

WILLIAM GEORGE MILLIAMS

This is an autobiography of William George Milliams 1877-1971. The folder was found at the Dartford reference library. July 1994. Any comments made in [] are my input, B M Edwards. The script seems a bit random, and it seems that somebody else may have had some input.

The first section was in type.

Born at Green Street Green, Dartford, Kent, on Easter Sunday 1877 of parents George & Charlotte Milliams nee Ludlow who were both born in the same parish of Darenth, in 1853.

The cottage in which I was born was a single decker of two rooms, at the rear of four thatched and boarded houses, all of which have since been pulled down.

When I was two years old, my father, who was a thatcher moved into a brick house next door called Ivy Cottage. From this house I was sent at the age of three as a pupil to a Kent Board School, it was built in 1876, one year before I was born. The School was only 50 yards from Ivy Cottage, and was managed by two sisters by the name of Stocks, whose father was late of "The Home for Little Boys", Farningham. [South Darenth in the borough of Farningham at the time].

As my father was a thatcher, when making splints for his work, he used to make bundles of firewood as well. I can remember pushing my little barrow full up with 7 bundles of firewood as well for 3d., to the school Teachers house every Saturday.

I was 6 years old when my parents sold their home to take over housekeeping for his employer, Mr. Henry Goodwin of Lanes End, whose wife had recently died in Guy's Hospital. I then had to attend the Kent School Boards School at Lanes End.

There was also on this site a Presbyterian Church and a Manse built by a Mr. Morton, who owned Gore Farm. He was a Scottish gentleman, and his tomb is just inside Darenth Church yard gate. He also built a residence for his sister. This house is known as "The Chestnuts".

Since this Lady's decease, three other tenants known to us have lived there. A Mr. Finch, a Mr. Ward and Mr. Urban Judge, who was followed by his sons, Mr. George Judge and Leonard, who has long been clerk to the parish council.

It was at this house for a gentleman named Mr. Ward, I was employed as gardener after my apprenticeship of three years to Mr. Alfred Norton of East Hill, Tufnall Road Nurseries, Dartford. I was then seventeen years of age. Mr. Ward was a retired business man from Addison Road, Olympia, London.

In 1887 the names of the other thirty-five tenants living in the villiage of Lanes End were as follows:

The Fox and Hounds-Mr. Gransden.

| | | | |
|---------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| J. Chapman | F. White | W. Cook | A. Bevan |
| Tip Whiffen | R. May | H. Mumm | Mr. Carlos |
| D. Anderson | Stoneham | S. Munn | E. Diamond |
| J. Hodge | Williams | C. Fry | Jim Webb |
| G. Shepherd | Meopham | Edwards | Albert Osbon |
| J. Smith | A. Chapman | T. Taylor | Bob Eyles |
| Harry Goodwin | R. Ludlow | T. White | Dody Meopham |
| Jack Hunt | E. White | J. Coomber | Whip White |
| G. Hood | Treadwell | | |

The method of burials among the more humble parishioners would be the coffin carried from the house to the grave by six of the men of the village in relays of about 500 yards, a long black pall would be thrown over all; or the village carpenter and wheelwright, who usually made the coffin and carried out the funeral, would provide a horse-drawn vehicle and also assist the clergy. The undertaker would walk in front of the procession wearing a long black coat, a tall black hat around which was tied an enormous black bow. The cost would average about 80 shillings [£4] all in. The carriers were voluntary "or perhaps two pints of beer".

Secondly, why I am a "Man of Kent" is because both my mother and father were born at Green Street Green, Dartford, Kent in 1853. They were married at St. Margarets church in 1875, and I was born in April, 1877.

My father was the youngest of seven children born to Richard and Mary Milliams at the little hamlet of Maiden Elms, Green Street Green. My father had his own house built there in 1894, 2, Valley Cottages.

My wife's parents were born in the Greenhithe and Swanscombe districts. They were married at Gillingham Kent, eventually moving to Green Street Green and employed by Mr. Alfred Treadwell of Manor House Farm.

At the age of eighteen I started courting my future wife, a Miss Alice Ledger. We were both in the choir at that time at St. Luke's church of England. The Rev. G. Whitstanley Bancks M.A. was the priest in charge.

At about this time the Kent School Board was taken over by the County Council, and the new schools were built at Maiden Elms, Green Street Green. The staff of teachers were transferred to the new premises. They were:-

Mrs. Sanders taking the infants.

Miss Rosa Ware the first class.

Miss Sarah Taylor the second class.

Mr. Sanders the head teacher taking the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh classes.

All these were mixed classes.

Tenants names living at Green Street Green, Darent in 1890:-

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Dr. Armstrong | George Milliams | Mr. Brown | Mr. Summers |
| Mr. Pointer | Mr. Cowell | Mark Ludlow | John Ludlow |
| Mr. Muggeridge | Mr. West | Mr. Hart | William Ludlow |
| Mr. Venurer | Tom Whitbread | The Rev. Bancks | Mr. Hall |
| Mrs. Carter | Mr. Phillips | Mr. Durling | Mr. Ashby |
| Mr. Dolding | Mr. Webb | Mr. Radley | Gravy Baker |
| Mr. Arnold | Mr. Ledger | Mr. P. Hassell | Mr. Butler |
| Mr. Latter | Mr. Thomas Gray | Mr. Brett | Mr. Crowhurst |
| Mr. Ware | Mrs. Humphries | Mr. Bennett | Mr. Cutred |
| Teddy Lee | Mr. Ludlow | Mr. Beering | Miss Stocks |
| Mr. Wallis | Mr. White | John Hull | T. Ludlow |
| Snobby Wallis | John Milliams | | |

My young lady and myself had grown up together in the villiage of Green Street Green and had attended the Board School for which we had to pay two pence per week.

When I left school at 14, I was granted 40s. [£2] for passing into ex VII [ex 7th ?] under a certain age. At 18 I was the first uniformed postman to deliver letters to Bean, Stonewood, and to one house in Darent Wood, "a Mr. Ruskin, Game Keeper, to a Mr. Collyer, Southfleet".

My wage for this was 12s. per week, and included clearing the Bean

letter box at 6pm.

In my spare time I was gardener to Mr.Percy Hassel at the Clock House, Darenth.[an impressive old house opposite the "Ship Inn"at Green St. Green].

My girl friend at that time was parlour maid to Mrs.Hassel in the "Good old days" at £10 per year.

A subterranean passage runs from "The Ship" public house where "The Kent Sheriff`s Court was held" to the Sheriff`s home and dungeons which can be seen , known as the Clock House. A plaque set in the wall of the brick stairs of the dungeons is dated E.D. 1672.

Sir Edmund Davenport was the Sheriff at that date. His name is carved on the chancel steps in the parish church of Darenth St.Margarets, to which "Hasted" [a well known historian] says he was a great benefactor and no doubt was buried there.

The Wesleyan Chapel at Green Street Green 1870 `airea` [?] was built by a George Peat, with a grocers shop on one side and a dwelling house which he named "Eleazer Cottage". On the other side of the chapel he built another which he named "Elnathan Cottage". Both Biblical names given by a strict nonconformist.

All his family and servants had to be in his house for prayers at 10 o`clock every morning. Sunday services were held 3 times on Sundays.

My father often preached and prayed, he also had his own class of teenage girls. Three times on Sunday he would walk from Lanes End to Sunday services at Green Street Green.

The little church of St.Lukes, Green Street Green was built on the green some 100 years ago [I assume about 1867] on the boundary mark of both Stone and Darenth parishes for the use of both.

The Rev. Bancks and the Rev. Gibbons were the two "curator in charge" most of the time living at Durham House opposite. Trees were planted around the church, and when they grew up to the roof sides and the boughs banging in the strong winds on to the corrugated iron of which it was built, it was impossible to hear the sermon. The church seated about 60, and if you were late you had to stand, and that was often. The trees are there yet but the church has gone. Rotted floors, doors stolen if fell into rust and decay, and was sold to a buyer as old iron. Once the pride of our village and we have never had much to be proud of. [The original St.Lukes church was built just to the Longfield side of the Ship Inn, later, the building almost opposite Shellbank lane was used as a church & sunday school. This was also known as St.Lukes].

The Rev.Bancks M.A. "Priest in Charge" of this church was a great apiarist, owning at one time 100 hives of bees, selling the honey, and by writing books and by his cheerful disposition made himself very popular in the village.

The Rev. Charles Gibbons too, was also a great favourite among us.

The organist at St.Lukes was a Mr.Gibson, instructor to the boys of the naval training ship stationed on the Thames at Greenhithe "The Arethusa". He was our choirmaster, and I had two years of lessons by him on the organ at Gravel Hill church Greenhithe.

Previous to that I had had two years lessons on the violin under Mr.Ben Griffin at the baptist Chapel at Sutton at Hone; and what a wonderful string band he had built up with his wife at the piano. "74 years ago!" [I assume this to be 1893].

When about the year 1890 us boys of the 4th 5th and 6th standards in the village school at Green Street Green used to play in the main road of the village, several kinds of games, without the slightest fear of

passing traffic. How we stared one day at a vehicle coming along without a horse to pull it. What a difference now! 1964. To cross the same road now could be instant death.

How the leisure and pleasure of the country life for children has had to be forfeited. our game of bowling our iron hoops to school, bowling marbles for keeps. The games of Johnney, impeat and sliding on the icy roads to school. "What progress"!.
 Our chief games were hockey and cricket; football not at all, football was foreign to us boys in 1890. Hockey was played with about 20 on each side. The goal was usually two heaps of boy's coats at each end. Sides were picked from the crowd of boys wanting to play. First pick for the captains was the luck of naming flat , or round, of a cricket bat thrown up to fall on the ground.

Our clubs would be cut from the farmer's wood close by. The hockey would be a large cork or "bung" from the publicans cellar of an 18 gallon beer barrel. Cricket stumps too were taken "just taken" from the woods.

My mother came from a family of **Ludlow's**, all cricketers, and when she was a girl she would be chosen first, as she could play this game better than the boys. A cricket team of men, all **Ludlow's** of Green Street Green played against a team from Fawkham, all named Hollands, umpires and scorers as well of their respective sides.

The **Ludlow's** won, and also won the return match at Fawkham Green. One spectator said "**All Ludlow's had arms like blacksmiths**".

Migrated in 1897 to:
 Gray's Inn Road,
 King's Cross,
 London.

In the meantime my lady friend, Miss Alice Ledger, had given up her situation as parlour maid to Mrs.Hassell at "The clock house" Green Street Green and had taken one similar at Sidcup, Kent, as parlour maid to Mrs.Snelling of The Croft, Main Road, Sidcup.

It may seem amiss to record here some comparisons of the prices of some of the commodities that were being used for the inmates of the poor law institutions of the country.

Below is a record of one week's supply, with the prices of the various tradesmen.

| | £ | s | d |
|--|---|---|--------|
| 2 1/2 pecks loaves of bread (about 18 two pound loaves). | | 1 | 4 |
| 6 lbs of butter----- | | 2 | 6 |
| 13 lbs of beef----- | | 2 | 11 3/4 |
| 12 lbs of veal----- | | 3 | 7 1/2 |
| 2 quarts of milk----- | | | 2 |
| 2 quarts of milk-----May 21 | | | 2 |
| 2 quarts of milk-----May 23 | | | 2 |
| 2 quarts of milk-----May 25 | | | 2 |
| 2 quarts of milk-----May 28 | | | 2 |
| 1 kilderkin of beer (18 gallons)-----May 31 | | 3 | 6 |

1964

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Bread----- | £1-6-8 |
| 6 lbs.Butter @ 3/6--- | £1-1-0 |
| 13 lbs.Beef----- | £1-19-0 |
| 12 lbs.Veal----- | £3-0-0 |
| 2 quarts of Milk----- | £0-3-0 |

1877

About this time, perambulators were introduced in this country, young children were drawn along in a vehicle called a "chaise". This was a long box affair mounted on four wheels with a long handle in front to pull with. Your humble [William George ?] used to be taken out in one of these. My sister, eight years younger, was much better off, by the time she arrived, perambulators were in vogue. These had three wheels with a handle behind to push with. A mackintosh cover was fitted over all. We were living at Lanes End at this time.

In my school days two pence each week per child had to be paid on to the master for the funds of the school board. we were supplied with slates and slate pencils, which the monitors had to keep sharpened. No writing paper or pens were allowed. The master's cane played a very important part of our education. He was always walking around with it behind his back, and woe betide any he could catch talking. This was Mr.Saunders, but he was a good teacher, and head master. I got through standard ex seven under 14 years of age, and received the bounty of 40 shillings [£2]. Quite a sum in those days.

After leaving school at 14, I was apprenticed to horticulture under Mr.Norton of East Hill Nursery, Dartford.

Of course old fashion ideas and some verging on witchcraft were prevalent in my young days, and such things as hot-water bottles had not been introduced. I can remember my father two hours before he went to bed, in winter, would put a brick in the oven to warm up; wrap it in a square of flannel; then put it in his bed to keep his feet warm, "a grand old man was he". He was at that time one of a staff of men who milked at 4 a.m. every morning the herd of cows belonging to the Darenth Metropolitan Asylum Board. He would go to bed at 8 o'clock, and Church every Sunday. A Christian man he sure was.

Why I claim to be a "Man of Kent" is because my Grandfather was born at Shorn near Gravesend in the year 1820, also his wife, my Grandmother [Mary Ann Young] was born at Nursted about the same date. after their marriage they came to live at Gills in the parish of Darenth, where their first son William was born. My mother **Charlotte Ludlow** was their third child, and was born at Green Street Green, as also was my father in 1853.

The school children of that year were taught at a private house at Grubb Street on the way to Longfield. Afterwards they had to attend the school on top of Darenth Hill, in charge of one school master, a Mr.Best, who lived in Dartford.In 1876 a school was built at Green Street Green with two classrooms. It was maintained by the Kent School Board. The first teachers were the two Misses "Stocks", whose father, who had recently died was the Superintendent of "The House for Little Boys" at Farningham. [South Darenth].

At the age of three I was registered and attended this school. Another school had been built at "The Gore" Lanes End, and to this I was sent after we had moved to Lanes End, I was then eight years old. The teacher at this school was a Miss Skinner, who lived at Darenth village next to the "Chequers" public house. Also a pupil teacher named Bella Powling. This building now is a dairy. [now a private house, 1994].

This next section was in different "Type", and probably written at a different time.

GEORGE MILLIAMS born 1854 at Maiden's Elm Cottage in Pig's field, [?] and except for a short period, spent "in service", had lived at Darenth all his life. His father, Richard, and his Uncle John, were mole-catchers, whose duties took them on the round of the farms in the parish and its vicinity. He did not follow in their footsteps however, and in the course of his life has had experience of several types of employment.

As a boy of ten he went to work for Mr.Cripps at the Malthouse for a wage of 1s 6d.per week. [7 1/2p]. When he moved to St.Margarets, his wages for "bird-minding" were raised to 3s 6d. Next he was sheep-boy, and then he went catching moles with his father for a short season.

Thatching was the next task to which he turned his hand , linking his fortunes for fourteen years with those of Harry Goodwin, "the best thatcher in the district", and then to pastures new he moved, becoming roundsman to Mr.Summers, the baker, of Green Street Green. Taking round the daily bread in those days was a somewhat more arduous task that it is today. It was nothing for George Milliams to collide with his horse or lampless cart on a foggy night, while if it rained, his customers are liable to receive sodden bread, there being no covered-in carts in those days.

Mr.Milliams gave one of his hearty chuckles as he told of the old club feasts up on the Green. As in other villages, the annual feast was at one time the day of days for the villagers, and he remembered many a time answering to the call, "Push up boys", as he strained at one of the handles of the hand-manipulated roundabouts. After an hour or so of exertion spent in this manner, he would be rewarded with a free ride for his labours. The debt cleared, we follow him across to the pond where he joins the throng splitting its sides over the antics of those who have braved the greasy pole for a ham. The pole was a bowsprit, and beneath it was water, the water of the pond, so that there was abundant cause for amusement.

Mr.Milliams had a most vivid recollection of "The Great Flood", which followed a thunderstorm in the years before the turn of the century. In those days his late wife's father and family lived in a bungalow in the Betsham Road. Down the Betsham road came the deluge, flooding the bungalow up to the bed in which the head of the family lay. Immediately there was pandemonium, and a hurrying and scurrying about of all the family, anxious for the safety of the children. These were removed to safety, but father, Phillip, would not budge. He stayed in bed until the water subsided, as he had vowed he would.

WILLIAM GEORGE MILLIAMS called himself a "Kentish Man" because his grand-parents were both born in Kent in the early 19th century. He was born at Green Street Green Road in 1877, and there he lived until he went to London in 1897.

He started work as an apprentice to a nurseryman. Then he worked part-time as a gardener at the Clock House for Col.Angus McDonald, and part-time as a postman. "I was the first postman in uniform to deliver letters to Bean, and I was the first boy in this village to ride a bike with both wheels of the same size. We used to have the penny-farthing bikes in

those days.

He went to London in 1897 to work as a manager for a fruiterer and greengrocer's shop in Kings Cross. Two years later he married his wife Alice, whom he met at the village school when they were children.

"I have done some mad things in my life. I walked from Marble Arch to Darenth one day, and that is well over 20 miles. I did it because I wanted to be able to say I had walked that much.

It was on the day of Queen Victoria's funeral in 1901. All the shops were closed for the day, and he found he had the day free. On the next day, Sunday, his baby son was to be christened at St.Margarets church in Darenth. He sent his wife and son to Darenth by train while he walked.

He joined the Army in 1915, and while he was away, his wife moved to 9, Stanley Cottages in Green Street Green Road, next door to her mother.

Demobbed in 1920, he came back to his native village and resumed his work at the Clockhouse. After working in the gardens of several other houses, he retired from the Manor House, Green Street Green in 1957 at the age of 80.

On the 29th January 1955, he killed a poisonous snake. While walking through the woods near Green Street Green he saw a snake twined round a sapling. As a nature student he at once recognised it as a viper, one of the few poisonous varieties in this part of the country. He said that he had never seen a viper so early in the year. It was unusual to see the snake out of its winter quarters, especially in view of the recent hard winter. He killed the viper which measured 25 inches in length. Twenty-four hours after its head had been severed, the nerves in the tail were still active.

He led an active life, and died in 1971 at the age of 94.

The Smugglers Way

A bridle-way ran through the grounds of the Grange, Darenth which followed the track of an old Roman Road, and was known as the Pack Way. Mr.Fleets ancestor would tell of how the family used to hear smugglers galloping up this track from their hiding-place in Kingsdown Woods, their pack-horses laden with brandy-skins. They went on their way unmolested, for the village Patrol, the forerunner of the police force, dared not oppose them.

The Clock House

There is a secret passage from the clock house to the Ship [public house]. The Inn, it is believed, was at one time a Court House, and the passage is supposed to have been used for conducting prisoners to the dungeons. At the rear of the Clock House, Tudor style, with oak panelled rooms and mullioned windows, at a distance of about 100 yards, are the dungeons, these lead to two cells, shaped like p [?] hop kilns, with holes socketed just above the brick floor, through which chains were passed for binding prisoners.-These dungeons are in existence at the present day [1967]. On entering the door at the top of the stairs, a

plaque is set in the wall with the initials E.D. 1672. Edmund Davenport, a sheriff of the County, was at one time owner of the Clock House.

"Rats Castle"

Another interesting legend of Darenth is Rats Castle. [a house about 1/2 mile east of the Ship]. In this house of splendid beams lived the parish rat-catcher, in the days when the rat-catcher with his terriers and ferrets was a familiar sight in, and an indispensable amenity of every village.

This rat-catcher had three pretty daughters, and they all married well. At least, that is how the story goes, and Miss Treadwell accepted it as truth, named her abode Rats Castle. In confirmation Mrs. Cleaver gave the name of the rat-catcher as Mr. Brown, and said that she remembered as a child, seeing dead rats hanging by their tails from a line in his garden.

On the other hand **"Sharper" Ludlow** [Walter] declared that Mr. Brown was never a rat catcher, and that the gentleman lived in one of the two cottages of which the castle originally consisted, and that in the other resided a Mr. Carroll. Now, Mr. Brown had many children, but Mr. Carroll had none. The noise made by Mr. Brown's offspring at times proved very annoying to Mr. Carroll, who would remark to his fellow-villagers "They run about like rats, those children", and so the house was dubbed Rats Castle.

The rest of this information is hand written, and is probably the original.

I have typed this as near as reasonable to the script, in order to give it the character of the writer. Some of this section will be familiar from earlier pages.

"MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY 1967"

Born at Green Street Green, Dartford, Kent, on Easter Sunday 1877 of parents George and Charlotte Milliams nee Ludlow, who were both born in the same parish in 1853, Darenth, Dartford, Kent.

The cottage in which I was born was a single decker of two rooms, at the rear of four thatched and boarded houses all of which have since been pulled down.

When I was two years old, my father who was a thatcher moved into a brick house next door called "Ivy Cottage". From this house I was sent at the age of three as a pupil it was one of the Kent Board School's it was built in 1876 one year before I was born. The school was only 50 yards from Ivy Cottage, and was managed by two Sisters of the name of Stocks whose father was late of "The home for Little Boys Farningham".

As my father was a thatcher and in making his splints for his work, he used to make bundles of firewood as well. I can remember pushing my little barrow full up with 7 bundles for 3d. to the school teachers house every Saturday.

When I was 6 years old my parents sold their house to take over

house keeping for his employer Mr. Henry Goodwin of Lanes End whose wife had recently died in Guy's Hospital.

So I had to attend the Kent School Board's school at Lanes End. Gore Board School 4th Standard. Aged 10 years old.

Returned to live at Green Street Green in "Elnathan Cottage" next door to the Wesleyan Chapel.

Return to Green Street Green Kent School Board. Passed in all subjects up to the ex seventh standard. Granted the 40/= [£2] award under 14 years of age.

School master Mr. William Sanders and his wife school Mistress. **Miss Sarah Taylor** [soon to become Mrs. Albert Ludlow] and Miss Rose Ware pupil teachers 1901. [I think this should be 1891].

The School was built in 1876.

And just another incident from old Bill Milliams autobiography.

How well I remember playing with icicles hanging from my fathers beard. It was on a day early in 1881 since called "Black Tuesday". It was dark at midday, there was lightening and thunder, rain, hail, snow and frost, "The Lot". The neighbours thought the end of the world was near. I was 4 years old, we were living at Ivy Cottage Green Street Green. My dad had to come home from his work. He was thatching a house occupied by a Mr. Jack Hart, who was foreman to Mr. Hassell the farmer of Clock House farm. My dad looked like Father Christmas with the icicles hanging from his beard. P.S. "He never shaved in his life" which was the fashion then. They soon melted in my hands, that pleased my mother! Just then a knock came to the door, Old Dicky Butler wanted to know if George "my dad" would bring his ladder to peg down the straw blowing off his house?.

"George went"

George was a brick.

Mr. Goodwin was a master thatcher, and a past master at his work in straw and reed, and was in great demand by farmers and house owners for miles around. his only child broke his neck while collecting rooks eggs from a tall elm tree.

So it was arranged that for my parents Service Mr. Goodwin would leave them his goods and chattels. His money was willed to his nephews.

In 1887 we attended Queen Victoria's golden jubilee celebrations in Darenth meadow. The Rev. Bigham [Bingham] Stevens was then the vicar of Darenth.

In the meantime when I was 8 years old my sister Jessica was born at Lanesend.

After Mr. Goodwin's affairs had been settled my father decided to abandon thatching & barn & summer house building, & went onto the bread baking & grocery business of Mr. E G Summers of the Green Street Green Darenth Post Office. So back we moved to Green Street Green & I to the school again. This time under a schoolmaster Will. Sanders, at which school I was awarded £2 by the Board for passing through standard Ex.7 under 14 years of age.

Mr. Frank Armstrong's bible class of boys were taken by him and the "priest in charge" of St. Lukes Green Street Green, to Sheerness for their summer outing in 1889. All of them were choir boys as well including

myself. we were also presented each month with a 6d. copy of the "Boys Own" paper, quite "a posh periodical in that day".

These two gentlemen also ran a cricket club for us boys. I also had two years organ lessons under the choir master Mr.Gibson, schoolmaster of the training ship "Arethusa" laying at Greenhithe. Organ lessons at St.Mary's, Greenhithe. Also two years violin lessons under Mr.Ben Griffen, band master of the Sutton Baptist Chapel Sutton at Hone.

How well I remembered those dreadful dark walks I had in the winters after school hours, no lights on the roads, only dark trees, and me a schoolboy.

The writer well remembers the London, Chatham and Dover line being extended from Fawkham to Gravesend via Southfleet Stn, Rosherville Station on to the terminus. It was on this line, we the bible class travelled to Sheerness. A few of us boys lagged behind in the streets of Gravesend, and lost ourselves only to be informed by some men who were working on the road that "our Sky pilot" and the rest of the boys had just gone round the corner of the street. we went by boat via Port Victoria. We found Sheerness with the tide out what appeared to be a sea of mud. Incidentally my wife and family have spent our summer holidays there for a continuous thirty years, we like the place and would go nowhere else; the lodgings are so homely, and sociable.

I would like to record here two incidents which happened in which I was a principle as a witness. As a schoolboy I had just delivered some bread to a family living on top of telegraph Hill at Bean, of the name of Lynds; on my return to the shop of Mr.E G Summers the baker of Green Street Green I met a horse and dog cart "2 wheels"galloping up Sandy Banks Hill. The reins were under the horses hocks and the driver was hanging over the side. His name was Mr.Mark Eastwood of Northfleet, a horse dealer from Northfleet returning from Farningham Fair. There was no doubt that he was either ill or drunk quite possibly the latter. I rushed home to tell my father. He and Mr.Summers ran up to the spot.By then a shepherd was there with a hurdle gate. He was laid on this and carried down to the "Ship Inn"to await an inquest. At that time public houses were open all day, and what a crowd was there. Being of the Romany class, about 30 women attended all in their clean white aprons. A hole was dug in the side of the bank to show where he fell, "as was the custom". The cause of the accident was that one of the wheels of the dog cart ran up on a heap of stones dumped there to mend the roads with. The cart righted itself and the horse tore on down the road. Another baker, a Mr.Ernest Green saw it coming and stopped it by pulling his van at right angles across the road and brought it back. This happened in 1890. I can remember seeing his coat tails flying in the air as he fell out. I shall never forget it, I was told I was too young to give evidence. The horse had only one eye, as it happened no other traffic was on the road, no damage was done and no one else was injured. Mr.Mark Eastwood was a relation to Mr.John Eastwood, horse dealer of Darenth. Half of Lanesend was built by him.

The other fatal incident I remember was 20 years later [c1910]. While I was living in Gray's Inn Rd.,Kings Cross, I was manager and salesman at a big fruit shop and florist. Looking across the road one day

I saw a man-hole cover moving up and down. Presently a man's head popped up, we pulled him out he said his mate was washed away , they had been working in a sewer and were washed off their feet by the sudden storm water from the hills of Hampstead and Highgate Hill. We telephoned the alarm to St.Pancras Council's office. They dispatched rescue squads to likely spots along the sewer. They found the dead man stopped at the grid at Barking Creek.

London then was all cabs and horses, horse buses, dog carts, bicycles, 2 carriages, vans , all horse drawn. Dust carts, hay carts, straw carts, dung carts, water carts. Very seldom motor drawn. Motor buses when put on the roads would stop and break down and were then laughed at by horse drawn drivers. Very sarcastic remarks were made about their "closets on wheels", and to advise them to "take them down on to the Embankment", and "drop them in the Thames".

16 May 1968
on Lane End Green

Now who can remember the brick cage built on the green, near to the Fox and Hounds? This was built to lodge for one night the unruly person to be taken to Dartford Court by the village constable, perhaps for being drunk or any other crime.

These constables were chosen from the more respectable men on a rota scale. My uncle John Milliams was one of them "my fathers brother". In 1877 Sir Robert Peel founded the Kent Constabulary, after which they were known as "Bobbies" or "Peelers", a sobriquet that has caught on ever since.
