

Buckland Village – Now in Dover

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Edited by Derek Leach

Buckland has been overtaken by the spread of Dover and has to some extent lost its identity in the process. So much so, that not long ago I, who had lived in the parish all my life, was told that another historian considered that there was nothing of interest in Buckland. I started looking around, determined to prove him wrong.

I had studied the burial records of Buckland from 1857 onwards, which gave much information as to tradesmen. I followed this up with Tithe Census Returns, the evidence of my own eyes and scraps of information gleaned over the years.



Kingsford Windmill Brewery, Union St Dover 1865

Many people have passed through Dover and continued up the London Road towards Canterbury and beyond. The old town of Dover at one time only consisted of the parishes of St. Mary's and St. James's with the dividing line being the River Dour. It seems that for many years the route inland for horsemen and walkers was to the east of the river, but the Turnpike Trust road to Barham, created in 1753, diverted the road through Buckland to the west of the river. Hasted records a newly built bridge and the Bull Inn nearby dates from that time.

From about 1800 some of the wealthier citizens of Dover moved up the valley and this encouraged the Dover Council to extend its boundaries, taking in Charlton and parts of Buckland. There was a boundary revision in 1851, which took in most of the rest of Buckland and another in 1896.

Bavington Jones in his book on Dover asserted that there were few houses between the Eagle Tavern and the Cherry Tree Inn at the start of the 19th century; however, there does seem to have been some old properties on the right as you climbed Buckland Hill after passing Charlton Toll Gate, removed in 1855, which was opposite the 'Eagle'. The ground to the west, which until the Dissolution was part of St. Bartholomew's Leper Hospital, does not appear to have been used for housing until about 1825, but took off when much of it came on the market after William Kingsford, the miller, was adjudged bankrupt in 1854. This was rising ground leading to Chapel Mount or the

High Meadows where we used to fly our homemade kites. The Buckland boundary was just before the high terrace, pinpointed by the property known as Buckland Place, used by Youdens the estate agents. From here up to the Gate Inn the road was known as Buckland Street until about 1880 and then it became London Road.

The varied collection of houses on the London Road terrace began to appear in about 1840 when plots were sold off. The former Methodist Chapel with its rather grand façade was opened in 1839. I found an entry in the Dover Express of 1894 stating that William Pritchard, aged 8, died after a fall from Buckland Wall steps near the chapel. This reminded readers that for over 50 years there was no fence or railings to the steps. The Corporation was forced by public opinion to take some action, even though the owners were under an obligation to maintain the road and wall. It eventually came before the magistrates for a decision; from evidence given by the Town Clerk, William Knocker, the purchasers had a duty to build the wall when the chalk bank was cut back.

On the right was a house known as 'Bucklands' owned by the Fielding family (now a tyre & exhaust centre). On the opposite side of the road there was a gap between the houses, which was at one time laid out as gardens giving a pleasant view. The Fieldings were unlikely to have approved of the arrival there of the Buckland Picture House in 1920, later known as the Regent. In 1936 a new Regent appeared alongside the old favourite and was later known as the Odeon, but now replaced by the Territorial Army centre. A little further up was the Cherry Tree Inn which appears in a Licensing List of 1740. It had the distinction of being the first house in the

parish to be lit by gas in 1847. Just beyond Cherry Tree Avenue (formerly Lane) were the remains of Pear Tree Cottages; incised on a brick there was the date of 1754.

As we continue up the road we pass the white boarded flour mill built by William Kingsford in 1812 and also his residence, Lundy House, built for him. On the roof there was a platform with a telescope. I understand that a member of the Mannering family was fond of stargazing. The Mannering family ran the mill until quite recently. We then come to five flint cottages once known as Providence Place. There is a tablet at the rear which has begun to weather away, but I was able to decipher most of it: 'That he be dead, He is not forgot by him that had these letters wrote 1836'. This ground was sold off, according to a sales notice, in 1854. This indicated that my great, great, grandfather was living in a cottage there at the time of William Kingsford's bankruptcy.

Most of the villagers lived near the main road with farms on the outskirts at Barton and Coombe. Coombe Farm in Buckland Bottom disappeared when it was overtaken by the extension of the rubbish tip. Buckland Bottom in 1807 was the venue for Dover Races where in 1835 the Buckland Union workhouse was built, way out of town. This was laid out on the



Buckland Bridge

courtyard principle, similar to the Bridge workhouse near Canterbury. Buckland Workhouse eventually became Buckland Hospital, of fond memory!

An article in an old Dover Express mentions an 'Iron Mother' in a Board of Guardians report. This was a large pestle and mortar used for breaking stones by the itinerant visitors to the workhouse in lieu of payment for board and lodging. It was supposed to deter tramps from heading this way! Perhaps it did as the next report stated that six more had been purchased at £3 each. Quite a number who finished their days in the workhouse were buried in Buckland Cemetery.

Continuing towards Buckland Bridge, we pass the former Buckland School on our left built in 1852 for £842. When digging out the foundations Roman pottery was found as well as tufa. Tufa is found in old riverbeds and was used by the Romans as a building material, which can be seen in the Roman Pharos. From this we can assume that the river was much wider here at one time. In 1904 there were 389 girls plus 697 infants at the school. Some classes used the Rectory garden. A boys' school had been built on the site of Barton Farm in 1898 followed by an infants' school in 1903, which found room for me in 1920.

A little further up the road is a pair of houses, which have bricks with the date 1808 and various initials. These may have some connection with local brickmakers who abounded in this area. It seems possible that this was the Chequers beer house kept by Richard Pay the shoemaker, according to the 1841 census. Door sills show signs of being hollowed out by barrels being dragged through.

As we cross over Buckland Bridge there is

the old tram shed built in 1897 and now a motor showroom. I reported there just over 60 (sic) years ago for my first job. On the left is the former Buckland Paper Mill an old established industry, which may go back to 1638 when Thomas Chapman, a papermaker, was married at Buckland. Much more could be written about papermaking on the Dour.

Going up Crabble Hill there is the Three Cups; opposite was the old toll gate house. At the end of the turnpike era in 1860 the Dover Corporation used it for collecting the Coal Dues.

In 1951 on the hill close to Green Lane, ground was being prepared for new council houses. I decided to take a look. Bulldozers had turned up some bones and other items. Fortunately, someone moved quickly and Miss Vera Evison was sent to organise a rescue dig. I arrived just as it was getting dark and helped to put the cover over one of the graves, nearly putting my foot in it in the process. After twenty years, I thought I would enquire at Dover Museum as to what had been found. I was given Miss Evison's address at Birkbeck College and wrote to her. She suggested that I write to Mrs Webster at the British Museum who could show me the finds. A date was arranged and I took a day off and caught the train. The result was an hour in a room at the British Museum examining the artefacts and handling one of the swords. Shortly after that some of the items went on display; I believe it is still possible to see them. A full report was eventually published costing £45, but there is a copy in the Dover Reference Library. The burial ground indicates that Saxon invaders sailed up the valley and established a settlement at Buckland after the Roman legions left; or were they already here as mercenary troops? It is as well to recall that the Dour was much

wider and navigable in Roman times and continued to be so until the Norman period when the estuary began to silt up. The site was in probably in use from about 475 until c800AD.

It would be wrong not to mention St. Andrew's Church, the oldest building in



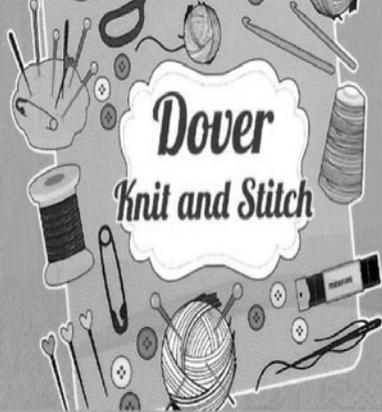
ST. ANDREW, BUCKLAND IN DOVER

St Andrews Church Buckland Dover

the parish, which appears to have some Saxon work in its fabric. I wonder if the first church was built by the descendants of those warriors up on the hill? In 1880 the old yew tree was moved to make it possible to extend the church of St. Andrew and many Bucklanders have a small wooden cross made by Mr. Yarrow from a branch of the yew which broke off in a storm. Now, near those Saxon graves, there is a daughter church dedicated to St. Nicholas and that may be a link with those Saxon seafarers.

Much more could be written about Buckland and I know some will say he did not mention this or that, but I believe I have proved my point: there is plenty of interest in Buckland!

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