they will be pleased to see me but advise me not to come as the valley is very dull in the winter. Although it doesn't sound as if they livened themselves up with carol singing, I will chance my arm and go.

December 23rd. Well, here I am sitting in the mill kitchen over a cup of tea, making a few notes in my diary. After the night spent in a non-corridor train, I was dying to stretch my legs, so leaving my bag at the Station I made my way to the nearest inn, where a good breakfast of ham and eggs followed by a fruit pie and cream put me in trim for a four mile walk over the cliffs to the mill. It was a grey morning with a nip in the air and as I strode on my way—the keen sea breeze on my face, the springy turf underfoot and mile upon mile of rocky coast stretching away in the distance, outlined with a white ribbon of foam,—a feeling of exhilaration made me burst into song. Eventually arriving at the edge of the coombe, I looked down. The mill was like a toy in the distance. With some difficulty I scrambled down the steep hillside and received a warm and friendly welcome from the good people, who have made me feel quite at home. The family consists of the quiet little mother, Amy, Phosie, Archie, Claude and Fred. It appears there are other brothers and sisters away from home, one a police sergeant in London. There is much bustling activity in the cooking department; one feels the spirit of Christmas and good cheer in the air.

After a simple but well-cooked meal, I went for a walk up the valley by the stream. It is well wooded, the steep hillside being covered with gnarled, stunted, wind-blown oak trees and I could see Kilkhampton Church tower rising from a clump of trees on a hill at the head of the valley. The stream empties itself into the sea a few hundred yards below the mill. Returned to tea in the warm kitchen, everything home made, bread of stone-ground flour from the mill, blackberry jelly, butter and cream from their two cows, "scats" and cakes.

To-night, after supper, Fred suggested to the others that they should try over a carol. I pricked up my ears at this hopeful sign and in order to stimulate them brewed a bowl of punch, the ingredients for which I had brought with me. As I sat smoking my pipe they sang several carols for my entertainment. They are all musical and between them play the piano, violin and cornet. It being a bit late we finished the punch and went to bed.

December 24th. Awakened by the sound of plunging water. Archie had started work early and the mill wheel was in full swing. It did not take me long to complete my toilet and descend to the kitchen whence an appetising aroma of grilling bacon and coffee proceeded. This afternoon Amy asked me if I would mind being left alone with her mother as they always went carol singing on Christmas Eve. I nearly jumped for joy and asked whether they would

take me with them. "Come and welcome," was her reply. Early in the evening Uncle John arrived with his 'cello and two others with violin and flute. Soon after we started and made our way up the hill and along the coast road towards Morwenstow. The night was serenely quiet with sufficient light from the stars to illuminate dimly the road ahead. The murmur of the sea on the rocks below was the only sound that broke the stillness. As the party straggled along one could hear snatches of conversation and a ripple of laughter from one of the girls who were linked arm in arm with the gay Claude. Uncle John, who led the choir, was a fine, honest old fellow with a complexion like one of his own cider apples, a short beard and the clearest blue eyes. I can see him with his cello, nearly as big as himself, forming a grotesque silhouette against the sky as we topped the hill. Amy, who had taken me under her wing, took my arm as we brought up the rear of the procession. From time to time we were joined by another member of the choir who had been waiting on a stile or at the corner of a lane until the party must have numbered about a dozen. After having tramped about three miles we turned into a narrow lane leading towards the sea which led to Rectory Farm. Here Uncle John enjoined silence as we tiptoed through the gate and ranged ourselves in a circle on the lawn. Two boys who had joined the party lit the candles in their lanthorns which they held aloft on sticks shedding but an indifferent light on the manuscript music with which the instrumentalists were provided. The silence was broken by Uncle John's deep voice giving the first line of "Let Christians with one accord rejoice"—and immediately the sweet cadence of an old time tune arose on the night air. I stood apart taking in the whole scene, the old farm buildings forming a dark mass in the background with here and there a cosy gleam through the red-curtained windows. As I listened to these homely people singing and playing in such perfect harmony, with the sound of the sea breaking on the rocky beach two hundred feet below, London with its multitude of people jostling and treading on one another's heels was forgotten.

Before the carol had ended the front door was thrown open, the farmer and his family standing outside until the singing was over when, with a hearty welcome, he invited us to enter. We trooped in and were ushered into the parlour where a blazing log fire threw out such a heat that it was uncomfortable to sit near it. In the centre of the room stood a large table heavily laden with pasties, sandwiches, cakes, jugs of ale and cider. A bottle of peppermint and a large teapot with its attendant cups and saucers indicated that the women of the party had not been overlooked. Coming in from the outer darkness it was indeed a cheerful sight. The warm atmosphere carried that faint, scarce definable aroma of old rose leaves and newly baked bread so nostalgic to the smoke-stained Londoner. Mine host and his wife, having dispensed liquid refreshment, made kindly enquiries as to the health of the various families, condoling in homely phrase with those who had illness in the house or ill-luck in stable or field. The quality of the cider having been favourably commented upon and a discussion as to a certain breed of apple brought to a satisfactory conclusion, Uncle John called upon his choir to sing another carol. There was some slight delay while the violin and 'cello were keyed up to match the flute then off they all went with another old favourite of theirs, "Hark the Music", which was followed by "Behold the Grace appears", the farmer and his family joining in. So, with intervals for refreshment, the time passed quickly. The faces of those sitting near the fire shone with their exertions and the heat, until Uncle John announced that it was time to move on if we wanted to get home in time for breakfast. The last carol, "O fair, O fair Jerusalem", which ended with "*My song is done, I must be gone, Can stay no longer here. God bless you all, both great and small, Send you a joyful year*," was

sung and followed by many wishes for happiness in the New Year, we issued forth into the outer darkness. We tramped on to the next farm where the same programme was repeated. Here an old chap who was playing the violin was so stimulated by the ale he had imbibed that he became a bit too energetic pulling his bow right off the strings and in the up-stroke pushing it under them. This created some merriment and rustic wit at his expense. "Never mind," said our host, "have another mug to put you right William." We arrived back in the mill in the early hours of the morning to find another meal awaiting us. It astonished me to see how much food the men could tuck away. Fred with a generous helping of ham in front of him, sat there with closed eyes, half asleep, his jaws moving automatically. I christened him "Contemplative Chew".

It did not need the tinkling water dripping from the mill-wheel opposite my window to lull me to sleep and how pleasant it was to realize, as I gradually emerged from my slumber in the morning, that it was not rain dripping from the roof in London. All was bustle as I joined them for breakfast. Evidently the womenfolk were making preparations for cooking the Christmas dinner so, after the meal, I went for a walk over the cliffs. The keen air gave me an appetite which was whetted by the savoury odours which assailed me as I entered the kitchen. And what a dinner it was, a genuine John Bull's feast, no fancy dishes. Just a great sirloin of beef, with a perfect Yorkshire pudding, vegetables, Christmas pudding and mince pies, with lashings of cream. For drinks we had ale and cider. One of the vegetables was swedes mashed with cream which wants tasting to be believed. It was during the meal that I quite innocently upset Amy by calling her "buxom". Apparently she was not sure of my meaning and flew to an old Dr. Johnson's dictionary which she kept on the dresser. Now the great lexicographer often gave his own interpretation to a word which, in this case, was "wanton". Amy returned to the table her face redder than ever and it took me some time to convince her that the Doctor was wrong.

In the evening we went carol singing again. On this occasion the party attended evening service at "Passon" Hawkers' church which stands on the side of a steep coombe about half a mile from the shore. Here after the service they sang their carols, then leaving the church made for the vicarage where the vicar and his wife, who had only recently come to the parish, were obviously taken by surprise. However, we were all invited in and shown into the drawing room but I noticed a momentary look of consternation on our hostess' face as the heavy boots trampled over the light coloured carpet. Coffee was brought in and I could see from the demeanour of the men that they were ill at ease. As soon as they had emptied their cups a move was made towards the door and to the more congenial atmosphere of the old thatch-roofed inn, from which the sound of revelry proceeded. Lights streaming from several windows indicated the presence of a goodly company.

On entering we were greeted by a shout of welcome and a space cleared near the inglenook for our accommodation. A large saucepan was placed on the fire into which ale was poured and a quantity of rum and sugar added. Having refreshed themselves with this concoction, the singing started and as the whole company joined in, I think it must have been audible in the vicarage. With singing and the recounting of events which happened at former Christmases, closing time came all too quickly. Back at the mill they refreshed themselves with a good meal, sang a carol and went to bed.

December 26th. Over breakfast Fred told me that it was their invariable custom to have a shoot along the cliffs on Boxing Day and although I had no gun, he invited me to join the party. Soon after breakfast we sallied forth, climbing the hill which took us on to the cliff edge. Although there was plenty of banging and doubtless much bad luck, the total bag

for the morning was two rabbits. It was hungry work up there and when I saw two girls from the mill coming over the hill carrying roomy baskets covered with white cloths, their aprons blowing in the wind, I had a vision of something good to eat. This pleasurable anticipation was realized when, spreading a cloth on the turf, Amy and Phosie produced from the aforesaid baskets a great variety of hot pasties, sandwiches, cakes, etc., together with bottles of hot tea. Hunger is the best sauce and never was a dinner at the Savoy eaten with greater gusto.

December 27th. After breakfast Claude harnessed Merrylegs, pushed my bag into the trap and drove me into Bude. Bidding me farewell he thrust a flask of whisky and some pasties into my hand for the journey and I arrived home full of good spirits and happy memories, singing, *sotto voce:*

God bless you all both great and small,
Send you a joyful year.