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# The Collins of Chard

## Setting the Scene

In the West Country, close to the town of Chard, is a grassy mound and the remains of a trench - of an Iron Age settlement – a ditch and earthworks, which had its own-hutted encampment. Rough grass now grows within the enclosure giving cover to the rabbit... that never travels far from the warren. Close by, the partridge – neck thrust forward keeping low to the ground, scuttles for cover. Everything of consequence lay at the foot of the hill... those things beyond gives a backdrop to my tale - country life a generation ago, and the effect it all had on me.

From the top of the earthworks is a beautiful view... over hill and dale. It is the type of picture which lightens and warms long winter evenings – stirs the memory – remind one of summer skies and the call of birds – of wind blown sward – waving fronds of fern and nettle. The bees are there making full use of the wild flowers as they return repeatedly to carry the next golden harvest... back to the hive. In the distance a plume of smoke rises from the charcoal burners mound, disappearing in the grey streamers of cloud, interspaced with brilliant blue, that skate by above - toward the darker grey horizon – heralding rain. Scudding lower down a puffy white cloud goes gliding by, as graceful as a swan. The suns rays penetrate the breaks in the clouds to illuminate by turn the fields, the hill, and distant farm buildings.

The grass-decked mound, its past associations with ancient folk recognised and considered, prompt us to seek out their source of fresh water - needed for drinking. There, issuing from numerous springs clear water brooks, streams and watercourses are formed... winding

down to the river. The ancient inhabitants of the settlement chose their encampment well.

Not far away, a ribbon of road carries a wagon pulled by a pair of horses enters a field. As your eye travels along the track, you spy a rick that has a bite out of it. It is to this that the wagon draws up for another load to be cut out for carting away. The driver saws out the next series of straw blocks, which make up the next load to make his way back over the bridge to the group of buildings lying in the distance.

The stream that travels under a bridge starts near to where you are standing... is a little lower than the warren. It wends its way down the hill, you can just make it out... to run by field and farm through field and dale to land up, eventually, on either side of the main street of Chard, where my brother and I sailed our match stick boats; then divides to become the River Isle that runs north and River Axe that heads south – towards Tatworth. To the east of the town is a ridge, which carries an important Roman road giving ease of access - for the legionnaires to March and chariots to drive... westwards. These old Roman roads built so long ago are discernable today and purposely laid, with their attendant forts, taking the easiest, straightest route. On the uphill side of the paved way is the fosse – the ditch to take away storm water that is now full of weeds and grass. This gives the road its name - Fosse *Way*.

The geography of the market town of Chard - that sits upon this main arterial road, which leads to Honiton and London, Bath and Bristol, made it a valuable ‘trade’ link. This geographical reason made Honiton one of England’s main lace production centres - gave the driver of the pack-horse caravan a route to Somerset and beyond...to Devon villages, that lay in the valleys, particularly those to the south towards Axminster, and Lyme Bay. It is believed, the skill of lace making began in the late 1300s, in Beer, Branscombe, Honiton, Otterton and Sidbury. This close relationship is typical of trade routes – from outworking ‘cottage industry’ to make-up centres in towns. Horse and wagon, pack animals and walking trader made their way to outlying town and port.

Ships carried the finished products...across the channel to the continent.

The discovery or invention of any industrial product leads to the construction of a factory. This industrial centre requires power, a delivery of material, and a pool of skilled labour. This in turn leads to associated trades developing close by. When one product is overtaken by fashion, or new technology, the former adapts. This occurs particularly when a product or technology is found in large towns or cities where local wealth relies upon maintaining full employment. This cycle occurred in Chard, each industry using the same source of power – the river, and later, the mills.

Chard's industry grew in the fifteenth century from tanning leather. A hundred years later wool production took over as the major trading product. It would also be natural and convenient to expect wool to be used locally to weave. The cloth trade gave much employment in the town – spinners, carders, shermen, fullers and dyers all were needed; so too, shuttle-makers, tearers, weavers and loom-makers... all giving industry to the area. The manufacture of woollen cloth was his town's only industry in the 1550s. It was indeed fortunate for the town and its citizens that the materials and skills needed for weaving and lace making were interchangeable... not forgetting Chard's geological position - close to two rivers, on a trade route – from coast to London. Three-quarters of the male population and ninety percent of women could neither read nor write... and most goods were manufactured in the home. In the late sixteenth century silk weaving and the knitting of silk stockings complimented the wool trade each using similar crafts... both offered skills to the lace-maker. Bone lace received its title by the use of sheep's trotters for bobbins. Fish and bird bones provided the pins.

The weaving of silk on handlooms still operated in 1870. It began in England during the reign of James I who promoted the skill of knitting silk stockings. Mulberry-trees were planted to feed the silkworms and there were many gardens that catered for this industry. Another village industry was cheese making, producing cream and butter – the village of South Chard, within walking distance of Tatworth, had the butter

factory where granddad, and my uncles, worked, just before and during, The Second World War. The factory was modelled on cleanliness, an important factor for butter making.

About the same time as weaving silk stockings, introduced lace making was encouraged. In about 1570, Flemish refugees, who fled to England, settled in Hertfordshire, and later to Buckinghamshire. King William III's annual bill for lace amounted to £2459.19s., and his wife, Queen Mary, £1918. These were considerable sums of money - demonstrate the importance of the trade. By the 1700s, lace making was a skill very much based in Honiton served by outlying villages as a cottage industry.

The wold gave up its brush - to become cultivated to grow woad for the dyers. The workers, with other woodlanders, lived off the woods and forests... the summer work went on... growing the crop, cutting the leaves, grinding them into a paste... then shaped into balls, to dry in the sun...

In England, the wool industry was linked to rural life - using cottage craftsmen. There was no production line, excess was bartered, and interest led to skills being perfected. Later, the need for mass production, prompted the workers to join forces - to form communes - relying upon each other. This voluntary act prompted by an obvious need became a necessity... finally, an important part of the areas economy... a relied on source of trade for local and national exchequer. Many trades' people hired out manufacturing equipment and raw materials - particularly cloth. Whole families would turn their hand to help spin and weave. Cloth was England's largest export. The major agricultural improvement came with the invention of a modern plough that considerably increased output. The Enclosure Acts replaced the old 'open field' system. A system that helped achieve proper drainage, crop rotation and hedging.

In the 1648, the Manor of Chard was taken away from the church and king's steward and given to Col Nathaniel Whetham, as part payment for services rendered. The manor was land granted by the king as an inheritance subject to the performance of such services and yearly rents - as were specified.

A cottage, according to a statute of law – proclaimed by Edward I, is a house with land attached to it. An even earlier definition was, ‘those who dwelt in cots or cottages, were ‘bound’ freemen - to provide a fixed service for the lord of the manor and not work for anyone else. The Collins were a family long established in Chard and its sub-Manor Tatworth. Their life a reflection of many others that make-up England’s heritage.

## CHAPTER 1.

Workers of the land - Gloucestershire Poll Tax 1381 – The Bishop of Bath & Wells - Lord of Chard Manor - Sir William Petre -The open field system – Land share – Enclosure - Wool - Extracted minerals – Transportation - Metal working – Pewter – Ironmasters–Tanning- Ball Clay -Tobacco-pipe manufacture – Mill power - Weaving.

*Documents record that Collins is a Norman name, derived from Colin. The family found its way to the West Country in 1381 - the Gloucestershire Poll Tax confirms this, and by the fourteen hundreds, the family became established ‘workers of the land’; bound to the soil within Chard’s manor boundary... there they worked looking after the lord’s sheep on common land, ‘the waste’, [beath, woodland and marsh] which encircles Chard, and its sub-manor Tatworth...*

Pre-history Iron Age was a period in England of forest clearance and a settled population. The countryside was dotted with settlements made up in the main of extended family units. It is highly likely that Tatworth had a few homesteads for it was surrounded by a rich countryside with ample water. This period lasted from about the middle of the first millennium BC until the time the Romans invaded. Celtic people populated the West

Country originally from Ireland and Gaul of the Durotriges Tribe. During the Roman occupation of Central and Eastern Britain, there was a great deal of trade. The Romans left the West Country alone not fearing any attack. [The relative isolation of the West Country, other than coastal trade, continued until after The Dark Ages – almost up to The Hundred Years War and the building of Exeter Cathedral.]

The rural *pagani* worshiped their native gods speaking in the Celtic tongue – gradually adopting Latin closer to the line that separated Roman Britain and the Celtic West Country. The west of England was consolidated into Saxon England proper towards the end of the first millennium, which encompasses The Dark Ages and Aethelred I. Over a hundred years later King William's Domesday survey catalogued in 1086 declared that Chard was owned by the church but would be recorded for the assessment and collection of the 'geld' or land tax. In this there was no exemption from paying royal tributes - included the provision and upkeep of armed men. As the land comprised eight hides and one man was to be provided per six hides we will be generous in stating that The Bishop had to provide one armed-man for the king's service. The Bishop had to pay towards the upkeep of bridges and highways... he also had to hand over any fines [fees] from legal jurisdiction. He may have been able to levy fines and receive them instead of the king's sheriff but that privilege was not universal. The first time we come across the name Thatteworthe is about 1320 relating to someone of that name holding land attached to a dwelling house.

Chard's sub-manor land was arranged as a three open-field system, cultivated in a three-year rotation of: white corn – wheat, rye, and barley; peas and oats, and the third arable... resting as fallow. The two main production fields raised corn crops on the furlongs – ground cultivated in strips. Each farmer had rights over his land that was scattered across the manor. The decision

about what was planted, and when, was made communally; all the men worked together sharing the oxen, ploughs and other tools under the direction of the Reeve. The other main activity was looking after the animals – sheep and cattle, on the common grazing land..., one looking after the lord's oxen, grazing the water meadows.

Each village gave work to a miller, baker and ale-house-keeper - who also sold provisions. They all worked in unison, as did all the other tradesmen. Each farmer gave a percentage of the grain to the miller for grinding his corn - the flour produced, he used for his own household - any extra was sold to the baker... he in turn sold the bread to the tradesmen who did not work the land but needed loaves. Some of the grain went to the brewer to make into ale, who provided all with brew. The craftsmen needed the skills of the smelter and the foundry. The charcoal maker needed his axe and knives forged and sharpened. The blacksmith made up the farming tools, and the wheelwright sought his rims; the carpenter put on the handles and made the yokes. The shoemaker and leather worker shaped the soles and cut the traces; the basket maker and weaver all exchanged their wares for basic materials from the farmer and his field. It was part-bartering system that worked well; the wise Reeve saw to it that no one was given short change. All these trades with their craftsmen had rights too, just as the farmer did. These tradesmen's sons took over from the father keeping the skills within the family making themselves indispensable. They too had to pay for the privilege of working for the lord even though they were freemen. When there was trouble, they had to turn too and become part of the lord's conscripted army, and when the harvest needed to be gathered in, they became farm labourers. It is only by long service that they could purchase their freedom from forfeiture.

Up to the late Middle Ages, the power in the land lay with the king, who owned all the land. The king awarded some of his land to relations and those who helped him – his lords. Both the king and lords gave land to the church so that they might be redeemed. A manor is principally a territorial unit, which corresponds to the parish... The manor included settlements referred to as vills', which corresponds to villages, hamlets, and large farms. Most of England and Wales was divided up into manors. All the land in the manor was overseen by the lord or his tenants and was held as principle tenures being freehold and copyhold. The freehold tenants held their land by grant from the lord in return for a definite service. Military service was usually commuted in course of time for a money payment or '*quit rent*' – quit of his personal service. The copyhold tenants, whose evidence of title was their copy of the entry in the Court Rolls recording their admittance, owed various services, which usually was particular to the parish. These included heriots, forfeiture, the obligation to do fealty to the lord, and suits and services of many different kinds. A heriot is the best live beast – horse or ox – of which the tenant dies possessed, or sometimes his best chattel – piece of plate, furniture, or garment. The lord was entitled to take this when the tenant died or when the property was alienated to another person. Forfeiture, or obligations, was the liability of the copyholder if he alienated without telling his lord or seeking his consent.

All tenants of the manor had the same rights on the manorial waste – the unenclosed, uncultivated land – on the common... This did not necessarily mean they were 'practicing commoners' for that was generally reserved - as a handed down right - to long serving members of the community. The freeholders had, as well as their tenure, 'rights of pasturage' for their 'beasts of the plough' cattle, horses, donkeys, geese and



special rights for sheep. The copyholders had various additional rights.

Tillage - 'working the land for cultivation: needed ploughs, plough socks, coulter, spades, shovels, sickles and scythes... power was supplied by oxen. All these were the means to produce enough grain and vegetables, to feed the ploughman and his family, and to pay rent for his land. Eventually after more common land had been cleared - for development, there remained sufficient for a cash crop.

Pasturage: the right to graze cattle, horses, donkeys, geese.

Pannage: the right to graze pigs.

Turbary : the right to cut turf.

Marl : the right to dig clay.

Estovers: the right to cut bracken, ferns, heather, gorse. All these were used to provide roofing and bedding. Wood could be cut but only for use in the dwelling... for the right applied to the hearth, that lay in a particular place. Similarly the Turbery – the right to cut turf as a fuel. This also belonged to the chimney and the hearth. There was also a 'right' to draw water, and to fish.

Housebote: the repair of cottages.

Firebote : the collection of fuel for the fire.

Ploughbote: the wood needed to make the farm implements.

Hedgebote: the material to construct hedges and fences.

Tenant: Usually described as a smallholder, one who rented land paying dues and a forfeiture to the owner... could also be a Cottager - a villager, [villein or feudal serf], with a smallholding of land measuring one yardland or less. Also described as a husbandman – a common labourer... someone attached to the soil - a slave.

A cottager owned very little... other than one or two house-cows, he had no other animals and the minimum of arable strips. His only source of payment was from an excess of the corn he grew and grazing rights. Bad weather, poor harvests, and low grain prices saw him destitute – owing money for his rent...; he had to keep a supply of grain for his next sowing. When enclosure was forced upon him, he lost what little income he could make. When enclosure was enacted it affected all the cottagers until tillage ceased - and all became landless – unattached labourers... Illness and injury saw the family begging.

The cottager's rights were for constructing dwellings, maintaining them, making the tools and carts, and developing the land to produce food. The tenants and copyholders had these rights attached to the property - passed on when the property changes hands. All these went with the property not the person that meant the dweller was secured/attached/linked to rights that kept him firmly controlled and subservient to the holder of the land - the lord. Over time, these rights become unused, disinherited and died out - as tenants moved away.

The Reeve, who enforced the local rules and rights, with the aid of his Hayward [Assistant] handled the management of the lord's estate. The workers of the land voted him into office, which gave him credence - elected him annually giving him the authority to adjudicate... when there were arguments; this gave him standing, especially when discipline was called for. Generations later, the Reeve's job was superseded by the Sheriff, only this time the position was the lord's to give, and not the people; he was retained in office, in some cases permanently... being an inherited position - able to be passed down from father to son.

The forfeited service – the obligation the tenant had to pay for the privilege of the 'grant', was usually military service. The

lord was honour bound to provide a similar service to his superior in the hierarchy... and so on. It was a method whereby the king obtained an army, which he did not have, to train or support.

By good work and long service, the tenant could buy his quintal from his obligation to fealty – his *quit rent*. The lord held his fiefdom devising taxes and laws hiring a steward to look after the day-to-day running of his estate in company with the reeve who was far more knowledgeable about the countryside and the people who dwelt there.

The result of The Black Death – the unprecedented death rate - particularly of the poor, reached Chard in the autumn of 1348/9. For the first time it gave more power to the workers – the serfs, because the plague reduced the population by over a third - making those left worth a great deal more; they could now demand better conditions – which is what they called for... The Bishop's steward, fifty years later, found that low prices and high wages made demesne farming no longer profitable.

The Peasants' Revolt in 1381, led by Wat Tyler was mainly the outcome of the massive increase in the poll tax - three times higher than the previous year, taxing both rich and poor, at the same rate. This aggravated the already dissatisfied working population who wished to have their servitude – as serfs and the villeinage system, abolished; they also wished to have free contracts for labouring services and the right to rent land. Parliament legislated to keep the wages of the workers low - prevent their dissatisfaction from seeking new employment - moving to other estates. The lords sought further means to stop the flow of workers from the land by increasing the feudal dues – services rendered, tightening the legal bonds. The rebels attacked any signs of lordship and lordly authority – both secular and civil, including their manorial systems and records they kept.

The Bishop of Bath was the district governor and owner of Chard Manor. He represented the church here and at other manors - in his diocese. He was a member of the king's council and one of the country's leading magnates, and often the holder of high offices of state. To oversee all the churches property and land he travelled continually accompanied by his secretaries, servants and guards. At each manor he controlled there would be his steward who ran the estate in his absence. Over time - by beneficent work and prayer, the church had been gifted over forty percent of the land. The 'lordship' of land is about its benefit to the lord, 'hide' refers to an area of land of about 120 acres and *virgate* measures about one quarter of a hide.

The armed man provided by the owner of the land, tenant in chief, to the king's service was not just a swordsman but also 'a man at arms' or knight. The knight also held land which he sublet and lived off the rent, or employed a steward - he usually held the largest free holding in the manor - sometimes he represented his holding as 'his' manor. The steward acted as a local administrator to run the *demesne* of the knight, when he was away serving the king, appointing a *reeve* [magistrate, organized labour and collected rents] and a *beadle* [parish officer, enforced law and order] from names put forward by the villagers.

All the inhabitants of Chard - the Manor, and Tatworth - the sub-Manor, knew their place in society. It was a 'feudal' society, which meant that it was a society based upon families within a community - where each person relied upon the other. Land was owned by the lord in return for 'homage' and 'fealty' - recognising the power and rights of the king, which the land owner had to defend - in reality both protected each other. The land was held on condition and service - a fiefdom. Homage referred to an acceptance by the knight that he recognised and respected the king's position - to which he swore an oath of loyalty.

Over a period of about two hundred years, this tenure changed as much by the increase in population as anything else. Land became transferrable from one generation to another – it became one of inheritance. The land then became enfeoffed by common-law owners.

The lord was most reliant upon his workers who were the villeins. Their sons had to have a house. Itinerate serfs needed a home too. There was ample land and in most part, individuals built their own home, perhaps bartering help from neighbours... It was wise to tell the bailiff and seek his approval which was easy to do labour was sorely needed - if the lord's position was to be maintained. There was not a strict plan to be upheld houses were built close to the areas being worked. It was normal to try to build close to housing materials, fresh water, and ease of cartage, near neighbours and close to the church. The bailiff would advise taking a small parcel of land not occupied on waste ground – which would be close to the forest or wood... This ensured that arable land was not lost.

The main upright structural members, which support the beams and roof would be buried into the ground. Large horizontal timbers called plates would be morticed into the posts. These would stop the posts from sinking and distribute the weight of the building. Depending on the surrounding ground, there may be sunken stones or logs providing a foundation – the posts jointed into the plate, or the walls half built of stone. However, we must not get beyond our self for the serf or villein neither had the time, help, tools and expertise, to form such a structure. Their simple structure was a pole house needing no sawing only the splitting of green timber. Lesser posts were the uprights to support partition rails, which together make up a frame or panel. These wall panels were made up of woven split canes, similar to a hurdle. A mud and dung daub filled the gaps. This would soon become a hovel with a

compacted earth floor and a fire burnt upon stones set into the centre of the floor area. Smoke would dissipate through the rather rough thatch... such a hovel would soon deteriorate and the roof to sag. Depending on the character of the man that lived there the place would either fall into total disrepair or it would be maintained, improved and part rebuilt.

The improvement upon a simple pole house was a post and beam building with rails, rafters and braces, and a crown-post roof. The wattle and daub walls replaced with shuttered cob... better still a stone and flint infill, using a lime mortar. The single large room partitioned and a floor above with dormer windows... but this was years later after The Black Death when the workers conditions improved - their labours better appreciated.

The villager who wanted a dwelling either negotiated a plot with the bailiff or squatted. There was an excess of waste ground and the village needed labour. It was a do-it-yourself building although there was usually somebody close to superintends the building – either a family member or a close neighbour who had knowledge of such things. The site would be marked out taking regard for access to the site and availability of wood, gravel, sand, mud and lime. A trench dug out to accommodate the foundations, which was filled with stone cleared from the site. There was no need to consider drains for these would be external. Close to the site, a pit would be dug to mix up the daub, cob, plaster, and lime. If this sound rather slap happy it wasn't. All these mixtures had similar components and to some extent worked. The frame of the building was of wood or the walls built of cob blocks, stone, flints, or shuttered cob or a selection of all, perhaps you could lay your hand on some old Roman bricks or stone from a disused house, church, or barn. Once again, this choice relied upon what was on the site - or close to. Cartage was a problem. It was rare for the villager to have his own cart, or the

loan of one. Nor did he own a horse. What had to be transported to the site had to be carried? If you had to do this, you made very sure you had enough materials on the site before you began, and the most easily made up compound was a mixture of mud, chalk, flints, stones, straw or chaff and cow dung. If you added stones, sand or flint to the mixture it became hard to mix so that that leaves just a mixture of mud, chalk, clay, dung, chaff and soil. Whether or not you baked the chalk or lime was probably doubtful. The longer the mixture was kept together in the pit with sufficient water to soften it the better. Here I am talking about six months, for all the components had to be fully saturated and rotted to break up into particles. Therefore, you see its best to think about the structure a long time before you begin to build the walls.

The most common method was probably the easiest, which was to build thick walls or stone. The largest stones were reserved for the base, which saved having to lift them up. The stones were assembled very much like dry-stone walling or building with brick or block - to make the inner and outer surfaces' interlock to give rigidity. The mixture of chalk, lime, clay, and mud pushed and placed between and about the stones to give a secure base for the next layer and to stop any draughts blowing through.

In an area providing sufficient stone, much of that picked up off the ground by stone-pickers who were paid a contract rate – so much per cubic yard in preparation for planting, building with stone was the obvious answer. Similarly in areas of slate and flint. In deciduous woodland clearings, the land gave the split green wood to make timber-framed houses associated with the Tudor period and in areas planted with pine, the pole houses the simplest construction method. The relative scarcity of wood dictated the use of cob in Tatworth.

The easiest way to use cob was to make blocks using a mould, allowing the cob to dry in the sun – very much like the original way of making clay bricks. This took longer but in the end was more precise. Constructing wooden shuttering either side of the wall then packing the cob down inside was perhaps the faster method, but took longer to dry out. For some villagers simply piling up the cob into layers allowing each to partially dry out before the next placed on top was the easiest. Making the sides true and square with axe and saw, trimmed it into shape. The quick, but holding the shortest life span, hurdles, or wattle tied against stakes driven into the ground, daub pressed into it from both sides, and smoothed off. All these methods were used allowing a large overhang of the roof to offer protection to the walls. Giving the inside and outside wall a wash of lime gradually built up a hard rainproof surface. Making sure, the rain drained away from the wall base kept the building relatively damp proof. Ultimately, it was continuous maintenance, which secured the longest lasting building, and having a well founded thatch the key to that.

It must not be thought that cob, timber framed or pole houses, flint, slate, or any of those other building materials were inefficient building materials, which had a short life span. They were used hundred of years ago, are still able to be seen today, and lived in. Nor must one think that the builders in the past were incapable of building attractive long lasting houses that leaked, were damp, and disintegrated.

Research reveals lime and brick kilns operating in Tatworth whilst cob extensively used. Lime burnt, crushed, and mixed with water made an excellent protective coating and many of the houses were thatched. A full range of attractive bricks was made as well as drainage pipes and roof tiles.

The Black Death reaped its toll over Britain. The country lost over a third of its population. Some villages were abandoned,



and cottages remained empty... the countryside began to disintegrate - as the land drainage systems clogged and the tracks became overgrown. The landowners could not maintain their estates - the fields returned to their natural state. The numbers of skilled artisans – that did survive, were sorely needed, which gave them power, which previously had been denied them... the lord of the manor could not continue with the old manorial system and the tillage system broke down. The only way food could be produced was to entice the remaining men by the promise of land of their own. The onetime cultivated fields now grazed sheep. This alarmed the government who believed this would reduce the number of peasants owing forfeiture – they would lose subjects for the Crown. This they tried to prevent.

There is little doubt that the plague did alter the countryside and its manner of husbandry. Food had to be grown and the bartering system had to be maintained. The land's management certainly took a blow and most manors reduced their farming areas - productivity fell, but only so far, the reduced population was still fed. The main source of income was the lord's store-flock of sheep and in this the Bishop of Bath did very nicely – he maintained his position. In all, the ancient enclosures of Chard and its sub-manors did not radically alter. The tillage system evolved with a reduced number of serfs attending to the land.

The first dwellings were the construction of a single room, housing the family and its animals. In the centre the fire. This 'hall-house' gave way to the smoke bay house where part of the end of the hall was given a first floor, reached by a ladder. A space was left over the hearth for the smoke to travel up to the roof. In later times, the hearth made into an inglenook open on both sides – this structure becoming a hollow dividing wall – the fire heating both rooms. It was not long before the cooking was

done in a separate room either partitioned off or built as a lean-to onto the original structure. The dwellings of the 1600s took the form of a conventional house with two rooms below and a number of bedrooms above. The original rough structures, built before this period were over time, improved, replaced, built onto and refaced... the hovel became the hut, the hut became a cottage and the cottage a farmhouse. A steady improvement over many years made the now quaint farmhouse much sought after - becoming a countryside residence upon the town's main road.

The hovel had no windows relying upon the open door back and front to give air, light and access for humans and animals. A later improvement, which required very little structural alterations, was to put in window slits - to direct light. The huts that came after, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, had windows included with bars and shutters for security, and keep the winter draught out. Horn was also pared down to give a sealed light-penetrating cover but these have not survived. An oiled cloth draped over the hole was another method used - as a light emitting barrier. By the 1500s small paned mullioned windows were glazed having the panes tied to the bars. This was before grooved lead glazing bars were introduced - for the insertion of glass a hundred years later. The glass was blown and cut to fit giving at every blowing what is termed a bottle bottom, the rest was cut into very small panes. Later the glass was blown in a tube, removed - unwrapped - opened out, and cut... This latter method continued for decades. All old glass would have distortions created by blowing and are distinct. Whether the bars created a latticed diamond pattern or vertical and horizontal plan was incidental - a design feature.

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, most open hall houses were converted to take a staircase and second floor. The buildings structure incorporated a designed series of fireplaces with the flues linked top and bottom - some sharing the same smoke chamber and

chimney. It wasn't long before builders and architects became aware that it was best to add a kink in the flue to draw air through the fire... and to stop smoke being sucked back into the room.

It did not take the government long to tax people on the number of hearths – rooms, the building had. This was the hearth tax of 1689. Parrocks Lodge had about twelve chimneys. Those houses where there were more than half a dozen chimneys could be considered the dwelling of minor gentry... below this number the house of a yeomen, tradesmen or craftsmen, and those with but one home for husbandmen, shoemakers, labourers and shepherds.

Householders that paid less than 20s for their hearth tax, per annum, were exempt, as long as they did not own another property. This banding applied also to paying church tithes, rents and rates, and to those who were widows; Paupers also did not have to pay or the bedridden.

Chard Manor came about from its geographic position by sitting on a trade route – the main highway between Plymouth and London. When the Domesday survey was made, there were fewer than two hundred persons in the borough. By the time Queen Elizabeth I mounted the throne that number had increased to five hundred... A further two hundred years saw over five times that amount... then becoming an assize town, with buildings to match its importance

The lord's 'manor court', probably held at Chard Church otherwise known as Manor Church, was the place where disputes between all were deliberated and the results declared '*the custom*'. The court was run every three or four weeks by the *court baron*, whose declarations became local law – no appeal even at the king's court were countenanced. Other matters were not the business of the lord but for the *hundred court* to consider, presided over by the sheriff, on behalf of the king. The good behaviour of

the citizens maintained by a system of *frankpledge*. These were groups of ten or so households called *tithings*, pledged to be responsible for each other's good behaviour – usually fixed prices of goods and maintained weight and quality. The tithing men and alesters oversaw the assize of ale.

The church was an important part in village life. Many sermons proclaimed the hope of salvation, which had the result of making attendances regular. For the majority this became a habit, celebrating and proclaiming the rites of baptism, marriage, and death... celebrating too the Saint's day, Christmas, Easter, Lent and Whitsun, all helped separate the seasons... the peasant's work on the land - the tilling, sowing, reaping and harvest, given a rightful place in the order of service. All these special occasions drew the congregation together.

Saint Mary's Church, built c1440, in flint and dressings of local Chard stone was given castellations on wall and tower as decoration, was the centrepiece of the local community and provided a meeting place for the village. Bishop Jocelyn's courtroom of c1235, now part of the church structure, suggests that before the church was built the Bishop's Courthouse was part of the Bishop's farmhouse, which is a good deal older than the church. Chard Church has its own cemetery, which was a privilege not a right.

St Margaret's Chapel at South Chard was built in the 1500s served as one of St Mary's chantries – whose priest was given an endowment by the mother church to sing masses for the founder's soul. The chapel made oblations and donations for pious uses to St Mary's Priest. It was also used as neutral ground for local hearings particularly between the various religious bodies.

A manor was a certain amount of land granted by the king to some baron or lord; the king also granted land to the church for absolution. Locally it was in two parts. There was the *demesne*,

which the lord retained for his own use and the rest, which was parcelled out to the tenant's *freemen* or *villeins* - held in villeinage, virgate or half-virgate land [A virgate is thirty acres] - in return for services. The land was allotted in hides or carucate, which was an area of land, which could be ploughed by one team in one year...

Each manor was a kingdom within itself... with its own customs... wholly at the mercy of the lord, who held the largest share of common pasture and wasteland. The tenants had certain liabilities besides supplying eggs and chickens... they had to perform *boom-works* at harvest and ploughing time... these duties were not linked to him but to the land he held... he however, was expected to provide '*aids*'.

The legal possessor of the land - who occupies it - as 'something passed down from generation to generation', holds it as his '*demesne*' [di'meen]. In the English village the lord of the manor owns, more often than not, 'home farm'. He also owns a number of strips in each field and sundry other parcels of land.

The lord charged rent for the use of his land that was collected by his steward or bailiff - who also had the task of allocating the land. The Bishop of Bath, being the district governor of the church, received a tithe - a tax of one tenth of annual proceeds of the land worked... collected by the Bishop's bailiff for the church commissioner.

Sir William Petre and his successors - the Barons Petre, were granted the sub-manor... and received, as a due, rent from each villager... This could be cash, produce or service. This 'right' depended on any number of circumstances - good or bad harvest, what work was necessary in the manor and war. Sir William also had to pay rent to the Bishop who was Lord of Chard Manor.

When first marked out the greater part of the manor was divided up into strips or balks. These strips were separated from

each other by unploughed turf. The strips were not all the same size but measured about an acre... the length being a furlong - 40 poles, and the width, 4 poles. A furlong taken as being a suitable length to drive a plough pulled by oxen to make a furrow. A pole, rod and perch being the same length, the language difference being a purely local patois. Some strips were half-acres having the same length as an acre strip but half the number of rods wide. The strips lay side by side – separated by unploughed furrows, to make a number of separated strips – about a square acre. Each acre square separated by wider balks, which became over time overgrown, making a rough hedge. There was an important downside to this system of land share. The principle was that each year different strips were issued to every villager from the three fields – so that all had an equal chance of receiving the best and worst land. This collective issuing of land meant there was no incentive to treat the land well - knowing that it was to be re-allotted the following year. Another handicap was having to move any tools, hurdles and other farming paraphernalia to the new site wasted time and energy.

All the tenants' *vassals* in the manor were allocated a certain number of strips, in several fields, so that the best and worst evenly shared – some probably held land gained by military service. The head tenant was probably the sheriff, who held a virgate and considered himself a yeoman – a much-respected man in the manor. A lesser holding was the *cotland* holding five acres whose holder did not attend court, paid no rent or relief but provided services. Below the free tenants came the villeins – the baulk of the population – who did the main work. The villeins, customary holdings - tied to the land called *copyhold* land – copied into the rolls. The *waste hold* tenancy held less than an acre in return for a small rent. Sub-tenancies could be granted usually only by the head tenant from his own land, then the rent

was due to him. People who owned no land - who rented, did not appear on the rolls. Below them came the cottagers who might be called allottees and lower still the serfs who were really slaves that could be bought and sold in the market at the lord's pleasure. This became known as the '*open or common field*' system of cultivation. The common land, or waste, was shared too; in a similar manner - for grazing and haymaking... when the harvest on the strips gathered in this too put to graze using hurdles to pen-in the flock.

Where the strips touched head to head a gap was left to become the 'headland' - the place where the plough could be turned round, this area of land could be cultivated, but only after all the strips had been ploughed. If the strips were situated upon a hillside, terracing, or lynches would occur. If one or a number of tenants worked thirty scattered acres of land this bundle of land was referred to as a *virgate* 'worked by a villein' therefore he became a villein tenant... the highest grade in the village hierarchy and served as jurors in the 'Halimot' - Court of the Manor. Even though a villein owned the land, he still had to pay rent.

Uncultivated land, bearing beech, oak and scrub, was prepared for future cultivation. The felled wood split for building houses, furniture making and fencing, and the better pieces used in the manufacture of wagons and farming implements. This clearance prepared land for the new generation to occupy it also helped develop the basis for new highways. Clearing land exposed rocky outcrops, gravel beds and chalk hills all to be of use building roads and houses of the future old town.

This manorial and monastical system, exacting rents and tithes for the use of the land, was, if fairly operated, for the good of all. The Lord and Bishop guaranteed security and stewardship... they needed the serfs, or villeins - to work the land productively, and ultimately, profitably, to maintain their

position. The 'freemen' in the village were not subject to this tax, they owned their own plot of land or had a trade or skill needed by the lord. Unfortunately, none of the landlords were above taking advantage of their position, interpreting 'the kings will' to suit themselves - extracting more and more for their '*rights*'.

This development of the land and the overseeing of best practice in the seasonal production of food was not haphazard. It was about husbandry – cultivation by open-field farming where villagers worked their own strips of land in the company of others all within a large field. The tools, harnesses and heavy equipment shared as were the oxen. After the harvest all, the livestock turned out into the field to manure the land and partake of the feed. All this was done in 'common' – with everyone else – as a communal undertaking. There was no time for disharmony or discussion, the land and weather dictated the course of events. The methods of cultivation and husbandry worked out over the centuries. Everyone had to pull together and make the system work.

The strips of land allotted to each villager were long and thin specially designed for the ox-team to get in and plough. The action of ploughing over the centuries had produced steps, somewhat like terracing, seen today as a series of ridges. The strips grouped together in shots or furlongs and where the heads of the strips touched the unploughed parts were called baulks – over time became paths, tracks and byways.

All villagers held a number of strips in three fields – one of the fields kept in rotation fallow, as pasture for the animals to manure. [Rents were not due for fallow land] The number of strips distributed by rank or standing in the community – allotted by the lord's steward. His job was to see that this distribution of land was fair - according to age old custom and fertility of the soil – sharing good and difficult land. The three-year system



worked tolerably well – one year to grow corn or peas, the next corn and beans and the following to lie fallow.

The villein's stint – his allotted amount of work or share of the land, was five sheep for every acre of meadow, this also applied to the number of sheep he could turn out into the field-laying fallow. In the late fifteenth century, fees had to be paid to the Reeve for *pannage* rights – allowing pigs to root among the acorns in Great Chard Wood. *Pasturage*, conferring the right to graze cattle. Another, entitled the villager to *turbary* – cut turf or dig peat, *estovers* – to gather wood from uprooted trees and *wyndfallen*, gather wood from branches blown off trees. An amount had to be paid for the enclosure for grazing in Chard meadows and on the common land beyond Tatworth Middle Field.

The pig was the primary source of meat for the villager. Once again, pannage had to be paid for letting the swine feed and a strict watch was paid for how many and for how long the pigs ate. Too much rooting disturbed the growth of young trees and the mud baths created barren earth. Although there was clearance of forest, wood and bracken to form arable land it was appreciated that this would detrimentally affect the numbers of wild animals that could be caught and eaten and eventually strip the land of wood for building.

As Tatworth expanded – mostly by births not by an influx of workers, more trades and skills became available that brought prosperity to the village. The baker, butcher, ale sellers, cobbler, smith, carters, drovers, shepherds, shop keeper, tailor and weaver of baskets just a few of the trades that flourished. Whilst they were busy they could not work the land or the land they were allotted. Therefore, there was bartering, agreements and tokens to be exchanged.

Each villager had an entitlement to use the wasteland – meadow, pasture, and wood. Mostly all villagers paid rent and

tithes, and carried out some service for the community - threshing, winnowing, gathering, carrying, or stacking. The meadowland down by the river was specially set aside for the small herd of oxen owned by the Bishop - kept to do all the heavy work in the village.

During the Reformation, Henry VIII made himself Head of the Church of England in 1534 – this was the pre-industrial age of English history. Henry's act abolished control of the English Church from Rome, and as the church was very strong - played an important part in English society, Henry assumed total power over all aspects of the society. This was also a dynamic age regarding the economy, which affected both towns and villages. From this book's point of view, this age set Chard and its satellite villages firmly on the map. As explained, the village of Tatworth functioned using a high degree of democratic control through The Bishops representatives working in conjunction with village-meetings - expressing concerns and electing the populations choice of leaders. The economy was centred on arable farming, the dairy livestock, woodland crafts, and smithy.

Research declares that Tatworth was a sub-manor of about five hundred acres producing corn and livestock. The first possessor of the land was Sir William Petre in 1550 as a dependant paying rent to the Bishop of Bath & Welles. He was a tenant of the sub-manor working his service. He had no court for the bishop was the owner. His manor was in effect an agricultural holding.

A butcher of Tatworth, according to the Borough Court records of 1569, overcharged shoppers and was fined... This was not the only case recorded where shop owners tried to extract more for their wares than was acceptable. The manor court or assemblies, called *'Hallmoots'*, controlled the actions of the population by the consent of the owner of the land - who had 'right of title'... in effect, the lord of the manor... and to the

Bishop, being the representative of the church. [In the instance of Chard manor and its sub-manor Tatworth the lord of the manor was the Bishop of Wells who was the district governor of The Church].

Tatworth grew in size - in the number of dwellings erected... the increased population were materially better off than previous generations. The swing away from a purely arable to mixed farming – with an emphasis on sheep rearing improved per-capita wealth. Towards the end of the century, the common land was under pressure to be enclosed. It became essential for good stock breeding to separate animals, carefully manage the production of wool and dairy food... this was a natural and obvious evolution in the production of food and animal products.

The reaction of the small holding poor was one of fright and concern. The peasantry were being forced to give up their rights by the larger tenant farmers. The result was unrest. More commons were turned into pastures and the onetime tilled fields seeded with grass. The wealthy farmers began to take a great interest in better husbandry. Pastures were drained, watercourses diverted and ditches dug. Stones were picked up off the land and used to erect boundary walls. Fences erected and hedges laid. England began to take the shape seen today. In reality, the poor were being exploited by giving up their rights, which they receive little compensation for. Gradually the little hovels and hamlets were flattened and cottages abandoned. The poor drifted towards the towns to work in the mills. The Collins, and the rest of the inhabitants of Tatworth, remained closely tied to the land - to the manorial system.

The dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry saw two-thirds of ex-monastic land sold... his original intention was to abolish the whole monastic system. The monastic houses included abbeys, convents, nunneries and friaries... their

dissolution lasted four years between 1536 – 1540... in all there were over eight hundred religious houses, the homes to many monks, friars, canons, and nuns.

Initially lands were given to the church by the king and his lords to secure redemption – to be prayed for. By good husbandry, the monks developed the land making it very profitable. Before the dissolution, the bulk of the land was put to wool production, which was very profitable finding a ready market at home, and abroad. This made the various religious bodies' very wealth. It was after The Black Death, which reaped a heavy toll on the population as well as the monks that the tillage system faltered. The land afterwards could not be maintained properly. To increase profitability the fields were turned into pastureland, which was easier to manage. Clearing the land of stone, building walls, fences and hedges the sheep were corralled... production increased and profits kept pace.

In 1538, the Vicar-General decided that the dissolution was not being accomplished fast enough especially on the larger houses. He sent out his secretaries who presented a ready-made deed of surrender to the abbot who in most cases readily signed the property away. Those who did so willingly were granted a pension for life and a lump sum of money.

The sized property was granted to landowners or offered for sale, some given to the parish. The stonework demolished and reused, lead and precious metal melted down. There were a number of priories raised to cathedral status with a dean, and a chapter of canons, that saved them from extinction.

The redistribution of land meant a change of ownership not 'change of use'. The system of paying rents and tithes did not alter - only now there were more owners. However, before the new order was established there was disruption and confusion – rents not paid - land becoming overgrown.

Eventually, some of the church lands were returned to their original owners... and order restored...

This harmony was soon dashed by tenant eviction. The 'open field system' was changed to one of 'enclosure'. The object was to make the land more productive, especially for the grazing of sheep... this in turn gave an opportunity to advance a new farming technique - controlled dunging of arable land. The village people really affected by closure were the small tenant farmers of mixed farms, smallholders and those with limited rights. They were all paid a minimum amount to move minus that year's forfeiture fee.

In the 1530s, the price of farm produce – labour and grain, increased appreciably. By 1540, there was a series drought, which pushed prices up further. It was thought by some that this was exacerbated by the continuing enclosure of land – that sheep farming reduced the amount of land available for arable crops. Four years later the king sold off more land grants. The rents due on the land included the right to carry on collecting the old Landmole rents [ground rent outside the town walls, rent at a penny an acre – or measure of land, per half year]. Thus, the tenants on land had a new property owner not set free from their old duties of forfeiture. Over the next fifty years there was much selling of land, which consolidated holdings and redeveloped larger estates. The Bishop of Bath held onto his estates being a supporter of the king. Edward Seymour promoted himself to Duke of Somerset and by so doing focussed attention on himself. Eventually he was overthrown and replaced as head of the Great Council by the Earl of Warwick.

The effects that came from the dissolution of the monasteries on the citizens of Tatworth were small. Henry's commissioners found nothing in St Margaret's chantry or any guild funds to lay their hands on. The Abbey at Forde closed

becoming a private home. Those in the village who were staunch Catholics kept a low profile, moved away or emigrated. For the labouring tenants nothing altered their way of life. Having the Chantry and guilds abolished and their plate melted down meant little to them.

In 1546, peace was restored between England and France. Mary I followed by restoring the Catholic faith in England nine years later, then it was the turn of the Protestants to hide. From this time the non-conformists began to form groups lead by dedicated missionaries. The dissenting chapels started being raised over the next three hundred years: The Baptists, Mission Halls, Methodists, and Wesleyans, The Independents and the Congregationalists and others. This move away from the established religious institutions marks out Tatworth and the area around.

The church was not the only institution going through social and economic changes. The expanding population that was 'on the move' was undermining the manorial system. It was a time of recession after a period of growth. The government brought about controls through Justices of the Peace who had the authority to impose fund-raising to relieve poverty. The administration ordered the Parish of Chard carry out legislation with a constable of its own. Gradually the manor lost its relevance.

The importance of wool is recorded in 1586 as a commodity, as well as for local bartering and weaving - no longer thought of just as a by-product. Gradually the purely rural cultivation of land promoted ancillary trades which eventually developed more profitable skills – the wagon maker turned his hand to making more practical farming machines, the millwright devised machinery for cutting wood and the blacksmith produced cooking implements and furniture for doors and windows. It wasn't long before these skilful adaptors became

organized by entrepreneurs, adding yet another strata to the society. These new tradesmen maintained their position by organizing themselves into guilds - societies for mutual benefit controlled by a council.

The domination of the underclass, by those who owned the land, was not seriously questioned – it was an accepted fact, and only worked when for most of the time a sort of fairness existed – some individuals changed their class through hard work, opportunism and good fortune.

Those who held freehold land were guaranteed the right to vote for Parliament. The yeomen were the baulk of the lesser landowners – they could be tenant farmers if prosperous. They served as jurors, constables, churchwardens and bailiffs. In a village such as Tatworth there were but few, perhaps three or four. It was to them that any credit goes if the village was run well. Husbandmen rarely owned land but had smallholdings with long-term leases, which were renewed. They either bought spare land to make theirs more profitable or became wage labourers for others whilst maintaining theirs.

As families grew, larger and mechanical devices became available to increase farm production spare labour had to be found work. To start a cottage industry adapting skills and applying new ones small businesses began. Shoes, pots and pans, basket weaving, straw dollies, leather goods all gave a basis for work. The carter transported the work to market and local shops and did a door-to-door service. These industries included ‘putting out cloth’. Whole families combined to weave and spin, crochet and knit – children carding wool, women spinning it into yarn, and men weaving the thread. Cottages would be altered to accommodate the industry and families cooperated to form a production line.

The Tatworth watermill sold meal and flour both for the local farmer and from further afield. He also provided the results

of his labour to a mealman who was the middleman in the transaction. The grinding of corn continued until it proved to be uneconomic.

The lord of the manor, who may also be the squire and magistrate, exercised justice and good government. The squire, usually the largest landowner, was the senior landed gentleman and managed the day to day running of the manor. It was a handed down, hierarchical existence, based on the gentry. This was not always the case if there was an aristocrat or Bishop in the manor who may have been in a higher class. However, neither of these tended to interfere in the running of the manor. Following on under the squire was the parson, then, the largest tenant farmer running the manor farm, the apothecary, the miller, the bailiff, the wheelwright, publican, postman and then the smallholders. At the bottom, the shoemaker and below him the agricultural labourer. Each member of the community dressed according to their station, affording those above him due regard. Within this social system, the Collins prospered...

In the 1620s, the price for fine wool collapsed due to over production and the demand for undyed wool from the continent was banned. Six years earlier the London dyers persuaded the government to ban all undyed cloth. All the small south coast exporters felt the pinch from this ban and one by one faced extinction. Those that were worse off were the cottage industries especially those that served the export trade. Initially they built up stocks hoping that the government would realise their predicament but eventually this failed.

Within the first quarter of the century the summers were recorded as poor... this affected the harvests... corn prices shot up. Many of the farmers still struggling from enclosures lost their livelihoods. In 1622, the cloth trade was in ruins. Broadcloth went out of fashion. Lighter weaves and cloths that are more colourful were in demand. Because the previous ban on undyed



cloth had choked off the export trade, the continental weavers had made their own. Now the call was for quality cloth...

This area of England was firmly behind Parliament and Cromwell. That does not mean to say that pockets of Royalists were not to be found close to stately homes, castles and the houses of landed gentry. Even so, the tenants, in-house servants, land-workers and tradesmen, of these rich men, were parliamentarians. Royalists were referred to as malignant and high churchmen as scandalous - and the bishop of Bath owned Chard manor. By 1646, there were a number of minority religions. There were the Baptist, Ranters, Muggletonians, Quakers, and Congregationalists a new movement. The Congregationalists were members of the puritan Presbyterian communion; some of these were called Independents of the New Independent Church.

By the end of the year, the First Civil War ended. The unpaid royalist army collapsed and the men made their way back home. Their reception was hostile and businesses taken over or torn down. Many of these disfranchised soldiers immigrated to Spain continuing their royalist sympathies. In 1649 The Monarchy, the House of Lords, and the Anglican Church were abolished... All lands sized by the Parliamentarians, the law of the land, were restored and boroughs regained their old charters. Parliament passed the Act of Uniformity, which made the Church of England the official religion.

By about 1650, some yeomen were letting their houses to people outside the borough boundaries. We can make a judgement that this was the last century that yeomen farmers farmed their own land that includes copyhold or freehold land. Their status gave them automatic rights to pronounce on village matters, run the lord's farms and to be the leaders in the community. Gradually outsiders replaced them some selling their holdings and others renting out. Their time was waning and so

was the influence of the manor court. The medieval system with its emphasis on residence and inheritance lost out to new owners looking on their holdings as investments. They were not interested in maintaining the manor, the lord or his rights. It was the foundation being laid for industrialization. The agricultural sector was operating at a time of low prices, in a society, which was vibrant and expanding. Machines were needed to provide greater productivity.

Cromwell died in 1658... soon afterwards The Restoration took place bringing Charles II to the throne... The Commonwealth passed and the House of Stuart restored. In a lifetime Darby's coke, smelting process revolutionized the iron industry and Watt's steam engines did the same for mining, weaving and lace making. Meanwhile the fashion was flippancy and lace.

The new charter granted to the borough by Charles II in 1661, restored old liberties and rights. The Tory party lead by Earl Poulett stood shoulder to shoulder behind the new charter but it was too late. The Poulett family obtained a rent from the church for stewardship of the estate. There was a deduction from their rent for their undertaking. This agreement continued until the confiscation of the estate by the Cromwellian government – giving it to Colonel Nathaniel Whetham for services rendered eventually the estate was granted back by Charles II and the Colonel recompensed. By judicious handling, the Pouletts gained much of the freehold land and buildings. Their manipulation of the leases allowing them to let the land out to tender. A managerial control not well received by the farmers.

William III and Mary invited to rule the Country in 1689... almost immediately they scrapped the Hearth Tax. With the new royal family came permanent toleration for nonconformist religions - by way of the Toleration Act... quickly Meeting Houses were built and congregations formed.

The religious non-conformists insisted upon having a mayor or officer answerable to the community... they won the day a portreeve was installed. [Today Chard is lead by the Town Clerk]. The Dissenters were not averse to using the church for baptisms and burials... at times they attended with everyone else on Sundays ever bearing their responsibilities becoming churchwardens or trustees. Church rates provided the money to look after the church fabric. There were a number of householders who paid rent for church lands and a number of non-residents. Burials inside and outside could be bought and kept over if not used. The Parish outgoing covered the repair of the roof, keeping the graveyard tidy and maintaining the tower. Gravediggers were provided from the populace, as were mourners and headstone carvers. From Reformation times the care of the poor and needy became the duty of the parish and a number of bequests were made to help provide clothes and sustenance.

The court leet was to be held annually, to deal with town nuisances, drunks, highwaymen, field regulations, assizes of bread and ale. Gradually these concerns fell away leaving land registry their main consideration. The town's budget rested on rents taken from 'capital burgesses' properties. Although there were seventy-five tenancies including by then shops, alehouses, businesses, and arable land etc., it was not always a fair levy. 'High rents' due to the Lord of the Manor, who at this time was Lord Poulett, the income was not enough to maintain the town's services.

The shops paying rent to the portreeve are difficult to research. The court only occasionally fined shops and then mostly those selling bread or ale. This was to do with the contents and weight. The production of saleable goods – made in one place and sold in another, was allowed by statute but only then to badgers or kidders who were licensed by the county

court. The rapid rise in the number of shops took business away from the established markets. The innkeeper did not just sell ale. Food in the form of bread, vegetables, and fruit was also sold. Only later, the village victualler or grocer became the badger and he sold by license all the common goods. These shopkeepers were from yeoman families. By the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the badger became the grocer or chandler... In some places, the chandler was originally the tallow-chandler - the candlestick maker and seller. Having a reliable outlet he also sold provisions... such as twine, string, rope, belts, nails and all manner of metal and wooden goods – to become the hardware store. In other towns provided linen and woollen goods, lace, and knitwear. Having a general store came from the entrepreneurial spirit of the owner who traded in anything that would provide an income.

The Enclosure Act 1760 – 1844, saw the removal of the balks and the fields divided into blocks, hedges planted and greater consideration made to drain and fertilize the fields. Up to 1844 in some areas the open-field - three-field system, was still working. Enclosure was not just a matter of individuals putting up fences around their strips in the common-field. That is far too simple and almost reasonable. No, it was about the removal of everybody's rights in the field and with those stolen rights the reallocation of the land to another. The 'Act of Parliament for the Inclosing of the Open and Common Fields, Commons and Waste Grounds within the Parish of Chard', went ahead. There were 1,611 Enclosure Acts between 1760-93. It was done to make better use of the land - which could not be disputed. It was to whom it was allocated was the rub. The land was to go to those claimants who could use it properly... persons who already had land under cultivation - land that they owned. The lord of the manor and the Bishop, who already owned the largest land areas, had in proportion the largest share, commensurate with

their holdings. This occurred down the hierarchy – those who had the most got the most but they had to give up the right to allocate the waste, lost the tithe. We do not know how the Commissioners measured those rights, what weighting given to common field land, pasture rights, existing enclosed land and house plots. We do not know about the deduction of corn rent, land usage, mineral rights, wasteland or spoils of the forest were. In fact, the new owners should have made some sort of payment to those who did not retain any land. The suppression of common and grazing rights caused hardship and often riots.

Chard, and its satellite villages, was fortunate: they were close to commercial trade routes. Both the town's rivers provided substantial amounts of water for industrial use. The local watermills gave power... the rich pastureland provided food for the cows, and the sheep supplied wool for weaving and hides. Above all, the farmers tilled the soil that provided harvests to feed the population... and the land gave yet more...

The extraction of stone, gravel, clay and lime from rocky outcrops, quarries, opencast and underground mines kept pace with house and road building and allied trades – it was an expanding business through the centuries, although influenced by fashions and foreign competition. The wealth of the land was recognised in the Iron and Bronze Age. The Romans, who further developed the industry, knew about its potential well before setting out across the channel.

Traders from Europe and from further afield, dealt in extracted minerals and the smelted ore. The quarrying of stone, recorded in 1235, was used for building. Both dressed and hewed stone and knapped flints- seen on buildings today.

In Tatworth, the extracted stone was a slightly different colour recorded in the field survey of 1599. The relatively small

clay pit in Perry Street close to the brickworks suggests that local building materials were manufactured and used in the area. The Romans first introduced brick making to Britain in 43AD. The techniques they used were developed from brickworks in the Mediterranean.

The term 'brick' was not used until the middle of the 1400s. Previously it was difficult to differentiate between descriptive words for tile or brick, the word *tegula* does for both. The nearest recorded word is 'brick stone' used in 1483 and 'brickstonys' in 1670. Buildings for the wealthy have always been made to be long lasting and secure. Homes for the lower classes were constructed to last 'their lifetime'. The cost dictated style, endurance and comfort. The poor had their huts and hovels, which with a bit of work and a call for more space became a cottage that eventually became upgraded to a house...

At first, all dwellings were made out of wood – as pole and timber framed houses, with wattle and daub as an infill. To ensure a more substantial structure a base of stone was used, perhaps, up to the first floor. When the hall-house had the central fire enclosed and the space partitioned into separate rooms load bearing walls were built. The expense of carting stone suggested a cheaper product. Cob took the place of stone, which was made out of a compacted mixture of clay, mud, limestone, and sand to make blocks, or the mixture tamped down between shuttering. A longer lasting item were bricks bedded in mortar. All these building materials were found on-site or close-to. When bricks were used, these too were fashioned on-site especially if the building large or a number of houses built in the same place. Making bricks was not an unusual practice. Many villages and towns had their own brickworks in the 1700s and later.

A satisfactory composition for brick making is clay and sand. The term clay refers to fine-textured, silky material with a

high alumina content with a consistency when wet of plasticene. This material mixed with a suitable silicate makes when fired bricks, tiles, drainpipes and domestic pottery. In general, brickyards are placed where there is suitable bed of loam, the clay, and sand carted from a local site. On three adjoining fields there may be three distinct types of clay, each composition suitable for a different job.

In the 18<sup>th</sup>-century local bricks were kiln-burnt. The kilns were built in a similar style to those used by the Romans - straight sided, open-topped and, similar to lime kilns, built into the side of an earth bank or outcrop. Building into a bank gave the structure substance and insulation. Two tunnels were made at the base to set the fire in and the bricks for firing placed opposite at a higher level above vents, which extended the whole width of the kiln. The bricks for firing stacked in a manner to allow hot gasses to circulate. When the kiln was full a layer of burnt bricks placed over the top to form a roof. The faggots pushed down the firing tunnels to reach the back and lit allowing a gentle heat at first to dissipate the excess moisture in the bricks. Gradually the heat is raised and maintained for at least forty-eight hours.

Brick making was a seasonal activity. Brick earth was dug in the autumn and left standing to 'temper' in the wind, rain and frosts. Moulding could only begin when there was no danger from freezing weather damaging the drying bricks. The moulds had to be sanded, to stop the clay from sticking to the moulds sides. The hods had to be scraped clean ready for the next day's work. A brickmaker could make by hand a thousand bricks a day. The baking of bricks took place after mid-summer until the autumn when the whole operation started again.

There was much to do to stack and care for the bricks, rebuild the kiln, gather wood, and order in other materials. It was

not unusual to have in the same yard a limekiln. Chalk was either extracted at the site or carted in.

As wood became scarce and the transport of coal made easier wood kilns were adapted to use a different material for firing. Conical extensions were built to regulate the draught. The manufacture of bricks, tiles and pipes often coinciding with the burning of lime formed an easy alliance. The transport of materials by road, canal and rail stimulated trade and ancillary businesses. Extracting unused minerals gave the road maker an easy source of ballast and surface grade materials.

According to records, a number of Collins was found in other West Country towns... becoming associated with the mining industry. Since early times men have used local materials for weapons, farming implements and building. The smelting of minerals was one of those important discoveries, which advanced man's development... the records of Crown Mines, produced in the tin traders cost books of 1680, give reference to a John Collins of Truro, who traded in tin at Newham Smelters... We can deduce from this that there were and had been several Collins who were licensed tin workers based in the West Country. The cost books, also records John's wife Barbara took over the business when he died.

The industrialization of those mines in the early 1700s, by pumps and winding gear, improved productivity. Later that century, another Collins family was recorded as being involved in the business... In 1712, Thomas Newcomen invented the atmospheric steam engine, widely used in the mining industry. Only fourteen years previously, another Thomas, Thomas Savery, invented the steam vacuum pump... both these inventions allowed deeper and safer underground mines to extract more ore. The new pumping engines introduced in about 1720 gave the industry longer life stimulating further advances in ancillary businesses. By 1780, steam locomotives



changed Britain's transport system and industrialization began. No longer, was water and wind power the only means of propulsion.

James and John Collins worked at Fowey Consols in 1841. It is clear from this connection that a 'tribute team' - an extended family unit, had strong links in the industry.

The mining industry involved a number of stages: extraction, grading, storage and shipment within these basic parts the production of power, the removal of water and development of the necessary winding gear, essential for the working of the mine.

The Tatworth Middle Field Report shows five land survey maps through the ages. Not only was stone quarried in and around Chard, but flints, sand, lime and clay. In the 1700s, it is recorded that a brick kiln built and clay pit dug - for the manufacture of bricks. There was reputed to be a similar construction in Perry Street, a little later that same century. It is interesting to speculate what quality this clay was and if it used purely for brick making.

From previous records, it seems that few brick makers served an apprenticeship, which suggests that these places were family run affairs. By the late 1700s, the first mechanical method to come into general use was the pug mill for mixing the clay. This consisted of a vertical shaft with several blades attached, which revolves inside a drum. The wet clay, ash, breeze or sand fed into the top, churned and extruded from the bottom. The vertical shaft turned by a beam harnessed to a horse. Previously this mixing was done by hand, using a spade or treading with bare feet. Later, the wooden barrel replaced by metal and the horse by steam engine. To make drainpipes extruded pugged clay through a die to produce a ready shaped pipe

The 1800 – 1840 Field Patterns clearly identify the considerable lime workings north of Church Path or Chard Road - up from the A358 to Witney Lane, an area previously known as Church Lane furlong. In 1898, there was an extraction of chalk in the eastern section and thirty years later an enlargement northwards. Both these quarries had attendant limekilns.

Builders use lime on its own and in conjunction with other materials to make cob, daub, external coating, and infill, and as a pointing material and mortar... it was an improvement on mud, sand and clay. Lime is a caustic solid of calcium made into a dry white powder by baking chalk to a high temperature then crushing. Close to the extraction point, the kiln worker would construct an oven and bake the chalkstone, which would, when crushed to produce caustic lime.

Farmers had known since the middle of the eighteenth century that an application of lime to the soil improved its fertility – replacing minerals washed out of the soil and over production. Just digging out chalk and spreading it onto fields was not sufficient... it had to be crushed –to a powdered form, spread onto the soil and left - to be taken into the soil by wind and rain, before ploughing.

Another product of mining was the extraction of clay. As for lime, clay has many uses other than as a building material... pottery, papermaking, electrical insulators and clay tobacco pipes. Clay pipe making started in the 1500s when Sir Walter Raleigh introduced tobacco to England. The clay necessary to make successful castings is easily mouldable white clay, which has a large proportion of kaolinite. This clay was described as Ball Clay.

Previous clay extractors - usually farmers, were not aware of the finer qualities of the material. They dug the clay out of pits with a spade and the result used for any number of projects. Most of these pits were centred on Newton Abbot working clay that had been eroded from Dartmoor. In transportation, the dug

out blocks or cubes lost their edges - becoming a lump of clay, further handling turned the lumps into a rough ball. Clay tobacco pipe producers wanted this fine clay from Newton Abbot - for its known fired strength. This particular clay was identified as 'ball' clay - and it came from pits centred on Devon and Dorset.

The bulk of clay production, for making building products, porcelain, paper and textile finishes, began in the late 1700s - about the same time that mechanical pumping gear was installed in the mines - which brought the clay to the surface with the water... The pumped water had the metal impurities separated in 'settling pits', allowing the pure clay to continue to pore into drying pans, to be left to settle. The water was left to evaporate naturally over a period of six months. The resulting solidified clay - still with large water content, was cut into blocks... allowed to further dry out in the open air, or in sheds, then dressed, and stacked. Then, before being sold and shipped, the outsides of the blocks scrapped clean... and finally packaged. The material most suitable to achieve these aims was clay with a large component of decomposed feldspar - aluminium silicates, plus other rock particles - clay that was finely grained, even sized and uncontaminated. The difference between the clay used by ceramic producers and pipe manufacturers is particle size not necessarily component mineral. Both the pipe maker and potter used a quantity of the other's material. Around 1770, Wedgwood needed an equal amount of ball clay and china clay to make his 'cream ware'. The prepared clay is placed in the mould to be fired...

The separation of clay from the pumped water and the working of kilns for the extracted lime provided additional profitable lines for the mining operation. Having the means to transport the ore and other extracts needed a linked transport system - using packhorses, wagons, canals and railways. The closer these could be brought to the mineshaft, the better. For

transportation to inland industrial sites and for export, barges and ships were used – requiring quays, ports or a shelving beach. Lyme Bay became the nearest port of call for south Somerset, Dorset and Devon. Records from the census give the 1860s as the peak for production... thereafter, a slow decline to almost extinction.

The earliest documented Collins, with a trade, was Edward Collins, and his son Trustrum, who produced tobacco pipes, (bowl heel impressed, E.C., about the same time as one other pipe producer named George Webb). Both these pipe manufacturers worked out of Chard, in the 1650s. It is agreed by experts that clay pipe manufacture began in the late sixteenth century and became popular over the next hundred years. Pipe smokers could use and discard half a dozen pipes a day. This suggests the need for large manufacturing industry - to keep pace.

This recorded industry, believed to be situated towards the southeast end of Fore Street had links to the manufacture of pewter and the skills necessary for the manufacture of moulds for pipe bowls and stems. The Collins team developed a range of bowl designs unusual to clay pipe manufacture. Having the knowledge how to make a suitable mould for pipe manufacture was essential and pewter was the ideal metal to use for making the mould.

Edward Collins received his clay by the same route as that taken by lace and wool traders. The extraction of clay – a by-product of the many mines in and around Devon and Cornwall, became an industrial partnership between the miner, industrialist, lime producer and potter and had been going on for years. The mechanization of the mining industry spilled over to the needs of other industries.

The extracted clay was transported to suitable beaches and port quays, perhaps, Lyme Bay, Morwellham, or Totnes... then by packhorse to neighbouring villages and towns being by far the most convenient and cheapest method.

On receipt, he submerged the balls of clay in water - awaiting attention by the plug mill - mixed by beating and pummelling to remove excess water, air pockets, and lumps - ensuring consistency of material before cut into pieces - suitable to be shaped into rolls - thick one end - for the bowl, and thin the other for the stem. A needle, inserted - by pulling the clay over the needle - gave an airway. The roughly shaped clay pipe, with threaded stem, then covered in oil, to allow easy extraction - placed into the mould.

The potter, clay pipe maker and kiln operator, needed the material to hold its shape when left in the sun or taken out of the kiln. For the manufacture of tobacco pipes, the moulded article had to be capable of sustaining its shape - whilst drying out, prior to firing, and when fired, the pipe should display its original moulded shape... The product also had to be strong enough to stand reasonable handling and attractive enough - in colour and design, to be sellable, and presentable when used in public.

The Collins' manner of production, whether in the firing or in the use of a special coating, made the pipes more resistant to decay... fortunately allowing their existence to be visible today.

In the West Country, the mining of tin and lead and their smelting developed pewter for plates and mugs. The skill of setting molten metal into prepared shapes was suitable for all manner of everyday items... This use of local minerals by the Collins was opportune. They had the knowledge and foresight to adapt those materials, which were on hand, to produce a much-needed item. They knew that pewter was an alloy of mainly tin

and lead, and other minerals – tin always being the greater component, and was an ideal material for making moulds.

Tin was, and is mined, mainly in Cornwall and west Devon; there are also mines on the nearby continent... All their production was transported to English manufacturing areas by sea, to the nearest port - closest to the point of manufacture.

Tin has always been a prized metal, the addition of copper instead of lead - produces bronze. It is recorded, that there was a manufacturer of pewter working in Chard between the dates 1635-41. Pewterers set up shop in mainly market towns close to water, wood and other industrial necessities. The pewter industry suffered a decline from 1740 onwards because of the production of porcelain – the use of clay as a cheap plentiful product promoted the popularity of pottery ware, rather than pewter...

In 1828 John Wightman, a farmer who understood the need for metal farm implements started an iron moulding business, he was later joined by ironmonger Charles Denning in 1842. In 1883, they employed fifty-three workers - demonstrating that this was no small concern but a thriving industry, which continued until after The Second World War. Their yard was packed with all kinds of agricultural machinery and implements – cultivators, horse-ploughs, reapers and binders, threshing machines all sorts of drills, harrows, horse-rakes and tucked into a corner massive elevators, wagons, tractors, and combines.

The discarded scrap found its way into the furnace to be made into ingots and the cast iron re-worked by the smithy. The foundry staffs who work in close harmony with the smith adapted, devised, reshaped and reworked to save as much material and time as possible... mainly to forge iron tools for farming, iron and brass mouldings for engines and turning and fittings for pipes and rods... work that needed the skills of white and coppersmiths, blacksmiths and engineers.

Another - John Smith soon joined these Ironmasters, in 1839, which expanded the industry into brass and iron foundry work, which became the Phoenix Engineering Company and still operates today. Concerns that deal with everyday farm machinery know that the work has to be carried out quickly and cheaply. The throughput of work is great, relying on a storeroom carrying all manner of spares and ancillary items. Increasingly it was found, after the age of the horse, that a qualified agricultural engineer and motor fitter were necessary skills to offer to the farming industry.

## CHAPTER II.

Shoe making – Parrocks Lodge – Bone lace - Weaving – Honiton - Power looms – Enclosure – Common land - Canal – Chard Road Railway Station – Perry Street – South Chard - Manor Farm – Pillow and Bobbin lace - The Mill – The Creamery.

The second most popular trade for the poor was shoe making. The Collins family had their quota, begun by George Collins, born in Chard about 1770. George was a very popular name in the Collins family... a name taken from the then reigning monarch, George III. He had been an apprentice shoemaker and now, as a skilled artisan, believed he could afford to court Sarah Spence.

Shoes were to the farm labourer a fashion accessory. Boots, on the other hand, were part of everyday life. To the researcher shoe is a basic descriptive term covering both shoes and boots. As part of his stock in trade George made gaiters, aprons, belts and a range of other leather goods associated with farming and farmers. It would have been rare, for him to be asked to produce a pair of shoes or top boots. Boots for best and boots for working were straight and blunt toed. Hobnails were adopted as standard wear for work... It would take another twenty years before rights and lefts, pointed and oval toed, and heels were to be added. Later, metal eyelets invented to take the laces. The prosperity of the shoemaker was very reliant upon the well-being of the farmer... when he had hard times so did the shoemaker, cobbler and snob.

George married Sarah on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1798, in Axminster. They had four children, two boys, both called John, and two girls - Mary, the eldest, and Rebecca, all born in Chard.

Five years before, the town watermill was sold to John Deane, onetime owner of Parrocks Lodge. He converted the mill's floor space to house weaving looms – using the power generated by the watermill. It was a time of poor harvests and bitter winters, which together forced up the price of bread. The poor relied upon handouts of bread, which were not always forthcoming. Families were issued with bread based upon the



number of dependants. The French Revolutionary Wars created inflation that further drained the town's wealth – harmed domestic producers and agricultural interests. John Deane's family had been prominent clothiers in the 1500s, and thereafter for a further two hundred years. When John Deane died Benjamin, Coles took over the ailing weaving house - trying to reinvigorate the business. Three years later, Coles, in 1818, gave up the unequal struggle and sold the mill. The new owner converted the wool weaving looms into the manufacture of lace.

John Collins, the eldest son of George and Sarah, born in 1801, married Mary Dowling, *b1813, in Combe St. Nicholas*, on 23<sup>rd</sup>. July 1835, in Chard. John was a journeyman shoemaker, trained by his father, and Mary, a skilled lace mender who worked out of a shop in Chard sewing lace onto hems and lace patterns into collars and cuffs. It was accepted practice to remove the collars, cuffs and hems from worn clothing. This lacework was washed and repaired ready to be sewn onto new body material or to be sorted into batches of like design to be made into new 'all lace shawls' and accessories. Many of the new workings were crocheted together with silk or sold on to other shops.

In about 1820, John continued where his father had left off – making shoes of a particular style unchanged from a century before. If any individuality required then it was a change of material and decoration rather than an alteration of design or pattern. The local trade included gaiters, buckets and straps as well as boots, shoes and binders. The boots were still heavy and clumsy although now fitting for left and right feet. They were made out of bark-tanned leather, with hand stitched soles and tongues with a welt. The threaded needle with wax-coated hemp passed through prepared holes. John closed all his own work selecting the leather, cutting out the uppers and soles then stitching to the welt. He worked from a shed at home, which was also his shop, soaking the leather to dress it – beating it to close

the pores and make it supple. He had been taught by his father to tan the hide with oak-bark or chestnut. A metal tool – driver, very much like a smooth file, is used - to hammer the leather – to make it soft, the same tool used to drive in the sprigs or tacks. The bootjacks, awl, hammer, knife and rasp were in my grandads shed many years later – passed down through the ages.

John's introduction to the trade began just as the heel became obsolete. The use of a heel, to retain the gaiter or trouser strap was no longer required. By the middle of the nineteenth century, heels returned, as built-up leather pieces, to give a platform of about an inch. The penultimate operation of the shoemaker was to use a heated iron to take out the wrinkles and tighten up the grain surface, before applying the wax. As with most of the cottage industries, the market fluctuates according to fashion and the state of the local economy. When the shoe trade faltered bags, slippers, straps and gaiters filled the books. All these items were passed to the local carrier to take on his round to sell to those unable to come to the shoemakers shop. The village Carrier's cart would hold all these items and many more including, baskets and besom brooms to sell on... making a percentage of the price for his labour. It was a similar story for the lace trade...

Chard's connection with the 'bone lace', trade goes back to Charles II and the Restoration period – a period of exceptional expansion dictated by the return to flippancy in wearing apparel and the dictates of a boasting aristocracy. On the continent, the craft goes back a further hundred years.

The dilettanti years of the Restoration saw the highest point of English lace making not just for the number of people employed but the delicacy of the quality and design.

The trade had many unproductive setbacks caused by trying to maintain a production line during times of war and public unrest; later, having to pander to high fashion and more

prosperous times. In 1698, Chard had 156 lace makers whilst Honiton had 1341, which shows how lace production contributed greatly to the wreaths of towns. It was recorded in this period that there was not a cottage in all Somerset, where white lace is not made – to supply the whole kingdom and to export. There is recorded, young children earning 1s .8d per week.

People from France and the Netherlands seeking refuge from religious and political persecution brought skills and new methods of manufacture that were greater than our own. They introduced different designs entailing complicated patterns and finishing. The immigrants, worked in a close-knit communities - lodging where there were already fellow compatriots living – making ghettos in mainly town and city locations. They gradually took delicate work away from outlying centres leaving the simpler work to country locations. However, Honiton retained its position for lace making as the main centre for the upper end of the market sending the bulk of the production to London. In the early 1700s, there was a decline in the output caused by the importation of cheap, intricate lace forms from Flanders...

Later, that century there was a decline in the death rate – people lived longer, and an increase in the birth rate – more children survived. In the first forty years of the new century, the population doubled... by the end of that period, the rural numbers were at their highest. From that, time on there was a migration, particularly for the young, away from the village to the town.

Lace making was a cottage industry, an expression used to describe a woman's earned income. It was paid at piecework rates – so much for a number of items produced. The work was taken on whilst their husbands were at work to augment their husbands poor wages. The women's fingers - so much more delicate and nimble, enabled them to work faster than men,

although there were some men who made lace, either because there was no work on the land or house bound through circumstance.

Lace buyers would come round the villages every month to buy up and to exchange lace for thread and pins. They had their own districts and routes - looking on their contacts as members of their team. In the sixteenth century, the pins needed to pattern the thread had no heads, which caused sore fingers. This was corrected by dipping the pins in sealing wax – to give a head.

Still, the call for lace was strong enough to entice inventors to create mechanical processes. In 1768, hand lace making began to give way to these mechanical innovations, which understandably, produced less complicated designs. This mechanisation lowered the cost per item that promoted greater interest in the uses of lace. It was an adaptation of a stocking frame, which made a net of not very wide proportions... it, helped save the industry and gave additional work for women to link those strips together... However, for detailed, complicated designs, necessary for high fashion of the period, hand lace making continued....

When it was warm enough, women sat outside their cottages, with their pillows or bolsters, using the strong daylight to follow the pattern. This may strike one as being quaint, even attractive – certainly following one's idea of a true Victorian watercolour, but in fact, it was essential - necessary to make ends meet! While the very young children had an afternoon sleep, the wife spent an active hour at her pillow. It was to earn a little extra for the children's clothes. Babies were not as a rule weaned until they were over a year old. It was cheaper, healthier, and more convenient to breast feed. It was thought fitting that they should sleep most of the time and not be mentally or physically stimulated. They were not allowed to sit up until they were six months old and not allowed to walk until they were two.

Lace makers produce both individual and repetitive patterns in the form of a netted tracery, which can be sewn together, or in sequence; the same operation used whether making a continuous tape, fringe, border, or circular design. It relies upon a pin-threaded sequence using pairs of cotton-wound bobbins... at their head the cotton – using the bobbin as a reel and at the bottom - seven beads linked to form a ring – prevents the bobbin twisting on the pillow... Twenty-four bobbins, a common number, to form a doily.

The pillow, is mainly for small circular and floral work, is fourteen inches in diameter and four inches deep - at the sides, a further inch thicker towards the middle. The term pillow applied to both the round and the square, bolster type. The former, more suitable for Honiton type sprigs, and the square - the Bruges, better for lengths. Pillows, as described, were pads - rather like a round kneeler, with a raised centre and held on the lace-maker's knees.

The bolster, made-up with exactly the same material, used for plain straight-edged, scalloped, or diamond-patterned borders: for cuffs, collars, table cloths etc. In size, were two-foot six inches in circumference by two-foot long, resting on the crossbars of a wooden horse. These workings, both patterned and straight-laced, sometimes joined to make-up the whole or part garment.

The pillow fabric was made of strong cotton or linen cut into two circles joined by a strip with an opening. The pillow was turned inside out, with the seams inside, stuffed with chopped barley or oat straw; evenly packed, pummelled, beaten and shaped into a very hard dome, left to 'settle' to allow more space to be filled. When finished the pillow sealed - by stitching. It is important not to include in the stuffing the nodes of the straw - too hard for the pins to penetrate.

The pillow then covered with one or two linen cases -the upper is the surface worked on. This is pinned by each corner under the pillow. This operation became known as ‘dressing the pillow’.

The original daft - a design on graph paper, called ‘the pricking’, consisting of fine holes. This pattern was again pricked through with a needle, onto a sheet of parchment or good quality writing paper - about fourteen inches long by eight inches wide. The transferred copy had linen loops or tabs attached to the ends... so that it could be tacked to the pillow – kept taut on the case.

As the work progresses, covering cloths, folded in half – [folds facing], are pinned at the side of the pillow - to expose the area to be completed. These cloths kept the finished work clean allowing the weaving thread easy passage over the imbedded pins of finished work. Horn ‘sliders’, today stiff plastic, half-slid under the covering cloth - allowing new work threads easy passage over the pinheads.

The lace thread is carried on bobbins, the size of 3-4 inch pencils with tapered necks, of which, there maybe thirty-six. The bobbins, each pre-wound - by hand, or using a bobbin winder, wound onto the second neck of the bobbin, called the long neck. The skein of thread was wound round pegs placed in crossed arms, of the blades, or ‘yarningles’– the blades had a number of peg holes to carry a larger size of skein. The free end of the thread is given a couple of turns round the long neck, which is about three-quarters of an inch long... then the bobbin placed in the spool. Turning the handle of the winder operated the belt linked to the spool... when spun, pulls the thread off the crossed arms... The wound bobbin, with its two to three inches of thread, is now ready to take the place of an empty one... meanwhile, kept looped in pairs, in a bobbin-case suspended from the pillow.

The turned bobbins, generally made of fruitwood, are light in weight, with small heads. Below the head is the short-neck - which is just a notch, or turn, made when the bobbin is manufactured... the thread is unwound slightly off the long-neck and a couple of turns wound onto the short neck ending with a turned-over loop, to stop the bobbin unwinding. The remainder of the bobbin is called the shank. The bobbins, sometimes referred to as lace-sticks, laid flat upon the pillow whilst not in use. Below the shank - the body of the bobbin are threaded beads - carrying perhaps seven, looped in a ring; this extra weight gives tension to the thread and prevents the bobbin slipping and twisting on the pillow.

The results of the lace maker, was very much like plaiting or crochet - where one twisted thread is laid over another - in sequence. In this instance pins one-inch high form the pattern - these, the thread wound round. As the pattern progresses the last pin worked round is pressed into the pillow... successive pins inserted along the pattern. It is the number of twists made using a pair of bobbins which maintains the pattern - stops the whole from unravelling, and the different gauges of thread ['gimp' is course] multiplies the opportunities for outlining and strengthening. Much of the work from Chard was 'trolley lace' which refers to the single neck of a rather shorter, heavier bobbins called 'a trolley' - for gimp thread - a thicker thread, used for outlining the design. The young girls of six or seven would use fewer bobbins, probably no more than eleven pairs, to make a simple fan, or shell shaped strip or fringe. The older girls would make point, honeycomb and Kat stitch, with picots loops on the scallop fringe. As most of the lace ended up in Honiton most of the workers were familiar with the Honiton flower motif which was sewn onto dress collars or a wedding veil, a number could be linked together to form a complete item. Hanging from the lace maker's pillow was a pincushion made of bran sewn into a heart

shaped pad. A bobbin bag, with two pockets, one holding re-wound bobbins and the other empty, is hung over the pillow.

Girls, of sometimes five, others perhaps older, worked at the ends of their mothers pillow practicing their stitches. It was believed that this habit laid down a good basis for a future life of work – made the child control their, ‘more casual demands.’

Much lace work was still done outdoors at the turn of the century but it was soon to be phased out by cheaper production methods. Using daylight, rather than sitting indoors using candles, was better for the eyes and allowed finer work to be made. Later, special rooms were built into the upper floors of outworkers houses – a cottage industry flourished; in some cases, two or three cottages were linked together - walls could be knocked through to form one large room. Special candle lit light globes and mirrors used to illuminate the workers lace. Extra wide windows - a number of windows linked together, were a feature of these building and still are seen today.

Girls sat round a table, in groups of two or three, so that each worker received the maximum light available from the candles and their light-reflecting globes. Quite often work continued right through the night leaving the girls exhausted. The lace makers who worked together in these large rooms did so under a Head Lace Hand. The workrooms were heated by earthenware pots of hot ashes and charcoal, known as ‘dickey pots’, giving off fumes and smoke which clung to the ceiling between the beams.

‘Outworking’ still went on, but the whole industry became more organised; ‘the gentry’ who wanted particular intricate designs dictated the fashions of the day.

Lace makers children were expected to contribute to the family’s income by working at every spare moment - they had to sit down each night and do a certain amount of work – complete so many heads of lace, before ‘play’ was allowed.



In 1800, machine net making began to be discussed by the workers and trades people. Gradually mechanical innovations to the existing looms crept in - making inroads into traditional work - producing a cheaper product. In lace-making areas, it was then very usual to find a mother and two daughters all making lace together. Their combined work brought in about a third less than that of a father and son. Whereas the men were out all day, at least until six or seven, the women were doing household chores – combining earning with building a home. This was for a five-day working week, the money earned allowed one-third to be saved for dressmaking and the remainder ‘put by’ for a rainy day. Lace continued to be made in many counties but the greatest being Honiton and the East Midlands. Most of the lace made in Chard found its way to Honiton where it was made up and sold on. Three years later, cotton had overtaken wool as Britain’s leading export.

The first mechanical means of increasing production was the mill driven by natural forces. Wool, in its natural state could be used as a covering – woven, made it versatile. The development of the loom increased production and quality. Using steam, as a driving force, gave the industrialist a choice where to set up his factory – close to both labour and customer. This was the history of Chard, and other fortunate towns, initially made possible by its rivers and trading position

The enclosure of Chard Common, begun 1819, allowed scrubland to be brought under cultivation. The total enclosure of the common took twenty-five years throughout this time ditches introduced to drain away excess storm water. It was unusual for French drains to be dug and piped land-drains took even longer to be laid. There was a fear that there still would not be enough corn harvested to provide bread for the poor. The price of wheat fluctuated dramatically due to bad weather. Corn was

imported free, which promoted a backlash of political unrest - demands for a law to ban imports.

At times, the lot of a farm labourer was very hard particularly if injured or became ill. His only recourse was The Friendly Societies or the Labourer's Friend Society, founded by prominent businesses men and politicians.

In the early eighteen hundreds, another grand project to promote trade was the building of Chard canal – finally opened in 1842. This became one of the last and probably the finest constructed waterways in Britain. The main haulage being coal from Taunton - for the growing industrial expansion requiring steam power, as well as for normal domestic heating. The weaving trade still relied upon waterpower to work their looms. Soon steam began to make inroads in the production processes giving greater flexibility to where new factories built.

By the early to mid nineteenth century, there was a baby boom - an increase in the population. As these children grew up a number of poor harvest, wet summers, put pressure on grain stocks - the poor were beginning to go hungry – particularly the children. At the same time there was experienced another period of prosperity in Chard town - which saw the building of a new weaving mill, for the production of lace.

On the farms the husbandry of animals had begun to be improved... there was a move to increase the numbers per acre. In the middle of the nineteenth century grazing one sheep to the acre was considered average and maintaining fifteen areas sufficient for one man. A farm labourer earned eight shillings per week for a twelve-hour day, usually from six to six. This was the start to the industrialization of Britain, naturally of Chard too which was to have such a dramatic effect on the life of country dwellers.

In the 1851 census, half the population was living in urban areas. Although we must not confuse urbanization with

industrialization in the instance of Chard, they are the same, and for that matter, Tatworth could be included as well. You would think that as food production increased wealth would remain where it was produced... but it did not. The wealth of the country was in the towns, not any town but industrial towns... and that is where the population flowed. What saved Tatworth as a thriving village was its river, its lace mill, Chard Road railway station and the butter factory. Like its parent town Chard they were dominated by the manufacture of lace and their mills their principle employer. In thirty years, between 1821 and 1851 Chard Parish increased in population by over two-thousand souls. On the day of the census, Sunday March 30<sup>th</sup> 1851, 5,297 people lived in the parish. According to the census, there was full employment and nearly half worked in the four lace mills making 'plain net' lace. As with all weaving mills, the workers had to get use to the vibration, noise, dust and danger. The working day was organized in shifts and turns linked to time and the insistence of good work as a way of life.

The remainder of the working population retained a rural life – worked at the same job for life working their way up the ladder from junior to journeyman, farm boy to farm worker. It was a steady existence regulated by the seasons and nature. What was certain was that their working hours were flexible, frequently exhausting, certainly long, and poorly paid. This secondary group of workers were in the main craftsmen doing jobs very much like those a century before: building, metal working, leather work, making carts and farm implements, and carpentry. Farm work was noticeable so too domestic service. It would be safe to say that the majority of children worked too from the age of nine upwards. Of the fifty percent who did not attend full-time work by far the largest percentage were housewives then children under fifteen. Only a very small proportion of the population lived beyond seventy.

In the 1840s short time was ordered at the lace mills – there were some closures. This caused enormous suffering. There was no work on or off the land and over a period of months, the situation got much worse – militancy began to be formed amongst the unemployed. The Chartist movement had support and there were disturbances. The mill workers from a number of mills ganged together and picketed Holyrood Mill and the troops were called out to back up the special constables. The mill-workers marched to Perry Street to try to engage more strikers. Eventually the gangs were dispersed. \the next day saw virtually a general; strike with all workshop and shops closed. Over a thousand people attended a meeting. It was a difficult time, which was not forgotten. Eventually the workers returned to work but they were hard times... it took the Crimean war 1854-56 to bring about any sort of industrial expansion.

By the middle and late nineteenth century there was almost twice as many lace makers in Buckingham as there were in Devon. Thirty years later the statistics had changed to the opposite position - Devon outstripped Buckingham. In the use of finished work – making lace up into garments it was eleven to one; Devon had considerably more dressmakers than any other county in Britain, similarly for glove making.

In 1864, the school leaving age was twelve, if not required to work at home. In Tatworth if the lad was not to go into the mill it was to the farm he went – to work on the land. His first job was pig minding on the corn stubble and in the woods on the common. Other days were spent rook scaring rattling his cans at the same time he would be picking up stones from the field. For this, he was paid sixpence a day, which he gave to his mother. If he were lucky, he could go back to school to finish off his schooling. Unfortunately, parents often continued taking him away from school the older, the boy got even though the law stated that twelve was the correct age to leave school.

By the time he was twelve he was able to follow the plough which meant being up at five o'clock and under a carter take out a team of four horses. Their life was hard. There were no days off and no holidays. If he was not required for ploughing, he took his turn carting corn to the mill in Forton. The horses were decorated with bells and either he was paid with a bundle of straw for beer money or given a shilling or if he were lucky the miller would give him a small jug of beer.

What the census reports of 1871 and 1901 confirm Devon outstripped all other counties for most country trades... the exception being straw plaiters. It must be emphasized again that Chard is close to three west-country county borders and sits on a main arterial road, within easy reach of Lyme Bay. These geographic facts place their working populations in a most beneficial position.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, agriculture had been in the doldrums. There had been a period of continual cultivation without proper husbandry with the result was that crop harvests decreased and the land began to become sterile. The old ways of laying fields to fallow - crop rotation taking place, was put aside and forgotten. The landlords demanded results without expenditure. Economies were put in place to try to make up for the shortfall. This did not happen for it needed the spur of increased prices to make cultivation profitable again. A series of social changes stimulated the turnaround... the first being the invention of machines to increase manufacturing output. The machines were housed in factories. To feed the factories required heavy wagons. These travelled over poorly made roads. To satisfy demand more factories were opened increasing the demands on the transport system. The construction of canals linking up industrial towns and cities to transport heavy freight was the answer. The factories, canal construction teams, the freight haulage and all the other feeder

businesses required labour. The men and their families had to be housed and fed and now they had the money to be able to do so. Some of that money went into the farmers pockets. Food became profitable to grow and cultivate. The need to make harvests more abundant required the land to be made fertile. The increase in meat production helped the land to be manured.

On the coat tails of the canals came the invention of the steam engine. Steam power was first used to drive beam pumps to drain mines. It wasn't long before the reciprocating engine converted to rotary motion and the railways born. Quickly steam power took over the job of the watermills and factories became free from having to be alongside rivers and streams.

In the early eighteen hundreds farming was a matter of handed down, gained experience and intuition. This experience gave some knowledge of chemical and physical action that contributed towards: the fertility of the soil, action of insects and small mammals, reaction prompted by the elements - sun, wind and rain, irrigation, rotation of crops, choice of seed or strain, areas of country and local geography, past land use, amount of self manuring, availability of trained staff and profitability of the farm past and present.... these all contributed towards the quality of the harvest. By the mid eighteen hundreds all these factors were know and partially understood by all farmers. A few took the chemical side more seriously and the knowledge gained was circulated through pamphlets, technical papers, and local farmer's clubs. Still it took two world wars to advance all farming beyond plain experience into theory and best practice.

The open-field system was still operating in the baulk of the country. The local market catered for the purchase and sale of stock. There were only a few well made-up roads and the fields small with high overgrown hedges, few ditches, and little provision for suitable land drainage. Oven still pulled the heavy wooden plough and the corn still hand cut with scythe and sickle.

Probably the single most important discovery to achieve almost immediate benefit to the grower of crops was an understanding of the nutrition of plants and the composition of the soil. This understanding was driven ahead by the German chemist Liebig. His book made popular by Voelcker, Johnston, and their experimental station helped form the Royal Agricultural Society, incorporated in 1840 and four years later the Royal Chemical Society, and in the same year the Cirencester Agricultural College. In a way, it is unfair to single out one particular moment or one particular thing, which contributed most to the massive leap forward in agricultural improvements. What one can say is that by the time of The Great Exhibition agriculture became an art. Good drainage was understood, proper fertilization proved essential and rotation of crops known to be beneficial. Each contributed to changes in the chemical component of the soil. It was understood that the farmers had within their own farms the means to improve their crops. They had the hay and straw to break up and loosen the soil, manure which contained all the constituent parts to ensure fertility and the distribution of sown crop – their roots to add their own particular action to the composition of the soil. All these were rich in both organic and inorganic substances, combining both nitrogen and minerals – the object being to restore elements of fertility each crop exhausts. The correct grassland, hay, and root produce the three ems: meat, milk, and manure.

The farming system in the middle of the nineteenth century was traditional and caused no real problems for the villager. It was based in the main on sheep and corn – an age of *High-Farming*. The sheep were hurdle flocks, feeding on the wasteland in the summer, fallow field mainly after the harvest - in the autumn, and strewn turnip and mangels in the winter. It was

a period of plenty and gave an appearance of well-tended stock on well-maintained land.

The scientific approach to farming was not something the farmers contemplated, studied nor sought. That they yielded to better methods learnt through contact with their peers – information passed on through word of mouth not by reading about it. They were willing to try new methods if someone they respected advised them to. If that were backed up by proof by seeing increased yields and their associate receiving greater monetary rewards - the acceptance of a new method assured.

The talk at the animal pens in the market as the buyers and sellers saw the larger animals, and the sight at the mill of larger ears of grain - giving more flour per ton weight, convinced the farmers that these new fangled ways were beneficial. The wants of plants and animals to give greater yields was slowly being recognised. That these things could be done artificially, using chemicals unheard of was a revelation.

Farmers, by this time, knew about the beneficial nature of lime, chalk, grit and ash... they were also aware of the positive effects of turned over stubble and root. Village horticulturists used soot, crushed bone meal, seaweed, and shoddy, to augment the more natural manure. They were experienced enough to tell if a soil was going to be productive by its feel, look and colour. However, they knew nothing about superphosphates, guano, nitrates, potash, and dried blood – a whole variety of compound chemicals.

What are different today are soil test kits that give chemical composition... that if poor recommend what chemical, or composition of chemicals, would correct the deficiency. When the soil test shows a reasonable content then the farmer adapts this to the crop, which varies according to the crops natural requirement. Knowing what is lacking necessitates a judgement as to whether the cost of application is going to make the



difference, from an economic point of view, considering the forecasted weather pattern, present state of the ground, long-term retention, by the soil. There is no point in spreading chemicals if not retained in the ground - washed away, quickly diluted, lack penetration.

Soil erosion caused by heavy rain was, to a large degree, prevented by suitable ploughing. The object of good ploughing is: to turn in surface weed, stubble and root; prepare – break-up the ground for sowing; allow the elements - air, light, wind and rain, to have a greater beneficial effect; help retain water – hold back, prevent ‘run off’ - an action that erodes lighter particles of the soil – mainly denudes the soil of limestone this causes the soil to become acid.

Soil needs four constituent parts: sand or silica, 60%; clay – hydrated silicate of alumina, 25%; limestone, – calcium carbonate, 7.5%; humus - decayed organic matter 7.5%. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century, most farmers were aware of the facts that were talked about and passed on; some gave the subject more importance and made a study of them. The Royal Societies promoted better land husbandry accepting the scientific results of experiments. Another rule of good farming practices was proper land drainage the theory being the removal of surface water, creating a change to the physical structure of the soil, allowing what chemicals that were present greater influence and improving the temperature of the soil. The beneficial nature of good land drainage was applied according to the geophysical nature of the land and soil.

As the land became more productive and the farmers received, larger benefits it became necessary to either employ more labour or find some other means to compensate. Throughout history, man has always come up with some tool to bridge the gap – to replace his fellow man or solve a production problem. In this instance, the age of industrialisation helped.

About this time a whole host of mechanical devices designed... some found their place in the development of farm machinery others fell by the wayside. Probable the first was a devise to lift potatoes... all, of course, powered by the horse. This in no way prevented the machine becoming later adapted for the tractor. From the middle of the nineteenth century, all machines superseded the labour intensive workings of the farm. The ten-year period between 1853 and 1862 were the golden age of English agriculture built upon the principles discovered by Sir John Lawes and Sir Henry Gilbert; the aim and objectives, method and effects of manuring. If there is such a thing as a period of boom this was it!

It would be naive to believe that these discoveries, and the results obtained from them, would remain a secret, or not adopted elsewhere... especially when they were broadcast at the various Royal Societies and written about in trade papers. What transpired here became common practice aboard; the difference was their fields were much bigger – giving them a surplus...

The Tatworth farm labourers were local lads raised by local people to live and die in the place they were brought up... which they were happy to do. They knew their neighbours, their relatives lived locally and they all attended chapel together. When they courted, it was to local girls and when they married and had children, they perpetrated the life their parents had lived. They did not reach out beyond the parish boundaries – they stayed in their own small world. This comfortable existence was about to end with the means of movement - the age of mass transportation of people and goods... broke the mould. However, hold on, this did not happen overnight, especially in a place like Tatworth. Ships had to be built, railways had to be laid, and Mister Ford had to start his conveyor belt whilst mixing his black paint!

The Langdon family at Parrocks Lodge prospered too. The land provided a good income and the farm gave them all the food they needed. It is little wonder that they could have such a large family and live such comfortable lives. The agent made positive noises about the state of the estate's finances. Improvements to the estates land were put in hand and another round of land drainage was put in place.

This rosy picture ended when imports started to arrive in Britain in 1875. Thereafter, the rising population in the cities were offered cheap imports of corn, and lamb and mutton gave way to beef. The production of milk products began to make itself felt and the nations diet changed to prepared cereals. The industrialization of Britain continued unabated and the population kept up with it. The yearly harvest could only just manage to provide sufficient food and it seemed likely that food shortages would come about.

The imported grain surplus from America and Canada flooded the markets and the new refrigerated ships from Australia and New Zealand provided the lamb. The twenty-year period between 1879 and 1890 saw prices halved. This very quickly resulted in farmers going to the wall, land being sold, marginal land abandoned, downland left to grass and farmhouses and outbuildings fell into disrepair. This was no five-minute downturn but a long-term disaster.

Thousands of farmers who had managed through generations to husband the land went bankrupt. Landowners despaired of ever finding tenants. Estates were put on the market at rock bottom prices... even so, much left neglected – land was considered a liability not as an asset. Gradually, as in most things, the problem of cheap imports became absorbed farmers diversified, adapted, and slowly recovered. The displaced labour found their way to towns and cities.

The difficulty finding work began to be felt... not in all trades at once though... It was a predictable consequence of mass production of factory products, providing for an increased population. Many local trades began to disappear, as the workers retired not being replaced by young trained journeymen. A pressure could not be dissipated except by having fewer young people needing employment. The gradual move away from the home-village began, helped by the greater numbers of bicycles available and the expanding railways. The new mass production methods affected cottage industries as well not just, because those skills could be reproduced by machinery but modern methods required different dress – fashions changed – there were new ways of doing things and these advances and changes could be read about, discussed, and acted upon. The social and economic changes did not just happen here in England but further afield too. Imports had their effect and the supply of raw materials had to be kept up and increased. As this change came about workers tried to stem the tide – slow down the effect of industrialisation, by working longer and harder. [This compensation by workers to increase productivity to slow down change happens in all industries at all times] Children were brought into the production line sooner. Women persuaded to take on outside work, work all hours – into the night. This increase in hours worked was sufficient to fill order books but only for a limited period. Workshop Regulation Acts, Factory and School Inspectors saw to it that these long hours of work in bad conditions stopped.

The girls in the village were keen to start work after leaving school. Nearly one in three, between the ages of ten to fifteen worked as a lace-maker. When completed the lace was sold by the parents to a dealer who collected the work on his round. Workers were enticed to buy their threads, pins, patterns and

material off the same man. This was convenient for outlying areas but the price was increased accordingly.

It was fortunate for John Collins that the workers at the mill required boots and shoes. By the middle of the century John earned just enough money, as a shoemaker, to pay the rent, buy food, and clothe the family. His eight children would have had very low priority for schooling. He was fifty-two years old and his children were expected to help with the household chores especially the two girls. George, the eldest son - was thirteen, helped his father in the cobblers shop, as a snob, serving as an apprentice.

His brother Eli had to find employment outside the home as a ploughboy. Daughters were sent to the local 'big' house as scullery or kitchen maids. If children went to school at all, it was only for one year at the cost of a penny a week. The attitude of country folk of the times was, 'that it was more important that children worked in the home or field, to earn their keep'. If there were a school, it would probably be at the Rectory.

There was no compulsory education in the early eighteen hundreds. It was not though necessary to have children taught who were only going to work on the land or to do jobs associated with farming. Even in those areas that did have a school the cost of lessons – charged according to the ability to pay, was one penny. Even this was considered wasteful.

Lace and plait schools were set up later that century in cottages catering for, 'as many as can be seated'. This overcrowding made it almost impossible to teach sensibly. It was found by Inspectors that children could read but not write and that proper registers for attendances were not kept.

In those lace workshops engaging young women a percentage of the wage was paid, 'in kind' – tea, sugar, flour or bread rather than cash. As these items were essential for feeding the poor's, large families, any payment were welcomed,

furthermore, when cash was demanded the relative payments less than the bartered items, so demands were exceptional.

At the end of the nineteenth century, education for children was placed into law by the passage of the 1880 Act – education for children up to ten. There were various bodies who tried to promote lace making as a cottage industry but these did not stand the test of time – the industry declined. Even towards the coast in Dorset, a body of people specialized in making net, which, because of its particular nature, found a ready market. This cottage industry floundered just before The First World War.

John and Mary had eight children, the sixth named Phillip Alfred - [*my great grandfather*], born 1847, and apprenticed as a lace hand in Chard. He married Mary Jane Web [*b1843 in Chard*] in 1870, at St. John the Evangelist, Tatworth. This was a daughter-church of Chard Church built in 1851 on land donated by Lord Poulett. Mary died after fifty years of married life giving birth to five children, four boys and a girl named Helen.

Phillip, later married widow Susan Hoskins, daughter of Isaac England - a piano tuner. Susan gave birth to three boys [1873, 1876 and 1878], all born in Chard. The eldest son - my grandfather, named Phillip Alfred Henry, after his father – later called Harry to differentiate him from his father.

From Harry's first cries, England's rural economy declined... to be precise, in-between the years 1861 – 1881, the agriculture industry lost twenty percent of its workers, and even more females. Children under eight and soon to be fewer than ten had to go to school removing their contribution... These losses to the industry pushed up the price of food and increased the import of grain. These absentee farm workers found their way into town businesses, the mining industry and the factory floor.

With a good school report and a family connection with the trade, Harry was accepted as an indentured lace hand to John Payne - at the same mill his father worked... He served for six years.

After coming out of his time, he signed on in the army, to the call for volunteers for The Second Boer War - for three-years. Major-General Hamilton was given command of 1<sup>st</sup> Devon and 1<sup>st</sup> Manchester Regiments, part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade. Harry Collins was in this force as a volunteer, having completed his apprenticeship, served as a Military Policeman - with the eventual rank of Sergeant, to take part in the Second Anglo-Boer War at the battle of Elandslaagte and later Wagon Hill; he remained as such until 1901; a year later the Treaty of Vereeniging was signed on 31<sup>st</sup>. May 1902, after the Boers capitulated - peace was declared.

When he returned to Britain he went back home to Chard. Since his departure, his mother had died and his father was coping with the family. Harry was the eldest child and his brother Frederick the only family member living with the father.

After he became a journeyman, he served as a senior lace hand running three looms. He was asked by John Payne to take over one of the vacant positions of Engineer, knowing that Harry was competent at servicing the looms and was technically minded. Payne, who was in his eighties, helped him enormously to become conversant with all the different machines then in service with the company.

This was the year Queen Victoria died. The Commonwealth of Australia came into being and Lord Sainsbury's Unionist government had been in office for fifteen years. Home Rule for Ireland, was the hot topic of political conversation, and most of the six and a half million children were at school. The previous year Keir Hardie was elected for Merthyr as the first socialist MP, and two years later Mrs

Pankhurst started a new Social and Political Union. The Edwardian age was an interesting time for political commentators and the Collins family...

Harry started courting Rosa Beviss almost as soon as he returned from Africa... being married at St John the Evangelist, Tatworth, that same year... he was twenty-eight and Rosa Jane one year younger. Harry had travelled abroad – seen a part of the world he was not likely to forget. His position as police sergeant he given him authority and standing... now transferred to his position as a lace engineer at the mill. Being married with a new home within walking distance of his work was everything he had looked forward too. Now he could begin to raise a family and settle down to concentrate on his job. Having trained in the mill was of a practical nature and he was soon putting up shelves and building a large chicken house at the bottom of the garden.

The newly married Collins' had their first child, which was stillborn. It was a great shock for both the couple and Rosa's sister who was attending her. Unfortunately, this was not to be her only one. By 1913, five of their children died in the first year of life and another aged four. In all Rosa had fifteen children all born in the same house, eight eventually marrying.

Chard Farm [Manor Farm] was formed on a Roman site – archaeology suggests a farm, and may have housed in 1235, a Bishops Court. The farmhouse, pre c1700 – close to St Mary's Church on the Tatworth Road, also known as Chard Church, built c1440. The vicar was also a magistrate and Trustee of the Turnpike Trust. A year later, at the time of The Great Exhibition 1851, Chard Farm was registered as having 500 acres, which was large for those times...

John Beviss had nine children, and two servants. His good standing in the community and trustworthiness stood him in



good stead when offered the Trusteeship of the Chard Turnpike Trust. Banker, Major John Churchill Langdon of Parrocks Lodge and Lord Bridport were also Trustees as were other town notables. The trustee's task was to instigate proper meetings set the tolls maintain the roads and staff tollhouses. The Trust lasted until the 1860s when the railways finally became so successful, particularly carrying freight that road tolls began to fall. The government could see that road repairs - by subsidies and local taxes - from the various county highways departments, would have to increase to take over the maintenance... thereafter, tolls began to be phased out and the Trust wound up in 1875.

Through good farming practices, John Beviss in about 1860 increased his grain tonnage. This was a time after the Napoleonic Wars as home prices rose for grain products... again it was profitable to plant and harvest corn. John appreciated that to make greater profits from this increased production; he should operate his own granary - to replace the previous mill. To maximise his outlay - even out less productive times, he offered a milling and storage service to other farmers. His son William sold the farm in 1920.

Rosa's father was a witness to her marriage as was Elizabeth Buller. The newlyweds set up house in Tatworth in a house Harry called Rosalie Cottage, naming it after his wife. It was a knapped flint and brick end-terraced cottage of three. They had sixteen children - eight boys and eight girls [one adopted] - a girl and a boy twins. Five of the children died within four years of birth. The eleventh child - the fourth girl, was to be my mother Elsie May, born 10<sup>th</sup> August 1908, the same year Campbell-Bannerman resigned the premiership... two years after the Liberal landslide election.

It would have been noticeable, to the interested bystander at the turn of the nineteenth century, the changes made by the Enclosure Acts. The common land, which occupied the land

beyond the village, became enclosed fields and ploughed... taken over by stealth by wealthy farmers and landowners. Some of the poor, living in their hovels built higgledy-piggledy on scraps of land in and out of the woodland, was ordered off. They were as entitled to be there as anyone, had squatter's rights, but had not the power or support from the community to resist.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, agriculture was the principle employment for men and boys. For women and girls it was domestic service. This state of affairs was changing – fast in areas close to town but slowly in outlying areas. The depopulation of the village started when the harvests were poor, as machines took over from the horse and industrialization enticed men away from a hard rural existence. This decline in the population had a knock on effect making struggling businesses even more difficult to continue. Cottage industries took up some of the slack. Lace making, mat making, straw plaiting and knitting bought in a little money to make ends meet. It was welcomed news to hear that the mill was to be kept going by Cuff & Company when they converted the mill to drive looms - to make bobbin lace.

Cotton arrives at the mill in bales, which is turned, into thin rope by blending, carding, and combing. Spinning draws out and twists the thread, winding the thread onto spindles. Richard Roberts designed the first fully automatic mule [rotating the thread from delivery, inserting a twist then winding the thread onto a bobbin] previously they had been either hand operated or partially automatic] at the time, the mule spinners joined the union.

The first power-loom invented and perfected by Cartwright in 1784. Dressing the threads further perfected weaving - giving the thread strength. By the time of The Great Exhibition, spinning and weaving mechanically perfected. It only required the introduction of the refill of the shuttle, by a rotating

hopper, designed by the American, Northrop, to complete the development. The slump and national strike of 1926 saw the start to a savage decline in Britain's industrial might... all these happenings affected the mill workers of Chard.

The first lace mill was built on Boden Street, Chard in 1821 turning out plain net. Coles weaving mill in the Old Town was taken over by Wheatley & Co., which was the start to the area becoming well known for lace production. By 1830, Chard could boast four lace mills becoming a centre for the production of clothing, curtains and military products. A machine called 'the bobbinet' was perfected in 1808; this led to the 'Levers' - a control mechanism, which further developed the lace making industry. The early looms had to be stopped every few minutes both to adjust the cloth and to 'dress' the warp threads as they unrolled. The weaver had to brush a flour paste on the threads to give them strength. This, at the same time as Arkwright's 'Spinning Jenny', Kay's 'Flying Shuttle' and Heathcoat's 'Lace Making Machine', came together in the 1820s to industrialise production. Up until the middle 1830s all lace made around the town of Chard was made by hand and called bobbin lace, [*needle lace - another process, was made in other areas*].

In 1837, flowered nets invented, although originating in France copied in England - known as Blonde - made in nine-inch strips. The further invention of a net making knitting machine opened the way for greater widths to be worked. Now the method of powering the mills was steam. At this time there was a great effort made to stop workers from joining Trades Unions.

Poor parents of young children expected their offspring to work as soon as possible – even before the age of eight. The Workshops Regulation Act of 1867 gave some protection allowing children to work shorter hours. This did not stop the exploitation even though Government Inspectors were given the

power to fine the perpetrators... this continued until the hand lace trade declined after 1870. The English braid and pillow lace industry suffered in a far greater proportion than continental producers did.

The English fashion industry brought about the change. Peasants, and particularly religious institutions, in France, Flanders, Spain and Italy still desired lace produced in the traditional manner - which showed complicated designs. Now the trade began to reverse... more lace imported into England than exported... quality dropped and skills lost. Many lace-makers went into service, which was the only trade suitable for them.

Records thirty years later indicate there were no lace makers in 'Farmers' households. This could only suggest that lace making was a country cottages industry, not occurring in town houses. Lace makers were wives, daughters or granddaughters of male 'heads of households' who usually worked as a farm labourer. The next most common trade for men was shoemaking. This describes the economic position the Collins family found themselves in - as people from a rural parish. Towards the end of nineteenth century, there was a general falling off in the more elaborate side of the hand made lace trade. The workers were mainly women between the ages of thirteen to twenty-two, although much younger children did participate - even to as low an age as eight.

Most women wore under garments trimmed with lace, which gave lace-makers a great deal of work. New patterns were brought over from France and then skilfully copied. However, the bottom dropped out of the lace making by the end of the century. The Lady of the Manor gradually ceased to employ a needlewoman. Home sewing started again with the advent of the sewing machine - made at an affordable price. This was the end of the 'age of lace' especially for collars and cuffs. Ladies and

children's wear, handkerchiefs, tableware and chair-back and arm covers were some of the items, which kept lace makers busy for few more years. As a means of employment, the net making industry came at the right time. By the middle of the next century, production was well established.

The manufacture of plain net was begun in an old wool-weaving shed in Mill Lane, Chard in 1822. The venture, proving to be successful, transferred to a larger factory, in 1830. Patterned lace still had its customers who preferred the old-fashioned style for cuffs and collars, this work continued to be made by hand. The mill in Chard began making bobbin lace in about 1836 and by 1840 could produce a pattern. At the same time, G W Cuff & Co converted the watermill at Perry Street, Tatworth, to make bobbin lace. Five years later the mill was leased to John Payne in 1844. Payne was a skilled millwright and engineer who adapted and developed the mill's machinery. The finished net was taken from the mill to Nottingham's 'Finishing Shop' [*closed several years ago*] to be dyed and dressed.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, when Britain was fighting the Crimean War, workers wages gradually increased for a period of twenty years. Thereafter, after a slight hiccup in 1879, wages continued to rise, staggering in 93 to resume until 1902. However, the starting base was low, and even though this upward movement was reported farm workers were, still the lowest paid. The building of canals then railways soaked up many unemployed and kept wage rises moving upwards. The twenty-five year period between 1850 and 1875 saw a massive influx of Irish workers eager to find work and remove themselves from poverty and starvation. The industrialization of Britain and the rise in homebuilding gave these men a future and took the strain of agricultural workers who might otherwise have suffered more.

Most key mill workers, and some of those retired - lived in ten three-story factory owned cottages, close to the mill. The

offices and canteen adjoined the factory. Behind the cottages lay the millpond, or impoundment, which fed the waterwheel through a channel, or millrace. Driving the massive mill wheel, runner stones, and wallover wheel, in turn, they are set to power the looms and engineering machines. The other employees, the bulk, were 'outworkers' who lived in Tatworth, South Chard or Perry Street. Amongst these outworkers were juveniles... The 1851 census records that there were children as young as five upwards working in the lace industry, and that by the age of nine, seventeen per-cent of children were at work. There were four lace mills working in Chard one of them being the Perry Street Lace Mill owned by John Payne, employing between fifty and a hundred workers depending on the fluctuating business. As one of the Guardians of the Poor Law Union ['The Union', a number of parishes linking together to run a workhouse, in this instance thirty-three, set up in 1836... the inmates, mainly young people were obliged to work] he oversaw the working of the workhouse helping to find work for the inmates and provide medical care.

There was a great distinction between the social strata in England – differences of wealth, education and leisure. The wealthy tended to attend the Established Church whilst the poor worshipped at the nonconformist chapel; the upper classes voted Tory and the less wealthy the Liberals. The barriers could be observed regarding schooling where the fee-paying child followed hunting, rugby, cricket and tennis and the state educated child fishing, football, pigeon and horseracing. The difference between many towns and Chard, and others of a similar kind, was the closeness of its society - due to town limits, inter-mingled community housing, local schooling and religious nonconformity. In the 1600s Chard was a strictly parliamentary town where three-quarters of the population attended the non-conformist chapel... the town never lost this tradition or faith.

Although there were 'Chartist' agitators amongst the mill workers in Chard it does not seem as if the unrest travelled to the mill at Perry Street – no picketing and strikes recorded.

John Payne donated an organ to Tatworth chapel in 1860 as a way of promoting his position and constructing a link between work and religion. It was in his interest to forge a strong partnership between the village and the factory.

In the 1870s, the mill sheds had many rows of looms... each lace-hand allotted three or four looms to look after... these were packed together, with very little space in-between. The mill wheel drove the gearing and shafts that turned the belt-wheel operating each loom... the motion, in-turn, spun the bobbins and drove the shuttle... that producing the woven net. It was expected, lace hands to do all their own cleaning and oiling... to pull the cuts off the roller and fetch their own weft. When a weft thread broke or the spool ran out the weaver had to lift the shuttle from the loom, change the spool and reconnect the weft. Young girls and boys who had just left school helped the weavers clean and oil, by squeezing under the looms. There was very little heating provided in the winter and no cooling in the summer. The atmosphere was purposely kept damp to make the warps weave better. In the summer, water was sprayed on the floor to keep moisture levels high. In the winter, condensation was always dropping from the shaft and belt wheels. There was a tremendous racket made by the clack of shuttles and the whirling of spinning bobbins... the slap of driving belts and rumble of the millwheel and shafts... all made any conversation impossible.

It was estimated that in 1891 thirty percent of country folk over the age of sixty-five received some kind of poor relief. Initially poor relief for those living in their own homes had been paid to the elderly rather than taking them into the workhouse. This was in the order of one or two shillings a week depending on circumstances.

Payne sought retirement from the business that same year and engaged John Small to be its works manager. John Small was originally employed as a clerk at the factory. Although Payne continued to show an interest in the mill's operation he was gradually forced to quit, transferring property investment loans that allowed Small to take over ownership.

In 1895, the Perry Street Lace factory, situated on the main road near the lake and water mill, began production. The power for the mill was supplied by the watermill built in 1895. The mills manufacturing technique wove warp and weft yarns to make Bobbinet, which tried to copy the most complex of Honiton lace designs. This was done in big weaving sheds on large machine looms.

To operate a lace factory - that relies upon complicated machinery, it is essential to employ a tool shop and engineering department. Payne developed the engineering branch of the factory not just to service the machinery but also to serve his own inventions and patents... To accomplish this dual goal he had to purchase many machines and tools a normal engineering shop would not stock. Payne's comprehensive workshop relied upon outside sources to supply iron girders, sheet steel, details and a host of other components. The engineers would maintain their own machine tools and those of others, designing improvements as they did so. Riste and Gifford were two such designers who patented their own inventions. In times of low production, these skilled engineers took on outside contracts making and maintaining agricultural equipment, steam engines and specialized foundry work.

Needing further labour in the engineering shop Harry Collins accepted a position there - to study under the supervisor to become a qualified engineer.

Small, who now owned the factory, continued to operate the machine shop on a variety of jobs to keep the men



employed. Gradually these engineering sidelines and their subsidiaries became dominant, changing the core work of the area. Within these changes worked Harry Collins, by now self-employed - as an independent engineer. Being too old to be called up in 1914, Harry was called on to do many outside jobs on local farms as well as being on call at the mill.

At first, the changes brought about by The First World War were not immediately apparent – they came about slowly – especially in places like Tatworth. The happenings in London’s society and the advent of the ‘Bright Young Things’ were of no account to Harry Collins and his family. They were more concerned about their children and the order book of the mill. Life was little different since Queen Victoria’s coronation. Of course, there had been The Great Exhibition and the coming of the railways, and Chard canal, but most of that was all so very far away. The General Strike was certainly felt and the slump, which followed, did affect the local economy. There was a great deal of unemployment and try as they might the local authority could only find more roadside walls to build and ditches to dig - to provide some work.

All children were now educated and as result expectations had been raised especially for the boys. The girls looked longingly at the magazine photographs of the latest fashions. The aristocrats and gentry never expected their girls to work anyway and passports would describe the men as independent gentlemen.

In the local ‘big houses’ the butler was held in as much esteem as the owner and the cook reigned supreme. The Lady’s Maid and the Governess lead lonely lives – they did not fit into either camp. Social etiquette was closely adhered to for each section of the house ‘knew its place’ each maid and footman fitted onto their own rung of the social ladder. Many of the estate workers lead very happy lives and the workers living

conditions was a great improvement on those left behind. If suitable and had proved themselves to be loyal they had a place for the rest of their lives, including the availability of an estate cottage when they retired.

The employers were on the whole considerate towards their staff, if distant – acted unaware that they were there, until something went wrong. Unsolicited opinions and voices of discontent would lead to dismissal without a reference. This would lead to disaster – instant homelessness, the offender unable to seek further employment. If the recourse were to return home that would mean another mouth to feed from an already bare larder. An individual's class was not judged by ability or character but on what the father's occupation was. Money and possessions accounted for possible access to a higher rung not the top!

It was not normal for working men to own their own home and there was no stain on those of the middle class, who also rented. It was the general rule – to own your own home was an exception. Politics was rarely discussed and it was certainly not broadcast whom one voted for. There was a tendency for children to follow their father's preference and for estate, workers to vote as they thought their employers would.

Children of different class did not mix – farm worker's children did not play with the farmer's children and farmers children did not play with the estate owner's child. This led to loneliness and isolation. It occurred between professional men's children and the owners of small businesses, too. As children, you only spoke when asked to; you were not to speak to strangers or your inferiors and certainly not to those who were of a higher status.

It was a hard life particularly in the winter. It was a large family and they all crowded into the living room in the evenings playing cards or shove-halfpenny on the dining table. They

suffered chilblains for the range although hot its heat never reached the extremities of the room. The kitchen was worse still for there was no heating except for a paraffin stove. The girls had liberty bodices with suspenders hold up thick lisle stockings and the boys had to pull up their long socks over their knees. Their life governed by the seasons and church festivities. Helping in the home was done on a shared basis the tasks taken in turn. The start of the summer holidays were six weeks of fume damming the river and doing odd jobs on the nearest farm, helping our uncles and aunts pick their produce and feed the chickens.

### CHAPTER III

Chard Sub-Manor – Tatworth Middle Field - Land distribution - Settlement Laws – ‘People’s Common rights’ - The Gentry – Mineral extraction - Limekilns - Brick making - Village status – Farming – Social changes. . .

Our interest in Chard revolves around its relationship with Tatworth Village - its sub-manor... a mere three miles down the road,... the distance walked by the population - to attend it is nearest Church. The Devon Record’s Office of 1554, mentions Thatteworth as the land granted to William Petre... and goes on to describe it as: ‘the manor and park of Tatworthy’. Interestingly, in the early 1300s, the first warrant holder of the estate was a certain Adam Thatteworhe.

This estate was typical of the period - for the most part engaged in farming and weaving... remaining in the Petre family for almost two hundred and fifty years, until 1790... the first hundred years being ‘The first age of England’s Renaissance’,

The hamlet remained roughly the same size, just a collection of cottages, only increasing in size much later - when the lace mills of Chard required labour, and then later still, when Sparks & Co. were manufacturing net at Holyrood Mill in Perry Street, Tatworth.

It is difficult to see the effects made by the battles and disturbances on Chard and its sub-manor during the Civil War [Charles I, 1600 – 1649]. Land was taken away from some, divided by others and sold on by widows and the bereaved. This part of England – the West Country, was a Parliamentary stronghold although naturally the high aristocracy sided with the king. What one can say is that things were never the same again, when the dust had died down... even though some of the holdings returned to their former owners, the population had been unsettled, and it took many years for the effects to be absorbed.

The workers of the land – the poor, were housed in cottages still owned by absentee landlords and by The Petre Estate. The destitute taken care of by The Church and local charities. All concerns provided by the Old Poor Law. Many of the poor were exempt from the Hearth Tax whilst receiving relief from charities. Couples preparing for marriage still had to seek permission from the rector of St Mary's, Chard [Tatworth's Parish Church] who in turn felt obliged to contact Baron Petre, the main landowner. If the couple was likely to be homeless, they had to delay marriage, sometimes for years. The manor court could have undesirable couples shipped abroad to the colonies - as vagrants.

The Settlement Law of 1662 required all persons to have a settled [home] parish. This had enormous implications where people lived and the pressure the lord of the manor exerted. Anyone moving from that parish to another could be sent back within a forty-day period. This time scale was later relaxed if the

parish of settlement accepted the newcomer. A hundred and thirty years later the decision of settlement relied upon ‘when the person was chargeable’ - to the poor rates of the parish. Most poor families continued to be housed in family units. As a rural economy, the fluctuations in the market and the advent of bad harvests had a great impact on the society.

The many problems of housing the rural poor were obvious well before the Restoration, but the Settlement Laws of 1662, defined the people’s rights more acutely. The poor could be pushed out altogether and never fully established to form the necessary ‘right’ of Settlement. Poor families could be housed by taking over disused accommodation [squatting], take over a portion of an existing property, building on somebody else’s large garden, or a property could be sub-divided. Small freeholders could build their own or re-site an existing timber framed house. Tatworth was just a scattering of simple cottages built on marginal land alongside existing tracks. New dwellings that were built erected further from the centre on outlying parts of the settlement where community control was less strict... Once erected the squatter became accepted and later gained legal rights.

Many new builds were randomly placed to take full measure of the profit from corner plots, unused ground and land unfit for cultivation. Manorial lords profited by allowing new cottages on manorial waste in return for fines and quit rents. Over time these new incomers demanded their so-called rights to the common waste... if these rights were given then the cottage occupiers gained settlement as of right. The lord and his bailiff recognised that some of these newcomers did not have relatives or persons who could vouch for them and there were those who could not pay the rent in advance. It was therefore in the interests of the lord to see that work was provided even if it were work on the estate to repair roads, hedges, ditches and banks. In

the next county Devon a survey records 21 percent of the poor were occupying church houses and that over half of the parishes housed the poor.

Ever since the Religious Houses were, established part of their inheritance was looking after the poor by providing church and poor houses. These then became a valuable parish resource, which allowed flexibility to a slowly changing society. The birth rate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries increased the separation of rural families, particularly those from small farms and smallholdings... slowly the poor migrated away from the land to the town and the new factories. The parish officials recognised that the cottagers and farm labourers were totally dependant on their wage especially as the wasteland grew scarce and their gardens shrunk. Self sufficiency for the poor was essential... there were two Elizabethan Statutes that insisted on a certain size of land that should go with the dwelling, and another accepted that squatters could build their own homes or that homes could be constructed by landlords for rent... these were The 1558/9 Acts.

The housing of the poor has always been a problem, the responsibility ended up being a parish matter with the help of charities. This became what is now called local authority housing. In the latter end of the seventeenth century, there was a proliferation of habitation orders authorising the erection of cottages for the poor - the provision of rented accommodation.

The problems of the poor are always wrapped up with their relationship with the land - any pressure exerted on their ability to grow food, feed animals and provide a dwelling immediately have a knock on effect. The Enclosure Act was one such event that affected the poor more than anyone else. The object of 'enclosure' was to link manorial strips, and commonland 'waste', into economic areas - which could be easily contained; stocked, manured, drained and worked... this was

obviously beneficial if the object was economic efficiency. Cooperative fairness, reasonableness and for all the public's good, it was certainly not. This Act worked in favour of the landowners both large and small. It enabled the less well off and the bereaved to be bought out over a long period.

The almshouse built on the 'Lands of the Blessed Mary' in 1471 on the north side of the High Street, Chard, was renovated by the Corporation in 1647... built to house the community's destitute and paupers. The Borough of Chard provided this group of terraced cottages. Thirteen years later The 'Settlement and Removal' Acts of the 1660s was designed to keep out anyone who was likely to be a burden on the rates. The Act tied men to their own parish for the next two centuries. Every parish had to list those who lived within the bounds. There were interminable arguments about the parish boundaries and those who were within and those without. Parish Officers did not have to make this list if they did not want to in fact it only affect any person who rented for under £10 per year and who was likely to be chargeable to their parish or to his parish of settlement – had come to inhabit. In the end, possession of a freehold or copyhold became a means of acquiring a settlement in the parish. Anyone applying for settlement had to live in it for forty days if he had a freehold or copyhold, rent for £10 per annum, serve in the parish office or pay taxes levied in the parish. In the end, it all became quite silly and the whole thing fizzled out mainly because no one could be bothered to go into all the various permutations. As long as people paid, their taxes they could live in regulated accommodation [with planning permission] listed at the council offices.

In 1663 Richard Harvey who established a bequest, to the Borough of Chard, obtained premises. These properties were fitted out as a 'Hospital'. All accomplished by 1698... included a

farm for fresh produce and other lands called Chard Farm in Meldreth, Cambridgeshire.

The second half of the eighteenth century saw the foundations laid for the country's industrialization and the first agricultural revolution – a time of commercial activity organized to take note of the market place – concerning profit in a consumer society. Nearly fifty per-cent of the nation's income was generated by agriculture. Enclosure was the destruction, leading to the disappearance, of an independent peasantry – the theft of 'the people's common rights' affecting their fields, meadows and pastures. Enclosure led to evictions and oppression for the very poor, inarticulate, disabled and single parents over the centuries.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the result of enclosure became more apparent. The largest landowners who employed a land agent and farm manager were advantaged being able to increase their employer's holdings... similarly, the farmer who owned more than fifty acres. The farsighted tenant farmers also increased their farm size by purchasing land for themselves. It was the small farmers with a large family who found themselves disadvantaged; they could not produce enough or buy new implements - to make the land profitable in bad times, as agriculture moved from subsistence to a commercial one.

The most substantial house in the parish is Parrocks Lodge built in the Regency neo-classical style at the time of George II, in 1801. Soon after it was built, John Deane moved in with his wife. Fifty years later the property was sold to Major John Churchill Landon. The Landon has had eleven children, which not only stimulated much energy to the hamlet and local aristocracy, although none was married, but kept the family fortune well attended. The Langdon family stayed there for a hundred years eventually selling the place to the North family who took over a dilapidated estate.



Two paths, Parrocks Lane and Church Path [Chard Road], bisected the Tatworth Middle Field [one of the recorded open field systems]. In the centre lay William Drake's Bean Land on Woodcock Gate, below which Parrocks House, Farmyard and Parkland lay. The present day Lodge and associated farm buildings are sited here. Over the parkland, boundary and wall were limekilns and pits owned by the original owners John Deane, when he died his partner Benjamin Coles took over the business and house.

Carboniferous Limestone is dry at the surface, and sends out springs at the base; its local soil is thin. It was discovered that by spreading crushed limestone onto arable soil improves texture and fertility. Lime is used in the building trade - for making mortar, lime-putty, daub and lime wash, and in the leather industry - for soaking animal skins - to remove hair. When baked in a kiln lime produces a caustic solid of calcium, and some magnesium, oxide.

In the early to middle 1800s in Tatworth a large part of the male population worked on the land as farm workers – in times of need these worker turned their hand to all the other parts of the industry – hedging, ditching, horsemen, shepherds, stockmen and foresters, the list is endless. There was a class division between him and the tenant farmer or smallholder. From a social point of view there was also a difference between the farm labourer who lived in Tatworth and a farmer who lived outside the parish – they were not considered part of the community.

The business of farming is about working the land, which conferred a ridged social hierarchy. The people in the village knew who their gentry were and who owned the land – they lived under and worked within their employer's shadow.

Up to the time of The Great Exhibition in 1851, Tatworth had been considered a hamlet. This prior to the chapel being built about the same time the Langdon's of Pattocks

Lodge arrived in the new village... to present an east and south window to the new chapel. Tatworth was raised to the status of 'village' when the chapel was built – and then higher still when the school was built twenty years later. Tatworth that year covered an area of 1552 acres and had a population of 852.

As with the rest of the country Tatworth went through many high and low employment cycles – these naturally conformed to average prosperity figures... National and civil wars, plagues and common ailments, clothing fashions and availability of natural resources, all contributed to population growth, economic and social wellbeing, and individual and group feel good factors. The Enclosure Act had a particular effect on rural life especially for the workers and those who lived off the land and forests.

Before 1875, 'High Farming', a term used to declare agricultural prosperity, rural emigration reached its peak. It is from that time that many hamlets and villages lost their viability – became deserted – the few who remained moved away.

At the turn of the century, the schoolchildren who knew each other viewed those from another district suspect. There was a strong kinship between Tatworth villagers past and present as my mother explained, 'what did they know or care how we lived and loved'.

The happenings on the continent also influenced to a lesser or higher degree how manufacturing flourished, particularly those towns and villages within easy reach of the coast and trade routes. However, with all those influencing factors the two greatest disasters were the two world wars... the former, by loss of fathers and sons, the latter, the change wrought on the countryside and landowners – the breaking up of estates, [ this occurred during and just after: The Depression, The First World War, and later, by Government Legislation – Death Duties. Each changed Tatworth, radically...

## CHAPTER IV

Rural homestead - Married life - 'Lying in' – Growing family – Chard Church - The Coombes – Lace hand - The Poppe Inn – Rural matters – Skittles – Village crime – Increased population – Agricultural advances – Social order – Old order disrupted – New Society – The 'old' order – Corn Laws – Population increase – National need.

When Harry and Rosa took up residence in Rosalie Cottage, in 1891, Ivy Beviss moved in next door. This was a convenient arrangement for she was able to help-out when Rosa was confined the following year...and thereafter, as the family grew.

Wilfred Cyril married Widow Haines in 1945 and together lived in Rosalie Cottage when grandfather died, looking after grandmother until she too died, eventually buying the house. Cyril, for that is what he wished to be called, worked as a nurseryman at a smallholding up the road... He was the fifth son of Harry and Rosa - born in 1901.

As the years went by and the family increased Ivy's assistance became vital to the smooth running of the Collins' household. Either the children's clothes could not always be handed down, the next in line was not of the same sex or they were still needed. To meet the problem there was a system of loans of necessary items from the 'lying-in' charity. These essential clothing items, including sheets and pillows, were kept by 'lady-members, of the church for just such an instance, however, you had to apply for them and you had to be of good repute. Having to make this application put people off. Buying

what was necessary at 'the white elephant stall' was judged a more acceptable way of coming by the needed item.

Harry Collins had regular features with sloping forehead, fiery eyebrows and military moustache. Thinning grey-black hair swept back gave him the looks of a firm schoolmaster, which his height reinforced. He was always dressed in black... a collar-less, thin striped-shirt under an open waistcoat... held together by his watch chain. His boots, which he was never seen without, were made of highly polished soft black leather. His weather beaten countenance friendly and warm. The wrinkled forehead suggested much thought and his eyes, with their canopy of shaggy-brows, gave a penetrating gaze to us small children. His voice and manner was gruff – a product of many years of smoking strong tobacco using a cob pipe.

Rosa was a good foot shorter than her husband but not lacking in will or authority... her grey hair always tightly twisted onto of her head was tightly pinned. She controlled and led the house and its occupants - never challenge, and played a 'close' hand at whist. I do not remember her without a pinny and her sleeves rolled up. Rosa's voice was high pitched and brittle... using an even stronger local *patois* than her husband's was. Being, one of nine and the daughter of a respected farmer she had an authority which came from a highly respected household. Her father farmed five hundred acres and operated his own granary – both these occupations demanded a good head for organisation and business. Rosa had been raised to follow Christian principles. As a child, she attended Chard Church three times on a Sunday as well as attending the Sunday School.

Rosalie Cottage had been built a few years before Harry rented the house for his new bride. It had been built as an add-on to two original, three story, semi-detached cottages, built at an earlier age. There were two rooms on the ground floor: the larger one being the living room containing the cooking range,

and the other, the parlour..., up-stairs, lead to three bedrooms off a landing. Outside, a lean-to extension housed a workshop, kitchen and scullery. The greenhouse used the extension as a back wall.

It was accessed from Perry Street by a bow topped wooden gate set in a flint wall capped by large upright stones... beyond... a brick path leads to the front door. The knapped-flint and brick cottages nestle in their gardens behind the garden wall, which runs round three sides of the plot... To the rear, the ground sloped up the hill... as previous mentioned Ivy Beviss lived next door with her son and next to her – by the road, lived the Culverwells.

These three terraced cottages rested on a spot where the open down falls away to lush meadows that lies in a valley – ‘coombe or combe’, sheltered from the west [ a word derived from cumb, *Old English* for ‘a valley on the flank of hill’].

The greater part of Tatworth had thatched roofed, timber-framed houses with lime washed walls over cob, [a mixture of soil, clay, straw and lime]... with tiny inserted windows. A cob wall is built up slowly... packed down, between boards or hurdles... each layer allowed to dry before the next built up before the boards removed – when the cob hardened. This was, in many circumstances, the method by which the enlargements of ancient hovels built- randomly along the track... usually of two bedrooms that had to cater for the large families of the period. Through extension, additional dwelling space built on... windows enlarged and roof spaces developed. None had main services until the water, piped to the village in the late thirties. Farm labourers were paid thirty shillings a week, and a carter with two horses to look after got thirty-eight shillings.

1927 was a year of, it seemed, continual rain. It was unceasing. The hay turned black trying to judge when it could be picked up. Even with hay drier, it was difficult. The farmers

waited until October and still there were few days of continual sun. The year before prices had been bad and the farmers account was low. Now the poor harvest compounded to make the position worse. There was a great deal of unemployment and a movement away from the land into the towns and cities.

The pride of the home was the new wireless, with its fretted front panel, glowing valves, waveband squeak and trailing aerial – powered by accumulator charged up at the local garage. The announcers, pedantically announcing *The King's English*, and the style of music, that of Edward German or Albert Ketelby. Like the rest of society, the programs were refined, precise and structured. As children we still played with our 'cat's whisker' and headphones, using a saucepan to improve the sound.

The main meetinghouse open to all was the Poppe Inn, before 1927, it was named *The County Inn*, or *Hotel*. Initially, in 1564, it was a cottage called *Culverhays* owned by John Bowdyche..., straw thatched roof with chamfered first floor beams, [a mark of quality], and inglenook fireplace. My grandad and his sons frequented its low beamed interior most nights, for at least a couple of hours. In the clubroom, they played skittles, dominoes or shove-halfpenny whilst drinking cider. Most of the men of the village joined them for at least one night of the week.

The pub, with cider at 2d a pint, provided a venue for the working men to meet – to discuss their jobs, the weather and all those other things which control their lives. The women and children were banned in the taproom and even in the saloon bar; it was very unusual to find a woman. The pub was the preserves of men. Women for the most part met each other whilst passing the gate – to gossip over the garden wall – invite neighbours in for a cup of tea – to read the tealeaves. There was sewing parties and mother's meetings but in the main women did not meet up in an organized fashion ant a particular venue.

The men were social, using the pub to remove themselves from the sounds of children and the insistent wife, who always needed help. The pub kept them in touch with the latest gossip and created a sense of kindred spirit... where the topic of conversation was the state of their kitchen garden, the troublesome weather and the success or failure of the weekend football or cricket match. It was a matter of great concern how well the village was doing in both these games and even though not everyone played all were most keen to hear that their village was represented successfully. At some point in the evening someone would start singing some well known folk song which would be accompanied by others joining in with comb-and-paper, penny whistle, and on a good night, a piano player. On a dark and windy night, when the fire was blazing well, you could here the jollity going on down the street, as the door opened to let in yet another caroller... bathed in a stream of warm light... to cries of hallo!

1931 was another bad year for rain fell all through the summer. It was wet throughout which was depressing enough without the national economy being under considerable strain. The Lord Chancellor ordered o compulsory wage reduction on all salary and wage earners. For a fifty-hour week, the labourers earned three pounds. Grandma tried to make up the shortfall by selling some eggs.

The police house in the village was not looked on as somewhere out of bounds but one of refuge and help. There was no serious crime only petty poaching, chicken steeling, pub brawls and the occasional robbery. There was just one policeman who walked and rode on his bike to check the roads, shops and houses. It was a matter of long hours of tedious work making sure that each day all of the area covered at least once. He had to check that the public house closed on time and that there was no bad behaviour and noise - created by the last ones to leave.

Every year the constable paid a visit to the school to talk to the children about not stealing or harming animals. It was a matter of showing his face and getting to know the children personally. The same applied to the sports field where he always strolled round to show support and interest. It was expected that he should put in an appearance at church at least once on Sundays. The village policeman found it was in his interest to meet as many village people as possible – to see them at work and in their home environment. It made his job easier to be on friendly terms especially with the leaders of the community.

Most of the workers in the village, if not directly associate with the land, had an interest in rural matters. Even those men working at the mill or dairy had relations who were agricultural labourers or knew someone connected with farm animals. It was a rural landscape and that would never change. To a man, they were all poorly paid even those who had authority or a skill had little more than their unskilled counterparts did. There is a certain binding of spirits when the majority were in the same boat – scraping a living. Their houses were mostly badly built, cold, damp and rotting. To keep them clean and dry was an uphill battle fought by the women. Gradually this picture changed until the First World War brought to a sudden end the *status quo*, which had been the position up to and during Victoria's reign. Then workers had rights and demanded a little more consideration. As their wages increased so did their horizons especially those who valued education...

The population increase in the late eighteen hundreds supplied labour for the new industrial society. For towns and villages that had no local factory or business - that required a large staff, the local young adults drifted away... there were only a few who were content to work in large houses or estates, the rest had to look elsewhere. With the technical advances made to agricultural machines, creating a knock-on affect to allied



engineering components manufacturers, who devised tools to mass produce small parts... there was a general interest in all matters technical. There was no part of society that did not feel the change and the young wished to take part in the 'new society'.

This disruption to the old order and the mobility of the young, particularly those using the facilities presented by the new railway companies, allowed a migration away from the country. The young factory staff, construction workers, ship builders and domestic servants provided a stimulus to marriage and home building..., which in turn, caused an increase in the birth rate. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were only fifteen towns with more than twenty thousand inhabitants... by the middle, there were sixty-three. At the turn of the century eighty per-cent of the population lived in urban districts with ten or more thousand in the first quarter of the twentieth century only ten per-cent of the population owned their own home. By the late thirties, it was twenty-five per cent.

These statistics amply demonstrate the energy generated by man producing more food. This began in the middle Ages, the protection of the nation's wheat harvest, and continued intermittently. The Corn Laws were repealed during 'The Great Irish Hunger'. There was a national need to produce more cheap food to make the country self-sufficient.

## CHAPTER V.

Six religious houses – The New Church – The churching for women – Health Warnings – Boer War - Social mores – Ridged rules of behaviour -

The workhouse – The General Strike – Tobacco smoking – Saving the rent  
– Managing the economy – Hobbies –

In close proximity, there were six religious houses in and around Tatworth - five were non-conformist chapels; all were built roughly within a generation of each other. In the first half of the nineteenth century, there were four lace mills in Chard and one in South Chard, busy producing lace [bobbin net] - using new technologies; the town was expanding. The generous act of Lord Poulett - donating land in Tatworth, enabled St Johns Church to be built - it was the last one; it is interesting to speculate how many others would have been built if that had been first? There is little doubt that the surrounding villages to Chard were developed rural hamlets and their inhabitants were poor - closely allied to the land... The hardships of their lives – low wages and large families, ensured they would stay so. Children were brought up strictly and ridged moral values preached. They were Christian if not always chapelgoers. Politically, the majority were radicals [extreme Liberals] – chartists and non-conformists - protestant dissenters who did not accept the views of the Established Church.

Even if the family were not frequent visitors to chapel or church, they accepted the accepted doctrine taught – about duty and honour. The older generation spoke about ‘one’s place’ in the order of things. The gentry were offered as examples of ‘the right way to do things’ – manners, habits, language and decorum. The Socialist Party and Trades Union were coming into being. The class structure clear in the country but confused in town. In the large houses and estates, snobbery ruled the different jobs.

This period, approximately covers Victoria’s reign, and the industrialization of Britain - had an enormous effect on its citizens. Once begun had a knock-on effect prompting great

scientific advances in almost every field. These created enormous building projects. Young people left the land to seek work in towns and cities, which demanded the building of houses and factories. As with all expanding societies, there were at the bottom an enormous number of poor, sick and handicapped people. The impetus of the expansion declined about the time of the second Boer War – about the turn of the nineteenth century.

As with all village or town life, you were either church or chapel; and usually the parents dictated this choice - if the parents did not attend one or other of them then their children might attend one of the Sunday schools. Anyone who did not attend any religious institution was considered beyond the pale... neither of these mixed with the other. The congregations, fetes, days out, celebrations and high days and holidays were spent apart. Both services had their own procedures – equally strict. Each regulated outside the village or town by their institutions – with their books, hymnals, collect for the day and flags.

Those of Tatworth who were Church of England had to face the journey to St Mary's of Chard to attend church. It had been a sore point for many years. Here they were the worshipers of the national religion having to put up with having to go all the way to Chard or else go to a non-conformist chapel. In 1827 a meeting had been arranged in the vestry to iron out the problem of too little seating. The unanimous conclusion was to have built a gallery. However, although this built it still did not meet the needs of the Tatworth parishioners. A further meeting found support for a mission chapel to be built, to accommodate all the Anglicans in Tatworth. The lord of the manor, Earl Poulett contributed a quarter of an acre of land and all the necessary stone for the structure plus fifty pounds. The Langdon family of Parrocks Lodge presented the east and south windows, both to honour his family. The building was designed by Mr Pinch of

Bath in the Early English style and cost £1,400, and the builder, Davis of Langport - created the building of local stone.

The foundation stone was laid in June, the year of grace for The Great Exhibition in 1851. The building was finished the following September to be consecrated by the bishop of Jamaica, who stood in for the bishop of the Diocese who was ill. At the ceremony, the congregation witnessed the chapel's first baptism. Just over eighty years later I too was baptised there only by then the chapel had become a church, and fully furnished.

The start of the consecration began when the bishop and accompanying clergy - and Tatworth's principle inhabitants, in procession from Tatworth Manor Farm, led all the assembled signatories. It was a grand occasion as they all filed into the church there met by the assembled congregation turning in their pews to welcome the notables in. Some of the congregation could not be accommodated the crowd was so enormous. They formed an aisle outside the great west door. After the service the bishop and those in the procession returned to Manor farm to be served with liberal refreshments

In 1860 John Payne , the lace mill proprietor presented an organ, and thirty years later Stuart King, the then vicar, carved a set of reredos and lectern which he kindly made and installed.

By an Order of the Church Council in 1866 a new ecclesiastical district was formed which created Tatworth Parish, a parish now of 1552 acres and a population of 852 souls. The mother church of Chard retained the right to nominate each new vicar who in 1851 was that vicar's son, Henry Bell Thompson who had been curate-in-charge of the mission chapel. In 1890, the church was called to attend to the funeral of the king of the gypsies, which was to become an annual service of remembrance, which was always well attended.

The village was served by the vicar whose first job was to gather about him his church committee then start the Sunday

school. Depending on his authority, he controlled the type of service... in conjunction with the organist, or choirmaster.

The Vicar, tried to make the morning service as popular as possible but jobs in the home and farm prevented a large gathering. The local gentry did attend matins, which may explain why there were so few workers. However, communion, for the confirmed, was straight after matins or morning service. Occasionally there would be an afternoon service if there was a christening or Mother's Day service. If those were not laid on, Evensong was at 6pm. The church was lit by oil lamps, which gave the interior a warm glow even on the coldest night. The flickering candles on the altar made a focusing point for the congregation.

After the service, the congregation stepped out of the church into the blackness with the cheery glow behind them. There was no traffic to worry about so the various families could make their own way home all walking in different directions calling out their 'goodnights'. There was no fear that anything dangerous was going to happen – it never did. Everyone hurried home to get out of the cold.

Towards the end of the expansionist period there was an immediate increase in family size, which created a population explosion. Churches and chapels benefited - their congregations increased. This religious fervour continued right up to the First World War. The horrors of that campaign were felt all over Britain, and certainly by the county battalions. When the war was over there were fewer men left and for those that were many had lost their faith. The many single parents that were available to go to church were trying to bring up a family - lacked time and energy. The numbers attending church or chapel never returned to pre-war levels.

Families usually sat in the same pew. The congregation entered the church to kneel down to say their prayers for

forgiveness - for any wrongdoing, before the service began. The collect for the day, or the days psalm, gone over in one's mind... and no one spoke. The service was known by heart as were the hymns... the sermon, always long and boring... the collection, a period of coughing and movement. It was forever the same... the Langdon's windows reflecting the spluttering candlelight and the decorated altar the only piece of colour. Fortunately, the heating managed by the sexton took the chill off the inside or it would have been most uncomfortable.

In the summer, it was usual for families to visit each other in rotation after the evening meal, which on a Sunday was the main roast of the week. The older folk would 'sit out the front' and converse with passers by.

A special service was said for 'The Churching for Women'. After having baby women would go to the church and the vicar would read the service, which would cleanse her – release her from sin.

At about the age of twelve children were confirmed, after which they could attend communion services. For several weeks the candidates would attend classes one evening a week. They had to memorise and recite the Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Catechism, The Lord's Prayer and various other psalms and collects depending on the vicar in charge. At the ceremony, the girls had to wear long white dresses, white shoes and veils. Boys wore their best school uniform. Each awarded a prayer book or hymnal.

Modesty was considered an essential part of life. Sex was never referred to, parts of the body not discussed, child birth a total mystery, climax had something to do with a car or fire pump, menstruation, even to women, a necessary evil, but nobody could quite explain why, masturbation made you blind and the Marquis d'Sade, all you could expect from a foreigner.

The picture commonly painted by artists of ‘rural idyll’ shows a quaint timber framed cottage, with unruly thatch, chickens running about, children playing with a kitten and mother sitting on a stool outside the front porch with her lace pillow. The colours were clean; the light bright and there was not a scar to be seen. It was a picture of bucolic calm - gracing many greeting cards. It was not like that at all. Most cottages were either converted hovels, rows of terraced factory homes or estate houses. They were not owned by the inhabitant but rented. Mains water was piped to the village in the thirties and electricity some years later and main sewers, some time after that. All had deficiencies relating to construction, few had any damp course, most were damp and many leaked. The community existed by ‘following dear old dad’ - there was little place for individual action or free thought... for, what is good enough for me is good enough for you. The dress code, hairstyle, meals, habits and pastimes, ‘as they had always been’ – predictable; anyone who deviated not accepted – a bit of a cad.

It was little wonder that there were many undernourished and sickly children in Tatworth village. Large families, little money coming in, and damp, draughty unsanitary homes, were bound to lead to colds and influenza. Chilblains in the winter sun-stoke in the summer and little understanding about personal hygiene all contributed to a poor physique. No one understood about the need for balanced meals and clean water. There were no inoculations or advertised health warnings. Hospitals if visited had to be paid for. If the family had previously paid into a penny a week health club or hospital scheme, then it was free. It was common for young children to have chicken pox, measles and whooping cough and cases of diphtheria and scarlet fever were rare. TB and glandular fever feared, whilst rickets and blindness not unheard of.

My grandmother had a number of stillborn children that needed to be baptized before burial. It was not unusual for pregnant girls to commit suicide rather than face the disgrace of being a single mother. Divorce was unheard of, not that many wished they could. The main reason for women not wanting a divorce was that the courts found in favour of the man - they retained custody, the home and all possessions. For men it was the shame and the cost. The main reason for discontent was the husband's drinking, leading to physical assault.

What made life at Rosalie Cottage so different was Rosa's ridged rules of behaviour - which she demanded from her children. There were few crises, life was structured along tried and tested paths. It may have been boring for nothing upset the ordered existence, but it was most certainly predictable - calm and ordered.

The society, prior to the turn of the nineteen-fifties, was disciplined. The majority lived by the law, the property owner and the employer. Over all would be the rules set out in the bible. Shame, honour, duty and integrity were qualities set out by parents, by example, the school - usually by motto, and church or chapel - by sermon. As most other people followed the same dictum, the qualities were reinforced.

All men wore a hat or cap summer or winter, it was the mark of a freeman - considered an essential part of daily dress. Women too put on a hat or bonnet when going out, wore gloves and did not think of attending church or chapel without wearing stockings. Men doffed their hats: when meeting a woman in the street, for prayers, Armistice Day parade, the National Anthem played or when a funeral cortege passed by... A death in the village was accorded closed windows, drawn curtains and black armbands. My father insisted that my brother and I should raise our caps to neighbours, their friends and elderly relatives. This ended very quickly when we copied our friends and stopped



wearing caps... but even then, we had to touch our forelocks. Eventually, even this mark of respect died out during the early part of the war... it was then that society changed - to be less formal; this was certainly so with our Victorian upbringing.

It was an ordered society where anything out of the ordinary feared. This was never more so than for the handicapped that were treated as odd, sometimes ridiculed and certainly not considered. Many at the turn of the century confined to the workhouse or mental institution. For caring parents of such children it was extremely difficult, for the state provided no help.

The majority who went out to work understood that no attendance meant no pay and even if one attended - if for some reason work could not be done, payment would be stopped. Rain would only stop work if the animal could not operate properly. Thankfully there was always maintenance in the barn or outhouse to tide one over and if necessary using the flail to produce chicken feed. In times when no money came in a loan could be arranged from the tally man or produce bought 'on tick'. Everyone used cash even the employer who paid weekly. It was considered a disgrace to be in debt and 'saving up' was the order of the day. Most homes had a number of tins where money was put for each article of expense - so much for the for the paraffin, the weekly shopping, the butcher and baker; the coalman and the rent. There was a good deal of swapping between the tins!

Individuals were extremely independent, especially my grandfather who would not accept charity in any guise. There were no social services or welfare relief other than a merger amount for the weekly insurance man there was nothing for a rainy day. Anyone too old or feeble ended up in the workhouse, if the family could not look after them. Workhouse inmates were expected to do some work in the cookhouse, laundry, or garden.

If too infirm, put into a special sickroom where the fittest fed the others. Because travelling was difficult, the inmates rarely had visitors, which made life that of a prisoner.

Chard had the nearest workhouse which was divided in casual and residential sections - casual for vagrants, usually ex-soldiers – some shell-shocked, who moved from place to place chopping wood for each before moving on. Residential, were long-term inmates, some children reared by the workhouse, other orphans, others pregnant – who had been thrown out of their home. The workhouse children were found work when they came of age others apprenticed or joined the services. The workhouse was provided with money from the rates, by donation or by benefaction. Life was hard not just, because money was short but by intent. It was considered that to earn ones keep was essential and that the harder life was the faster inmates made progress to leave – to make room for others.

During the depression – between The General Strike and rearmament for the Second World War - in the early thirties, large number of unemployed and displaced men roamed the countryside looking for work. They often slept in barns or outhouses and begged house to house. They were not abusive but filled with sorrow that they had nowhere to go.

In the early twentieth century most men smoked – it was considered unmanly not to; the whole action of: buying, unwrapping, lighting-up, holding, expelling, stubbing out and conversing, was part of society – even part of the social graces. In some cases, buying tobacco considered more important than buying food. Cigarettes and tobacco was issued to the services, they were used as barter, often as contraband or a bribe. The smell was considered sexy, masculine, homely and calming. Children collected cigarette cards and mounted them in books provided by the tobacco companies. They swapped them, stole them, collected the stubs, and made them. No male wishing to

ingratiate himself, enter into a group, start a conversation or feel at ease shunned the use of his cigarette case. It was part of life - promoted, advertised, issued, and welcomed.

Tatworth citizenry were lucky, not only did they have a lace mill employing, in good times, a hundred workers, but a thriving butter factory with room for twenty. It had a railway terminus with ancillary sidings and sheds, and a corn mill at Forton providing animal feed. There were shops, in Tatworth and South Chard, and at least two main employers of any number of agricultural workers. All these businesses required servicing with a wide range of skilled workers plying their crafts and trades. They, in turn, employed trained helpers, fellow workers, and apprentices. This was indeed a thriving community each person relying upon the other in their work and in the home. Amongst these were the local masons, carpenters, thatcher, and decorators. The carters, farm implement makers and smiths all combining to turn out carts, wagons, and buggies. The miller was relied on to turn the corn into flour, and the brick, tile and pipe maker, to provide the local building materials... some of his work lined the kiln for baking the lime and making more bricks. Many of these men turned their hand to other trades to affect a smooth flow of work throughout the seasons.

All these workers relied upon the work of a horse – mostly for pulling carts of farm implements, about their daily lives. They had been brought up with a knowledge and respect for its work and loyalty... for they knew they relied upon its power attending to its wellbeing. The local farrier and smiths were there to look village horses in sickness and in health correcting faults by applying the correct shoes. There were specialist smiths for shoeing, hammering out bent tools, sharpening tines, and making cranked handles for wells, gates, railings, and ornamental flower baskets. Ties for builders, chisels, and mending buckets... such a

variety of work it was sometimes hard to fit in making the hooped tyres for the wheelwright. The engineering shop down by the station sidings performed a service to the lace mill whilst providing smaller more specialised items for all the other trades.

In general, whilst the village worker received sufficient in his wage packet to pay his rent and provide food he was content. As soon as his wellbeing was disturbed by famine, pestilence or war he became questioning and unhappy. If he heard about others whether in the next village to nearest town, receiving more he became dissatisfied... this was particularly so of the young.

For much of Queen Victoria's reign the country was comparatively stable. What applied – to normal behaviour, habit, custom, and pastime at the start of her reign, continued until the end. The effects of enclosure, bad harvests, the coming of the canals, steam, and the railways all had some effect on countryside life but it was a filtered change - slow to take full effect. What brought about massive change quickly was The First World War and its aftermath, a period she was not to see. Things would never be the same again in Merrie England!

## CHAPTER VI.

Water Lake - The ford – The bridge - Perry Street - The Butter Factory – South Chard – Chard Junction - The Hardware Store – Shopping - The river bank – Cottage gardens – Village & Family Life – Kitchen garden – Chickens – Bread and

Jam for tea – By stile and path – Playing in the stream – Movement away from the village.

Harry Collins was lucky in his choice of home. Others had to go to the village pump or collect rainwater. Rosalie Cottage had an abundant supply of clean sparkling water that never dried up even in the hottest summer. The new family had their first child Foster Fred a year after they moved in, in 1892. Thereafter they were blessed by the birth of fourteen more children, two being twins, over the next twenty-four years. Eight eventually married and six died whilst still young.

The cottage was of later build than their neighbour's thatched homes, with a tiled roof, occupying a triangle of land between stream and road ringed on two sides by a low stall. The remaining side an eight-foot high grassy bank peppered with an abundance of meadow flowers and fern, which when young has bright green fronds. At its foot runs a deep but narrow, gravel-bottomed, fast flowing brook - fed by numerous springs. This also drains the water running off Storridge Hill – the highest point around, and Monkham Down. Close to the cottage, the brook's edge was lined with large stone blocks prevents the water overflowing when in flood. Just over the small lane at the bottom

of the garden was Mr Jaco Parriss' flint sided, tile-roofed cottage - put shape to the corner with Perry Street, built directly opposite the school, on the corner of St Margaret's Lane.

The brook, called 'Water Lake,' not a lake at all but a slow stream, provided clear, sparkling water, with its shoals of minnows and, lower down, watercress beds; gave fresh water for the household...whilst being a convenient refrigerator for milk and butter in the summer. Its waters irrigated the kitchen garden, filled the chicken's bowls and flushed the privies. Its rushing

waters were slowed, lower down its course, by widening out to give space for untamed horseradish, brooklime, marsh marigold and crowsfoot. Its waters and wetland harvest explains why the cottage might have been built there in the first place.

While our family were on holiday we boys, up early - when excitement refused to allow us to linger in a warm bed, were out in the garden drawn by the temptations of the stream. The early morning sun's rays caused the rounded pebbles laying at the bottom to shimmer... the stream with its crystal clear water appeared like cut-glass, so sharp the shapes. The water, corralled by the edging stones on one side and the bank on the other, passes the backs of the cottages to enter a large pipe - that takes the water under the road bridge, and onwards towards Axminster. This convenient water had another use; carts for farm and home use had wooden wheels, even though having iron tyres fitted. One of the purposes for village ponds was to keep the wooden wheels from becoming too dry - shrinking.

By turning left out of the front gate, you could follow the course of the stream under the road bridge - a ford when the road flooded. The fording place at the foot of the rise in Perry Street was wide and a water splash for the passage of carts. Above, the stone arched bridge, its parapets polished by the sleeves of countless travellers - carries the road that grandfather and his two sons took each evening... that led to the Poppe Inn. The water flows out of the pipe and swirls about creating a spreading pool - before the water - penned in once again, conforms to the line of the bank to continue its chuckling way towards the coombe.

Milk was always in plentiful supply; when my brother and I knew granddad he worked at the Wilts, United Dairies, butter factory, as did his son Hector, and had 'an arrangement' with the dairy. Anything extra came from relatives who worked on the land or neighbours whose gardens produce a surplus. The dairy

farm milked its own cows; filling the sterilized milk churns with fresh milk, to be delivered to each house in the village. The gaily-painted horse-drawn milk float – a two-wheeled cart open at the back with a step, for the driver holding the reins. It held a number of churns; the largest had a tap from which the white coated milkman, in formal peaked cap, filled the offered jug. When delivering to the door he carried the milk in a bucket, which he ladled out in pint or half pint measures. The horse knew the route and each house on the round... the milkman walked behind...

The farm worker's lunch consisted of cheddar cheese and a large slice of bread and pickled onions - to be eaten in the field being worked on, or in the barn, first putting the nosebag on his horse... The milkman, usually in two-pound wedges, also delivered the cheese. The food was mainly homegrown and seasonal coming from Grandad's kitchen garden. The diet never changed from one year to the next. It was fine when picked early in the season but proved to be hard tack later on when the beans old and stringy. What wasn't eaten went into the chicken bucket; they did not seem to mind!

Potatoes were the staple fare hardly ever mashed or roasted and not often cut up. They were plonked onto your plate with a knob of butter and liberally, tapped, knife-full of salt. The rhubarb bed provided a continuous supple - like the potatoes, great taken early but a bit hard, course and stingy later on. Soon after the main crop of rhubarb, came the red and black currants or granddads prize gooseberries that seemed to last and last – gooseberry pie, tart, fool, pudding and jam. New french green beans, runners, peas and mange tout.

The mushrooms from the field over the bank, the blackberries from the straggly hedge by the bridge and the wild apple up the lane next to the stile. Each year they gave their crop

for us children to pick grandma to cook. Whatever we brought home went into the pot. It was never wasted.

It was a regular meal, to have roast chicken, one of the flock, taken from the bottom of the garden. It hung outside the backdoor ready to be plucked. No one could strip a bird quite like grandma who had it done in a trice. When cooked my brother and I claimed a leg each and as a special treat the parsons nose.

The shelves in the lean-to kitchen were packed with kilner jars. Either empty ready for filling or bearing their contents like a chemists shop. Most would bare blanched plum, greengage or damson. The bead-fringed muslin lay over the sugar jar above the curly treacly-coloured flypaper swaying in the breeze from the open door. Bearing testify to their worth.

I close my eyes... imagine pressing the catch to the garden gate... start to walk up the brick path... Then, smelling the box hedge, step into the hall to be greeted by yet another smell - now what is it...? It is a comforting smell, perhaps of damp wood - slightly musty, could be old clothes. I go on... into the living room, now it's stronger, like a bonfire - of burnt wood and ash, with a hint of lamp-oil and tobacco...

There was no time to linger – to stand and stare. Grandma would not let you stand idle. There were the eggs to collect, the chickens to feed and the washing to put out. Have you cleaned your-shoes-put-your-pencils-away-hung-up-your-jacket-made-your-bed-and-emptied-the-pail... all said in a high-pitched cackle, with waved pointed finger like an orchestra conductor. There was no argument or discussion it was best to seek out grandpa in the shed and helps chop the wood.

Tatworth village shared shopping facilities with South Chard and Chard Junction. Boasting, amongst others,



Stoneham's Store the newsagent, the fresh fish man came always on a Friday, and there was Bradford's warehouse, that sold all sorts of farm implements and an assortment of ironmongery... Fowlers animal feed... then, by turning right out of the garden gate... up the road... past the school on the left, to Lacombe's Store [*Ken Larcombe, a saw sharpener, was married to Ivy, mum's younger sister*], close to the Baptist Chapel, where my brother and I bought our sweets – at a penny a bag! The days' choice selected from large colourful glass jars placed on numerous shelves, which ran round the inside of the shop – on all the walls... the better sweets, cost tuppence, weighed-out on antique brass scales, then, poured into cone shaped paper bags.

Further, up the road – over the bridge – lead to 'Crossways' – a name given to the meeting of several roads forming a five pointed star. In the centre of the road an imposing fir tree, similar to that planted in the churchyard, to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee 1887. The doctor's house rested on one corner... a large imposing house, which was named after the place. The most frequented hospital was the local cottage hospital... Doctors were reluctant to send patients, not wishing share their fees. They were expected to set broken bones, attend to all minor operations, dispense and run a surgery. The Post Office and Wellington's Stores supported two further corners... whilst on another, an orchard - with delicious apples.

Two farms close by; both with their own dairy supplied the dairy produce to the village. Board & Son, the butcher, slaughtered their own pigs delivered meat by Hackney - pony, and smart high dogcart, taking orders twice a week. The baker baked their own bread which they too delivered by cart. Stan and I made our way to Lacombe's Store for our gob-stoppers, sherbet lemons and dabs, acid drops, icing sugar cigarettes and liquorish pipes. They were shaken from large glass bottles into

the scales to be weighed out. Each of us had two ounces placed into cone shaped paper bags.

What motor cars there were in 1935 all had an interior of upholstered leather with carpeted floors; plaited silken hand straps, plated ashtrays and polished wood dashboards...? Many built with an open top, able to be covered with an erectable hood, with mica windows, called an open-top tourer. Although they had starter motors the battery was often too low on amps to turn over the engine, especially in cold, wet weather... thankfully all were provided with a starter-handles - tied up with a strap. When starting from cold the choke [butterfly valve in the carburettor used to stop the flow of air] had to be pulled out. Frequently this tended to return to the open position so had to be held out. This proved to be almost impossible if you were on your own and had to turn the engine over by hand... it was then a question of who could turn over the starting handle and race round the car before the choke went back. The battery was kept on the running board as was petrol can and a spare wheel. When travelling up a steep hill it was important not to stall the engine when changing gear for the hand brake was not strong enough to stop the car from rolling back. A block of wood in the back was kept handy for such occasions. As there were frequent fogs the windscreen was kept fully open to see the road ahead. This meant for a very cold journey.

Shopping for household items: clothing, materials, furniture and kitchen utensils meant a trip into Chard by horse and carriage, later there was a bus service, which allowed small items to be carried.

The roads and lanes were ditched regularly to drain the fields... many having their own spring and watercourse, to carry away the water to brook... stream and river. Most of the vehicles passing over the bridge travelled at the pace of the horse and cart.

In the meadows, further down-stream – towards the Coombses – where the sheep graze as they will in the hollows on the hill-side, the spring waters irrigate withy and osier-beds - the produce of pollard willow trees that provided the village with materials for green and brown – with or without bark, wand, switch, rods, poles and stave.

The edges of the bank are not clearly defined, the verdant growth of rich tufted grass soften the edges and provide a haven for the dragonfly. Here and there, is stunted and broken willow leaning over the water trailing their slender arms that causes the water to divert and reform? Rushes grow in clumps, which give colour, and diversity separates the decayed branches from weed and lily. The chaffinches and sparrows abound for they perch in their dozens chattering away giving a sharper top register to the drone of bee and click of the cricket. The ducks dabbled... to suddenly plunge tails-up to feed from the weed... or stood, on one leg, to appear asleep... made soporific by the sun.

The willow provides the villager with osier and withy but the field and roadside hedges contributed most for hedging stakes, fence poles and hurdles. The rich crowns of chestnut, hazel, ash and willow in the lanes tell of past harvests by itinerant Gypsies, bodgers, basket makers and woodworkers... whilst the stick maker eyes the furze, debating its worth. Each piece of woodland known locally for its special use. Birch twigs as strainers, split Beech for tent and clothes pegs and cut for chair seats, Larch for ladder poles, Oak for staves, Ash for hurdles, Hazel for wattle, Ash and Elm for wheels... all known - where grown and how accessible. Further away - behind the hills and valleys, the fallow deer graze, their young calling to their mothers... sounding like the cry of gulls... their fathers - the stags, round up their hinds burping and grunting like pigs!

Over the bank, that bordered the stream... and into the field - abundant with wild flowers, the damp tufted grass wetted

our knees and soaked our socks and shoes. There grazed the bull - its nose ring green and wet... guarding the tea-plate sized mushrooms ... that rewarded the brave early birds...!

During our summer holidays, my brother and I would go mushrooming with either Aunts Ivy or Florence [*Florence was grandmother's sister married to Uncle Wilfred in 1945... the same year Ivy married Ken Larcombe*] Ivy and Ken lived over the road in White Cottage, next to the school... their daughter was tragically killed in a cycling accident, when a teenager.

At the cottage mother would be helping grandma with the preparations for breakfast. The results of our gathering were taken from the trug to be eaten.

Cottages in 1935 had no cookers, as we know them today, fridges, washing machines, lights or electric heaters. There was no indoor sanitation, main drains, bathrooms or toilets; no tissue paper, gas or telephones, few cars... no aeroplanes flew overhead and no plastic, building blocks, composition wood and no masonry drills.

. Later, mother would take us gleaning - corn for the hens; picking damsons, blackberries and apples from the hedgerows for grandma to cook for dinner; then later on in the year cob nuts were collected to be dried ready for cracking at Christmas. We always had a slice of bread and butter with the pudding instead of custard or cream. In some instances, the tart was eaten before the main course to dull our appetites.

The garden, corralled within the four-foot, knapped flint wall – that flanked the road... gave space for three plots - one for each of the cottages. All held neatly grown vegetables, and flowers for the house... the varieties always are the same: larkspur, pinks, sweet-williams, wallflowers, hollyhocks, London pride and lilies. It was the wife's preservers to look after and plant the flowers for cutting.

The cottage gardens, at the turn of the twentieth century - in all country villages, did not boast a lawn, for the inhabitants had to make maximum use of the ground they had. Mowers were after all too expensive and considered a luxury. Perhaps there may have been a patch of grass, cut by a scythe or grass-hook that graced below the washing line, a play area for the children - where mother parked the pram, with the sleeping child...

The kitchen garden plots, for this was really what they were, became very fertile, through much labour over many years, plus: an annual dressing of swept chimney soot, a frequent scattering of road and field manure and applications of well-composted kitchen and garden waste... the result being 'finely textured and black'.

Many of the village cottagers were farm labourers earning perhaps £1.50 per week. It was almost impossible to maintain a family on such a low sum. That is why these gardens had to be productive - only had narrow cinder paths flanked by brick or tile. The man of the house worked the productive side of the garden and it was his job to see that a further crop - ensuring correct composting - allowed this to happen, followed on the produce harvested. Most of the villagers were in competition with each other to see whose plot was the most productive... this did not prevent seeds being exchanged or given away and cuttings passed on. Digging and sowing went on late into the evening making use of every moment...

In unison, the runner beans canes were formed 'in line', the onion sets proudly flew their flags of browning leaves and the earthed-up potatoes - perched on top of pin-neat banked rows, again, marching in serried ranks, just behind bushes of red and black current, gooseberry and wired raspberry canes. All these dietary delights were hemmed in, by a neatly cut, eighteen inches high box hedge. Even today, I cannot pass box without that scent reminding me of granddad's garden - a picture of

neatness and colour... Although the family had very little money, the garden landscape and ordered existence, declared continuity, rustic comfort and bucolic charm.

The possession and upkeep of a good vegetable plot - that produced vegetables all the year round, made good economic sense... that it will also form a creative pastime, an essential part of rural life. Necessary digging and planting regulated every month of the year -. Seeds had to be ordered and the ground prepared. Every part of the country, county and town had its own special produce - those things that grow best. You have only to look around at neighbouring plots and hedgerow to see what flourished. It is far better to ask established gardeners what fruits best, and when to plant out. Eventually you too will be an expert - on your particular plot. Do not forget, the greenhouse and cold frame are necessary adjuncts to any vegetable garden... for it saves money, labour and time to prepare your own seedlings... At the end of each growing cycle, a selection of each vegetable should be set aside - to provide seeds for the following year... cutting, dividing and layering would also multiply your stock. This sound advice was followed and advocated by my granddad... one of his daily topics of conversation; the only other, was a comment on the weather that, whatever the barometer declared, 'Was detrimental to good health and sound crops...'

Looking out of the front door - to the right, just behind the privy, lies a small orchard - bearing desert apple, pear and plum... each contributing their own delicate blossoms in late spring - before the bulk of the flowers display their blooms - each to their part in the flowering season. Up against the garden wall, hidden by the trees, the compost rots... those parts the chickens fail to peck... The garden provides vegetables and fruit for the whole year... augmented by the fruits of the hedge.

Chicken runs take up the bottom of each plot, fenced off with wire - the nesting boxes built-up to form a backdrop to each garden end backing onto the stone boundary wall, which separated the street and side lane, from the garden.

Most people in the country kept chickens. Special containers were kept in the kitchen, or just outside, for the hen food. They were fed twice a day once with corn and once with all the meal leftovers. The grit, to keep the yolks and shells strong, was to be found by the hens from the ground. The eggs were collected in a bucket from the straw filled nesting boxes each morning. Fresh straw lined the boxes to keep the eggs from breaking and to give the hens a nesting bed. Most popular breeds were White Leghorns and Rhode Island Reds. A cock bird was in charge of the flock otherwise the eggs would not be fertile. All the other cocks would be penned up and fattened for eating.

Sharing the chicken run was a duck. It made no difference to the chickens who continued to cluck and scratch around in their dust holes. The duck, which happened to fly down one day and liked what he saw, waddled about seemingly unaffected by a different breed. He washed in the chicken's water bowl and ate the same meal. Eventually, I am sure, he thought he was a chicken... stayed there for as long as I can remember.

Rosalie Cottage had the largest share of the garden for it was the end cottage and the boundary wall circled around the line of privies – one for each property – all faced south. Each privy had a wide, scrubbed, wooden seat on top of the box, with the closet running to a cesspit. The latched, ledged and braced, door was short at the top and bottom to aid ventilation and the interior walls were lime washed. Strung on string were neatly torn leaves of newspaper - to act as toilet paper. High up in the corners were large cobwebs that were home to, what seemed to my childish imagination, enormous hairy spiders. Bricks had been laid on compacted bare earth, which, over the years moss

had grown in the joints, made the floor soft to walk on. A bucket was kept handy to pour down the hole - each user had to fill the bucket from the stream for the next person. In the winter, a hurricane lamp was kept by the backdoor for lighting the way. Outside the privy grew an elder to help keep the flies away... a sprig of elder was also used for horses, for the same reason, and kept under the horses' bridle.

Country sanitary arrangements included at that time using pail-closets, ash-boxes, ashbins, midden-privies and wet and dry middens. It was not until the 1950s that all these simple arrangements began to be replaced with flushed closets.

The lichen and moss pointed brick path from the front-gate continues right round the house, past the wide, solid front door and the espalier trained pear-tree, to a door in a lean-to workshop and wood-store. On the other side of which, separated by a wall, is the kitchen.

In the lean-to was to be found all the necessary garden tools, baskets, bicycles, stacks of firewood and in pride of place my granddad's military helmet. The shed held Harry's grandfather Phillip's shoe mending, iron-trees, embedded in large tree stumps... and still used, and the winter fruit store with boxes of newspaper wrapped apples.

In the autumn, the outhouse was cleaned and the pickling jars washed and sterilised. Eggs, put-down in Isinglass, walnuts hodded, dried and stored, apples and pears wrapped in newspaper, root-vegetables stacked and covered with straw and beans placed in salt. Herbs dried, soft fruit made into jam, tomatoes pickled and plums made into chutney.

Attached, to the side of the lean-to, was the greenhouse, which displayed a line of dried out tomato plants and my grandfather's rocking chair. Cobwebs abounded in every corner displaying numerous skeletons of flies. I do not think the potted tomato plants were meant to be particularly productive...the



greenhouse was my grandfather's funk hole – to get away from the family – it was either this or 'the club'. The water butt stood outside the greenhouse and quite often, this water was used to rinse hair after washing because it was so soft.

The kitchen 'out back' was accessed from the parlour with its own backdoor, [with tiny single pane window], leading to the garden and the brook. Hung on a hook is a dull green length of seaweed - to tell the weather.

Of no more than eight feet by seven, with a sloping roof and brick floor, the kitchen catered for many; at its back room provided for the clothes washing copper boiler raised up on a brick plinth.

The cooking was done on individual paraffin burners - any baking or roasting then the parlour range was used. The butler sink had a wooden draining board and the waste ran to a cesspit. The rest of the room was taken up by hanging pots and pans arraigned around the walls. It was all rather primitive but the cooked results, although simple fare - eaten with relish.

The Sunday joint would yield a bowl of dripping to use on toast or bread, instead of butter, chunks were put round the next joint to be cooked, or used for pastry or dumplings. Dripping was never wasted. As there were no refrigerators, food had to be cooked almost at once and in hot weather the milk boiled. There was no farm collection of milk in the twenties and no pasteurising so it was literally from cow to customer transported in a churn from the dairy and ladled out... bottled milk was available but by ladle was cheaper.

Boxes of Sunlight soap kept on a shelf together with bluebags and starch; black-lead with brushes for the range and a whitening stone for the front door step. From this shelf hung the cooking utensils - the blackened frying pans and battered saucepans... there, too, hung the battered, steep sided pan that

held simmering milk, the skimmed surface curds, removed - to make the clotted cream.

All the preserves were homemade using the fruit and vegetables from the garden. The meat from the butcher; the milk delivered straight from the dairy, as was the butter and the cheese. During the war granny, mixed margarine and butter together with wooden butter knives... shaping the patted result into a roll. This was to save money and eek out the ration coupons.

In one corner of the outhouse was a round boiler, on which, large wash pans or coppers were heated once a week to do the washing; extra soiled washing soaked overnight, and scrubbed, before putting into the boiler... to be pummelled with the dolly. After boiling the clothes taken out of the pan with a wooden spoon and put into a bucket of rinsing water... After the first rinse the clothes wrung out and rinsed again, and perhaps, even for a third time with a cube or little cotton bag of Ricketts blue dye dissolved in it - to whiten the washing. Back into the mangle for a final pressing then hung to dry. The washing line, stretched from the house corner to the nearest corner of the privy. It was a belief that a bluebag held against a wasp or bee sting would take any pain. The coloured articles went through the same process using a cooler water temperature. The mangle with its large wooden rollers was kept next to the greenhouse door.

When the clothes dry, they were collected from the washing line sorted and ironed on a stout linen cloth, laid on the living room table. There was a selection of flat irons for different purposes, in the main though; it was a favourite pair that was placed on the hinged plate over the fire. These were used alternately. Gophering irons for rounded pleats went out of use in the twenties although still used to curl hair. The irons were left on the hearth to cool before being put back into the scullery.

For my grandad's stiffly starched collars - used for best, the ironed result kept in a special round box kept on the top of his wardrobe. These collars were attached to the shirt by a small stud. There were no shirts with collars attached before the 1930s. Thereafter, the 'soft-collar' became available for casual wear but still needing a collar stud front and back. It was during the Second World War that attached collars came into being - normal dress for men, shortly afterwards, a permanent fashion.

For washing-up the crockery, an enamel bowl was used in the butler sink... soda, sprinkled into the water, helped dissipate any grease, there being no washing powder or liquid soap... perhaps a block of soap was pared down to help the process. All housework was done in strict routine. One of the weekly events was to sharpen and clean the knives. The knife blades were made of polished steel, not stainless, and had to be cleaned with emery cloth... if this was neglected the blades would rust. The range then treated with black-lead and the fender and fire irons cleaned - with wire wool. Brass doorknobs, fingerplates and lamp bowls cleaned weekly, so too the windows and pictures. Paraffin lamps filled daily, using a funnel, wicks trimmed, and the glass chimneys' washed. Although workers homes were poorly decorated and furnished, great pride was attached to cleanliness and neatness, no home was smarter than my grandmother's!

The imposing panelled front door was painted leaf-green, which set-off the brightly shone brass knob. Opening inwards - to the right, the door lay open, propped open with a large cast iron dog... Linger awhile... take a last glance at the flower beds on either side of the front door and there, beyond the large stone door step, neatly laid as a border, a small box-hedge. In the beds are sweet williams and marigolds, in February, snowdrops and crocus. Now... smell the air, it is filled with the unforgettable smell of box... the sweet william just distinguishable..., in the distance the ticking clock invites you in.

Before you do so, you observe... a small hallway, off which - on either side, further doors. The one on the right leads to the parlour, behind the open front door, and to the left the living room. Straight ahead, leading upwards ranged the stairs, narrow and devoid of covering. They are scrubbed white, with stained brown edges.

Stepping inside a couple of paces, you mount the stairs, clasping tight to the banister... taking good care not to make too much noise on the uncarpeted boards. At the top, a small landing gives you access to three bedrooms... all with sash windows looking out onto the front garden.

All the bedrooms have brass bedsteads and knitted bed covers - in colourful squares. The mattresses were similar to the palliases I used when camping with the Boys Brigade - but stuffed with feathers not straw, which, as always, dipped in the middle... Over all, an eiderdown, made the coldest nights snug and warm. Each room had a washstand - bearing a large china bowl, jug and soap-dish - ranged on the top shelf. At either side, hang two pink towels on rails. On a lower shelf, two chamber pots - handles, pointed to the side, this completes the arrangement... The chamber pots, plus the water from the bowl, were emptied into a slop pail, hiding its contents beneath a wooden lid. This was done every morning by my grandmother - who cast their contents into the drain outside the back door. A small rug, with indiscriminate floral pattern, lay at the side of each bed. The wood floors - stained and polished, in keeping with popular fashion, were complimented by the small rose-printed wallpaper and painted skirting. The rooms were simplicity itself, in keeping with the rest of the house and inhabitants.

When the evening games were over there was a general movement around the table, as things were cleared away. The next day's breakfast was prepared and the fire set-up - to draw

gently during the night. Both my uncles and grandfather arrived home from the Poppe Inn, and were enjoying their last smoke outside... you could hear them outside discussing who won the last game.

The following day the family would be off to see Mother's Sister Ada who lived in Bridport with husband and daughter Sheila. At Easter, time wild daffodils grew in profusion along the overgrown lanes. Later the bluebells adorned the glades in the woods - carpeted with their sky blue colour. My mother's passion for wild flowers which gave just as much delight as the flowers at home; she told us tales of her childhood picking the kingcups, cowslips, foxgloves and all the other delicate flowers so tiny buried within the tufts of grass. The cliff top walks to the top of Thorncombe Beacon to see Lyme Bay revealed below. The Pilgrims Way and the ancient village of Stanton St Gabriel, remains just showing behind the headland. The cliff top grass was soft, springy, and full of downland flowers. The lark would soar up singing in the sky watching where you went. Dorset was so full of surprising churches and ancient sites, delightful villages where the broad accent rang out true - unashamedly deep and melodic. The stroll along the pebble-strewn beach all the time looking for traces of prehistoric monsters and footsteps of Neolithic man. At the end of the day a lovely tea on spotless white cloth and the best chine and then home back to grandma... another magical part of our holiday.

We boys, cajoled to drink our hot milk faster, tried to see the faces in the fire, as we watched the last soldiers - the burning soot, gradually retreat up the fire back. Meanwhile, the candles, in their brass holders, were being lit and the stone hot water bottles filled - to be buttoned up in their felt jackets... All the rooms other than the parlour were lit with tallow candles. The butcher made up the tallow from strips of fat.

Then, up the creaking stairs... guided by the candle's flickering flame – caused by the guttering wax - we cast our own ghostly shadows on the walls. As a door slammed outside the wind whistled round the eaves... it was strange how suddenly the candle flame would almost go out as a hidden puff of wind blew! It needed no urging us to get into bed, as fast as we possibly could... to hide under the bedclothes. The overly soft mattress sagged in the middle rolled us into the middle, we turned away... the candle snuffed... the hurried prayer:

*There are four corners to my bed,  
There are four angels at its head,  
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
Bless the bed that I lay on.*

Mum's footsteps faded - causing the stair treads to creak once more, gradually died away... the beds springs stilled, all was quiet...

Waking – heralded, by cooing doves and crowing cockerel, my eyes focused on faded, flowered wallpaper, fluttering lace curtains and my ears detected the noise of grandma riddling the parlour fire. The poker dropped against the brass fender... it was time for getting up. It did not take us boys long to get down stairs... the stream beckoned attendance... we were never in mind to disappoint it... as we struggled into our still damp shoes - from the day before...

All country cottages had a constant fight against damp. It had no cellar nor was damp-proof course - the ground floor on a level with the outside garden. Other than the lean-to kitchen and scullery, whose floors were of sandstone brick laid on compacted soil, the rest of the ground floor rooms had flagstones. These were quite uneven and in some places loose. These were scrubbed and remained damp even on the warmest of days.

There were no floor coverings except before the fire and at the side of the beds. Because the banks of the stream was slightly higher than the floor level of the cottage, although several feet away, there was a permanent rising damp problem. Two cast-iron down pipes lead from the gutters to soak ways back from the house.

The parlour: leading off the tiny hall, was to the right of the front door. An eleven-foot square room furnished in an Edwardian style with lace and chintz. The curtains: masking the edges of the sash windows were partially pulled back leaving the room dark and intriguing. The carpet, somehow, never imprinted its colour nor was design on my mind... hidden under many pieces of furniture of highly polished dark wood, which included a whatnot and other small tables draped with lace held in place by a highly glazed pot holding a fern and dried flowers. The walls hung with faded engraved prints of cattle and highland scenes framed in dark wood; a mirror framed in ornate gilt hung over the mantle piece. I do not remember the room ever being used...

The living room... onetime the kitchen too, was to the left of the front door and hallway. It was a large imposing room running from the front of the house to the back. It held an enormously heavy oaken table - which could be extended, perched on thick turned legs planted firmly on the stone slab floor. Over the table was spread a green-baize, fringed-tablecloth, which almost touched the floor. Single chairs, with their turned back posts and stretchers, darkened by frequent applications of beeswax and polished by much use, were tucked under the table. Behind four chairs, a line of coat hooks screwed into the sidewall. From these hooks hung all the family's jackets, coats and scarfs, all hidden by a heavy green curtain, which hung from a pole close to the ceiling to the floor. There must have

been a love for green by my grandmother, much of the soft furnishing were that colour.

The large oil lamp, hung over the table, had its wick trimmed, bowl filled and glass chimney cleaned every morning. It's warm gentle light emitted a flickering glow in the evenings... whose beams, hardly touched the furthers extremes of the room; the spluttering wick drew a circle of soot on the ceiling and perfumed the whole house with it's familiar burnt oil smell.

There was a small deep-set window in the front wall behind granddads chair, its curtains drawn back at the bottom. The ledge was always filled to overflowing with books and papers, which prevented the window ever opening... its intended task not given a chance even on the brightest of days!

The low ceiling and exposed beams were covered in various artefacts from: an ancient sword, drying mint, horseshoes, mousetrap hanging from a hook, and resting on a wooden shelf the stub of a candle.

Dominating the room, the great fireplace takes up the whole of the centre of the sidewall. The brick chimneybreast - forming the bulk of the cottage structure, supports the floor and joists. The range, probably a Bodley of Exeter of more recent times, is built into the back of the fireplace - its iron flue and canopy leads up into the chimney. Bread had been made in it and meat baked, both giving the room a homely smell... Above all, a large, chamfered, and smoke darkened beam, supports the breast - from which a short curtain hangs... to prevent smoke billowing out into the room.

Above this ancient beam is a bracketed mantle-shelf, which carries an ancient French clock... It ticks away the hours... Behind the clock, a walnut framed mirror hangs reflecting the green curtained opposite wall. The remainder of the shelf houses the household's spare-change box, a couple of porcelain ornaments, granddads pipe and tobacco, fire lighting spills and a



used candle in a brass holder. There on the shelf, prominent even to the casual observer, a special box marked, 'For the burial club', received its sixpence a week with a ritual nod of grandads head, in recognition that he had made another week to continue the fund...!

Emitting a plume of steam... a large blackened kettle sits on a hinged, fretted iron-plate - over the fire..., hissing gently. The kettle was there all the year round, day and night... filled always to the top ready for immediate use - for making tea or washing.

Our meals were all cooked in a large iron pot suspended from a bar set into the chimney. Meat of all persuasions, puddings, and vegetables all put in together, the potatoes held within a string cloth prevented from mixing with the pudding. On special occasions, we had roasted meat. Grandma twisted a skein of wool to make what she called a twisting jack fixed to the mantle shelf. It was our job to see that it did not stop spinning. Occasionally grandma retwisted the jack to set it in motion again. Bacon the most common meat. The eggs came from the chickens at the bottom of the garden and milk from the farm at the crossroads.

Logs, stacked on top of the side-ovens and either side of the hearth - dry off... a sweet pungent smell pervades the room...; a brass-studded bellows, hangs from a nail, and there, on the opposite side, the warming pan - its polish brass reflects the flickering fire. The objects have been there for years... lovingly polished and dusted... now having a right to their place.

Numerous nails, some of enormous size, protrude from the fire surround... the family long since forgotten why they were put there. To the left side of the fireplace a shelf carries the ancient wireless worked from an accumulator, above, a bookshelf filled with novels of long past authors...

To the left of the fire, in front of the window, was a large rocking chair clothed in chequered knitted blanket and cushions of deep red...my grandfathers. To the right, 'a smoker's chair' – an oak wooden carver with curved horizontal arms, turned vertical rails and curved back. Colourful knitting and needles tucked down beside the arm; the whole, softened by a crocheted multi-coloured seat cushion... declared reservation - for my grandmother.

The back wall was almost totally taken up by a welsh-dresser, behind which the shove halfpenny board was kept. Plates lodged upon the shelves and cups hung from brass hooks. Its solid construction and much used appearance gave it a status undeserved by its value... upon its broad shelf resided the salt and knife box.

A hearthrug, framed one side behind the fender, and much pitted with scorch marks, set the two chairs apart. No one, other than granddad or grandmother, ever sat on those chairs!

It was quite impossible to read at night... the paraffin lamp, suspended from the ceiling, cast its wavering chequered light across the ceiling... its halo of light cast upon the table, leaving the outer extremities of the room in darkness. All those present, except my grandfather - who sat staring into the fire smoking his pipe, played whist, dominoes or shove-halfpenny?

Whatever the season the room was always dark and smelt of burnt wood and lamp oil... and depending on the time of day, smoke from grandfather's pipe. His habits were as ordered as the clicking clock. Every movement, action and breath tried before and found fitting. Nothing disturbed the ritual through the day. The clump of his boots on the stairs - both morning and night, gave voice to the time of day. I only ever saw him with a collar and that was in my parents wedding photograph. He was undoubtedly the king of all he surveyed – outside the home, his

rule was law, inside however, my grandmother ruled the roost. It was a standard held firm in most country homes...

The living room had a comfortable feel - secure and warm, with the ever-lighted fire flickering in the hearth. The front door and the two ground floor inner doors panelled to the same design, six-foot high, three feet wide and at least two and a half inches thick, sporting large brass doorknobs. Like the house and the people within built to last.

In the morning, those awake hear doves cooing to each other from the school roof... as the thin pale sun lights up the garden. The scent of lavender, box and honeysuckle begin to percolate the air whilst a spiral of smoke starts to trickle up into the sky. A blackbird sings and the cock crows... grandma rakes the fire and clatters the pots. All this heralds another day just like all the others...

Prior to smokeless fuel, all chimneys had to be swept annually to prevent chimney fires. This was even more important if the house was thatched. Most villages had their own chimney sweep that included selling manure in slack periods. It was normal for the sweep to inquire if the soot were to be taken away or left - to spread on the garden to prevent slugs. As the annual visit coincided with the cottage spring clean - the most popular period, he was always fully booked up. All the ladies of the village saw to it that they had their slot well booked up ready for the annual spring-clean a time had been set by grandma for the last day in March - a Monday. The previous evening the fire was allowed to die out and the hearth cleaned, removing all the usual paraphernalia that littered the range and fireplace.

The sweep appeared early the next morning his cart announcing his prescience as it was trundled to a noisy clattered outside the gate. All the furniture had dustsheets draped over them and the most important sheet of all was arranged by the sweep before the fireplace. The round bristle broom was inserted

and the process begun – as the sweep jerked the broom up and down gradually lengthening the handle as the upper reaches of the chimney was penetrated... At last, with a jerk, the passage of the brush became easy and the sweep rushed outside to check that the brush had reached the top and was sticking out of the chimney. It was then, as the brush lowered, that the main work was done. Gradually the brush lowered until with a thump, the range was covered with soot and the brush appeared. Now the remains of his labour were collected up in several bucket loads. The price for the job had included whether or not grandad was to receive the soot for the garden. Each bucket load was taken outside and several piles appeared on the vegetable plot to be scattered and dug in or retained to deter slugs. With a nod from grandma, the cleaning job done to her usual high standard and the sweep disappeared for another year. Now, the annual spring-cleaning could begin...

Rosalie Cottage, in company with all the other village houses, held its annual spring-clean. No family admitted that this celebration of the end of winter was not carried out. The rugs and carpets taken outside to be slung over the washing line to be beaten. Net and lace curtains washed and hung out... windows cleaned and woodwork painted. Floors polished and walls distempered. All the sweeping by broom and dustpan... the flagstone floors scrubbed on hands and knees. The feather beds hung out of the windows to air. All the work in the house was done in the mornings leaving the afternoons for preparing the evening meal, bottling, pickling, jam making, sewing, knitting, and socialising with neighbours and friends. Another year was about to begin with the cottage clean and bright.

My brother and I could' nt wait for our next visit: the expectations, the packing, the trip to Waterloo station - and the express steam train; to renew our battles with the stream, collect mushrooms, and to go to bed with a candle... whilst listening to

the call of the bats and owls ever on guard... as the fox checked to see if the chicken run door was closed...