

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

Some snippets of Dover History

Another extract from the writings of Budge Adams

The last episode in Newsletter 48 took Budge's story up to 1917. Now it continues with more extracts from Budge's memoirs up to 1919 (Part of this piece has already appeared in the first section of 'Memories of a Century' published in 2000)

In 1917 America entered the war we had been fighting since 1914 and it was interesting to us children to see these men from the New World, especially as they wore Boy Scout hats and riding breeches and Fox's puttees., cut on the bias and incredibly easy to put on, unlike the 'horse bandages' which were issued to British troops. (I know, I've had to wear both kinds.) Their uniforms were not quite the same shade of khaki and the material was closer woven and better than that provided for the British soldier. But they were often ill-fitting, just as were those of our own men. Where they mostly differed from our soldiers was in the amount of money they had at their disposal and in the quantity of food they were provided with. They were, at least to we children living in the area at the foot of Castle Hill, very generous. Their ration wagons, long low carts drawn by four mules moved up through Castle Street to Victoria Park where some of the troops were quartered and then on to tented camps at Broadlees and on the cliffs. The ration wagons were usually piled high with cases, tins, jars and every sort of container, and mountains of sacks of potatoes. These things appeared to have been loaded in any old fashion and the stacking was precarious, to say the least. Surmounting all these packages, and even more precariously perched, would be four or five 'Doughboys', as I remember they

were called. As the wagons moved along the street various items would providentially fall off, always, it seemed, just where a little knot of children were standing watching. The frequency with which seven-pound tins of corned beef fell off kept us busy running off home with our 'findings'. Though I remember the corned beef more vividly than anything else, many other very desirable items 'fell off as well.

The American soldiers quartered in Victoria Park were often 'confined to barracks' and would sit on the top of the long wall running up Castle Hill Road and would throw dimes and cents down to us, who scrambled for them. At the time the Americans were here Castle Street was a water-bound macadam road with a high element of chalk in its surface mix. In wet weather it was a squelchy mass of stones and mud and outside each house there was a foot-scraper (always called that, though in fact a 'boot-scraper' - why 'foot-scraper' when it was boots that were scraped?) which had to be used before one entered. The road camber was high and the tilt it caused must have contributed to the ease with which items "fell off" the American ration wagons.

As a result of Dr. Kent's efforts my father recovered and enjoyed another ten years of comparatively happy semi-retirement. He would, whenever he could,

work during the mornings even though all he did had to be accomplished sitting on a stool or 'squat' (a compositor's support). By 1919 a wicker bath chair stood at the bottom of the stairs at 37 Castle Street and most afternoons my father would be helped into it and I would push him over to the Sea front where, with an old pair of binoculars I still possess, he would intently inspect all that was going on around him. We had to be back in Castle Street by half past five so that I might have assistance from Charlie Southey, who had by then returned from the war, in getting my father indoors and stowing away the bath-chair. Working hours were from 7.30 until 6 o'clock so my return soon after five gave ample time.

I became accepted as the natural successor to my father and he devoted a good deal of time and care to very subtly teaching me what I would need to know of business and money matters. As far as these two things are concerned both my

father and I were, and I still am, quite unsophisticated. My father's main tenet was 'keep the books accurately and don't 'fiddle' the tax returns'. He held that a man's word was his bond and that the timely settlement of debts incurred in the usual way of business had the highest priority. 'Good name was more important than a full belly', was what I was brought up to believe.

I have some photographs of my parents, taken in the garden of No. 37 when my father was just able to get about again and the pitiful clothes my mother is wearing make a stark commentary on the sore straits in which the war and my father's illness had placed us. Both my parents were strong on principles but they were very kind and my sister and I in no way felt deprived: quite the contrary, in fact. Weekly we looked forward to reading '*The Children's Newspaper*' the demise of which was, I feel, the biggest loss the children of this country ever sustained.

The Dream of Richard Tilden Smith or Tilmanstone - what might have been

By Derek Leach

There is nothing left of Tilmanstone Colliery today, but during its short working life it produced 20 million tons of coal. There were three pit shafts: number 1 was 1590 feet deep, number 2 was 3168 and number 3 was 3139 feet. All were sealed during 1987. Things were different in 1925 when Richard Tilden Smith envisaged a pyramid of businesses based upon Tilmanstone Colliery, making S E Kent one of the richest industrial areas in the country.

Richard Tilden Smith was born in New South Wales in 1865. His father had emigrated, but had died when Richard was 16. The family owned a pub, but had discovered gold which Richard used to

good effect. He soon owned 5 million acres with 75,000 cattle and at 21 he was responsible for developing Australia's first coal field. A bank crisis in 1893 made him poor and he came to England, but he still owned property in a gold field which restored his fortune. In England he started restoring failing businesses and refused a baronetcy for his efforts! By 1908 he was a director of Burma Mines and had a controlling interest in Chinese lead, silver, zinc and copper mines. In 1914 he acquired the Swansea Vale Works and built a large modern zinc smelting plant at Avonmouth. Ironically, this plant produced mustard gas for war purposes and Richard's only son, Jack, died from