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A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF LYMORE.

A "Hamlet" 3½ miles from Lymington and New Milton, 1½ miles north of Milford-on-Sea.

In the County of Southampton and in the Borough of Lymington.

By

PEYTON T. B. BEALE

with the help of A. COLE and other residents.

The term "in the Archives" used in these pages, refers to matter in the book kept by the President of the "Record Society," and this book contains many photographs and other matters of interest to anybody who may read this account, and readers should certainly ask to see it.

In view of the fact that the Town Planning Scheme of the Lymington Borough Council of 1937, will, if and when carried into effect, completely change the aspect and amenities of Lymore, it seems desirable that posterity should have some record of the place as it now is.

PEYTON T. B. BEALE.

1938.

LYMORE.

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Lymore now consists of only a few houses on either side of a valley which contains Lymore Lane and the Lymore Brook, and extends from Cox's bridge to Akarton or Agarton. The name Lymore is referred to, and explained in some of the Record Society's volumes, and in the Archives there is another explanation sent to me by Mr. A. Oscroft of Southampton. There was a very lovely 17th Century house owned by Lord Powis in Montgomeryshire called "Lymore Hall", but on making enquiries, I find no connection between this and our own Lymore.

The Brook.

The brook appears to begin somewhere North of Hordle. It flows through the lake at Newlands, down the Lymore valley, by Akarton to the Marshes. Some years ago salmon passed up freely. About five years ago I saw a salmon nearly three feet long spawning just above the ford opposite my house, "Lymore End." Two years ago, in a November flood, hundreds of Sea or Salmon Trout passed up, and I was able to pick fish out of the water with my hands, they were from fifteen inches to eighteen inches long and in poor condition.

It has been said that Alfred Tennyson's "The Brook" may have been written as a result of the Poet's wanderings in the district. It is certain that he did walk about the country, and I append—with the Editor's consent—a letter which appeared in the *Lymington Times* of July 17th, 1937. This letter settles beyond doubt, the fact that Tennyson knew Lymore Lane very well.

Tennyson and Lymore Splash.

(To the Editor)

"Sir, I appreciate your comment respecting the stream at Lymore, which appeared in the *Lymington*

Times on the 10th instant. I was reminded of Tennyson's pleasure, when looking at this brook, as described in the diary of his friend, William Allingham, the poet, who lived in Lymington during the period from May, 1863, until the year 1870.

"1866—Thursday, February 1st.

From Custom House window see Tennyson on board the steamer as she passes, and hurry to station. Mrs. Tennyson and Lionel go off in a fly to Aubrey. T. and I walk, by Pennington, Everton, etc. Dark and moist day, some showers. Talk of Plato and Greek manners.

"In Lymer (Lymore) Lane we come to a spring by the wayside. 'I'd give anything,' T. said, 'to have such a one at Farringford.'

"Crossed a brook which 'broadened on the road,' and this also delighted him. 'Whenever I come to see you,' he said, 'bring me to a brook. I'd sooner have it than a hundred ruined castles.'"

Yours very truly, Ed. Habgood,
19, High Street, Lymington.

Houses.

At the north end of the valley, on "Cox's Hill" stood a house, called "Buona Vista"—about which there is some uncertainty, and the matter is referred to in the Record Society's Volumes. This house was the property of the Wilson family (see Vol. 3 No. 2), Record Society). It was quite distinct from Buona Vista Farm which was the property of the Braxton family.

The cob walls of the gardener's cottage near the road leading to Keyhaven were standing up to about forty years ago and many fine fruit trees still later.

I have every reason to believe that Buona Vista *House* stood about five hundred yards south of the present Buona Vista Farm, and that the old farm house—photos

of which before and during demolition, showing Tudor period bricks and timbers are in the Archives — was called Buona Vista Cottage. (An old map shows another Buona Vista, where Ramley, near Pennington, now is).

All that is known of "Buona Vista House" has been set forth in the Record Society's volumes. Buona Vista Cottage was originally two (Tudor) thatched cottages which were later joined to form one house. In 1928 it had to be demolished, as the timbers of the roof and those between the brickwork were quite rotten. The photo in the Archives shows the brick and timber West end of one of the original two cottages (bricks in the foreground are modern).

On each side of the brook and well above it, there were from twenty to thirty thatched cottages—two only now remain, the one close to "Lymore End", and Pippin Cot. One to the South of the brook, lately known as "Vine Cottage" was burned out in February, 1934. A man named "Baldwin" lived in it years ago, giving his name to a piece of land opposite the cottage known to this day as "Baldwin's garden". Then a Mr. Berry, a plumber, lived there (he died in 1886) and brought up a large family, adding two rooms to the Cottage. Before the fire the Cottage was named "Willow Cottage", and as such has been rebuilt, and is now owned by Mr. Cox.

Of the other cottages, there is little history. Their cobwalls were always limewashed at Whitsun, they had orchards and apple trees, and it is noted in an old coaching book, that a coach started from York for the South, and that the passengers were able to admire the wealth of apple blossom in "Lymer Valley", so I gather the coach passed down Lymore Lane.

Incidentally a map, circa 1760, shows Lymore Lane as the main road from Everton (then Evilton) to

Keyhaven and thence to Milford, though there was a rough track from Everton to Milford, where the main road is now, and a ford where "Cox's Bridge" now is.

Mention should be made of a group of large oak trees, and one ash tree, in the form of a circle, surrounding a depression, behind a cottage until recently called "Springer's Cottage"—just N.W. of "Lymore End." This depression, or pit, was probably an old "marl pit" from which clay was dug—the clay being spread on the fields in past days as a form of manure or dressing for corn crops. I think it is fairly certain that this circle of trees was planted, but by whom or why, I cannot conjecture.

SPRINGER'S Cottage has been, until recently, the property of the oldest Lymore family. A Springer—a Scotsman, came over here after the battle of Culloden in 1746.

Albert Springer, who now lives in the cottage, represents the seventh generation. His father, in conjunction with Rashley, built some of the first houses on Milford Cliff.

Many of the Springers are buried in the Milford Baptist Chapel Churchyard.

There are several springs of water between Lymore Lane and the Brook. One in particular on the South side, about 200 yards to the S.E. of "Lymore End" has never been known to run dry, and never seems to vary in the volume of water discharged. I am told that years ago the shepherds from all over the district came to get this water for their sheep. It seems also to have been noted for its effect upon all troubles affecting the eyes. In the Record Society's Archives there are several photographs of Lymore taken in August, 1937 which give a very good idea of "Lymore Lane" and the cottages, meadows and trees near by.

Lymore.

Between the years 1850 and 1865, "The Electric Telegraph Company" laid a Telegraph cable starting at Lymington and ending at Hurst Castle. This was, no doubt, done at the instigation of the Admiralty, as Hurst Castle was then an important signalling station as well as a fortress, This cable was removed by the G.P.O. when it took over the telegraphs in 1870, and I have a piece of one of the gutta percha covered wires, and one of the (hand made) 3 foot long, and 2 inches in diameter pipes which contained the two wires. The cable passed down the east side of Lymore Lane, and was about 2 feet below the surface.

Mr. Cole tells me that his father knew Mr. Preece (Sir William Preece, K C.B., F.R.S.) Preece was superintendent of the Southern District of the "Electric Telegraph Co." in 1856, and that Preece was here as Superintendent when the cable was laid.

Gravel Pit.

The Lymore "gravel and sandpit" used to be a "brickyard." About fifty years ago it was rented from Colonel West by one Harris—a very skilled potter who had been working the Walhampton brickyard. He used to make bricks, tiles, pipes, and some fine Tera Cotta ornaments, and facings for houses.

At one time he was troubled by too much water in the brickyard, and was advised by an expert to dig a "sump" in the lowest part and pump the water with a steam pump into a ditch leading to the brook. His son, Sam Harris, told me that he bought the steam engine and pump, and *then* dug the sump.

When he got down about twelve feet, all the water disappeared, and does to this day, into an underground stream. I believe I am one of the few persons who knows

were the sump is, and I have thought of cleaning it out and making tests, in order to find out the direction in which this underground stream flows. This stream undoubtedly takes the vast volume of water during heavy rainfalls from aboat thirty acres of field land north of the Lymore Valley, for little of it enters the brook. One inch of rain on this area means about 3,000 tons, or 678,000 gallons of water, and if such a quantity of surface water entered the Lymore brook, it would quite certainly be evident.

Fossils and Plants.

In the gravel a good many prehistoric flint scrapers and some arrow-heads have been found.

For an account of a clay beaker found in 1927 see pp. 27 Record Society No. 5 Vol. 4. In the lower layers of the gravel, one finds black and white flints—some weighing 20 to 30 lbs.—evidently brought downby glacial agency from the chalk downs above Salisbury.

As regards these flints, which are black, coated with a white layer, and are exactly what we find now in the chalk downs, I often wonder whether they were—as is supposed—really brought down by glacier action from the downs above Salisbury, or whether they were brought here by prehistoric man for the manufacture of his scrapers, arrowheads, etc. The fact that these flints ***are not worn smooth and round*** seems rather to support this theory.

In the clay beneath the gravel and sand, one finds "pockets" of Calcium Carbonate, made up mostly of estuarine shells —some perfect in shape. These pockets are locally but erroneously known as "Fuller's earth." This carbonate of lime is technically known as "race", and if any of it happens to be in the clay of which a brick was made, it expands when baking takes place, and bursts the brick. It contains many fossil shells and is found,

and has been fully described, in records of the outcrop of the clay at Hordle Cliff.

The gravel pit contains many wild flowers—a list of which appears in one of the magazines of the Record Society, and it is rather interesting to note that there is at least one patch of the Bee Orchis—found generally on the chalk downland. A full account of the geology of the district can be found by reference to sheets 330 and 331 of the Geological Survey and to "Memoirs of the Geological Survey," by H. J. Osborne White, F.G.S., 1915. Published by authority of H.M. Stationery Office.

Thatched Cottages.

These cottages seem nearly always to have been built with their long axes mainly East and West. The door was on the South aspect—usually protected by a porch and so *not* facing the Lane. They were built close to the lane or track which gave access to them, and many had a bread baking oven in a lean-to wood shed on the West end. The combined kitchen and living room had a large open fire place about eight feet wide and five feet high, the top of which was formed by a large oak beam twelve to fifteen inches square, and other beams at the back and side were furnished with iron hooks from which could be hung cooking pots, hams, sides of bacon, etc. The oven was of brick with arched roof and its door was in the lean-to wood shed—its flue opened into the fire place of the living room.

As these cottages became "improved" people demolished the old bread ovens and installed modern grates in the large open fire places—omitting to remove, or replace by iron bars, the old oak beams. Sooner or later these beams became ignited as the result of large coal fires, and smouldered—often for months, eventually setting fire to the thatch. Such has been the fate of many of the old cottages.

The windows were small—about two feet high and three feet wide—filled in with small squares of rough glass set in lead, and often incapable of being opened.

The upper room (often one only, but sometimes two) was as low as the living room (not over six feet high).

The roof was often made of rough fir trees, with cross bits of hazel, ash or any other wood, and to these were tied large bundles of dried "Reed" or "Spear"—over which the thatcher laid his reed or straw thatch, and kept it in place with hazel "spars," exactly as it is done at the present day. The "Reed" grew locally—much of it at Vidley Van Farm where it grows still.

The floor of the upper room was of rough boards—often oak—nailed with hand-made "clout" nails to oak beams, roughly squared by the adze, and, in many cases, obtained from ships wrecked on the nearby coast.

There was no fireplace in the bedroom, and the chimney from the lower room was of brick—generally 14½ inches in internal diameter—passing up the West end of the bedroom and terminating, without chimney pot, about three feet above the apex of the roof.

The floor of the living room was originally of puddled clay covered with straw. In later times people laid board floors, and as there was no ventilation beneath, the clay beneath became mud—often liquid mud! yet the owners often brought up from five to twelve children, who were remarkably free from illness, and frequently lived to be eighty or ninety years of age.

The water was obtained from a shallow well in the garden—in some cases six to ten feet in diameter, and at the end of the garden there was a "Privy" which was emptied perhaps once in ten years! They always planted

one or more lilac bushes close to the Privy—why, I do not know, but one sees, at the present day, lilac bushes in the hedges, showing where the privies of long ago cottages stood. Mr. Cole believes these lilac bushes were planted as screens.

As these old cottages were close to the lane or track which led to them, and which later developed into a road, sparks from the engines drawing threshing machines were a frequent cause of fires. One cottage usually possessed a long pole with an iron grapple at the end, with which the burning thatch could be ripped off. Such grapples were kept in the Parish Church in some parts of the Country.

The walls of the cottage were "cob" i.e. puddled loam and clay mixed with straw. There was no real foundation, but a trench about twelve inches deep and twenty-four inches wide was dug out, and placed at the bottom of it were large lumps of "iron stone" which were found on the beach and on the sea bottom in Christchurch Bay. (This iron stone was used to make "Roman Cement" in furnaces on the Medina River in the Isle of Wight. Roman Cement has been wholly replaced now by Portland Cement).

The Cob walls were built in the dry weather only. The Cob was pressed down by the labourer's feet, and when the doors and windows were to be formed, a rough "shuttering" or boarding was used to keep the Cob in place till it dried.

Cob walls, built during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, are still in position and in a perfect state of preservation.

The Cob was found in part of what is now the Lymore gravel pit, and was a mixture of loam, clay and gravel—with or without straw or rushes incorporated with

it. In recent years the building of Cob walled houses has been revived, and it will be interesting to note whether they last as long as the Cob made in Tudor times.

Practically all these cottages were originally Squatter cottages erected when Lymore was common land, but passed into other hands when the Commons Enclosure Act was passed about 100 years ago. This aroused much feeling among the owners but alas it was a case of "the good old rule sufficeth, the simple plan, for he will take who has the power and he must keep who can."

Kitch's Bridge.

This is the footbridge over the brook near "Kiln Copse" so called from a family who lived in a cottage at the top of the hill. A member of this family left land for "Kitch's Charity". This is now amalgamated with the other charities (Braxton's and Price) and used for quite a different purpose to that intended by the donors.

Lymore Alley.

A lane known as "Lymore Alley" opposite "Lymore End" leads, with numerous bends, up to a triangular grass patch, formed by the meeting of this lane with one leading down to Akarton, and another passing Lymore Farm and continuing to join the Lymington Milford Road. Immediately to the South of this grass patch there was a Lime Kiln.

Here chalk imported by boat from the Isle of Wight via Keyhaven was burned to produce Lime for the adjoining Farm lands. South of this spot is a copse chiefly of oak—Kiln Copse—and it is of interest because in May one may hear as many as 5 or 6 nightingales singing together. In a hedge close to the site of the

former Lime Kiln there is a mass of wild clematis—"Travellers Joy"—which is found native on chalk land only. Evidently the seeds came originally with the chalk used in the kiln.

I have been told that there was a windmill on the hill near by—where "Lymore Farm" now is, but can get no confirmation of it.

BIRDS.

The Lymore Valley owns at least one pair of kingfishers; coots abound, and the heron is occasionally seen.

The tern or sea swallow may be seen in summer in the meadows bordering the brook. The yellow wagtail is not uncommon. Owls, brown, white and little are plentiful. See "Birds of Milford"—one of the Record Society's Vols. 1 No. 5—for an account of the birds of the district.

As regards the Fauna, we have otters, water voles and foxes, and a badger is known to exist. Of course all the common animals, rabbits, rats and mice abound.

On the South side of Lymore Lane, opposite "Lymore End" there is another old marl pit, of which the owner of "Lymore End" has made a "wild water garden" and in which there are some uncommon bulbous plants flowering in Spring, Autumn and Winter, and many semi-tropical plants, such as Eucalyptus, Cordyline, Pawlonia, Water lilies, etc. This Wild garden has been open to the public since its formation about 10 years ago, and a money box at the gate has resulted in close upon £100 being collected for the Milford War Memorial Hospital.

"Lymore End" was erected by a local builder for Mr. (now Sir) George Young and was completed about 1914. It is a replica of a Portugese Villa and is quite in keeping with the old (Tudor) Thatched Cottages on either side of it.