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rather careful if you walked along the line because it would come up on you and it very nearly ran over my mother's Pekingese once, which would be a very good thing I think! But never mind, it was rather attractive and it was fun to go on. It started at Maiden Newton and it ended in my day at Bridport; at one time there had been a branch line which went on to West Bay. It stopped a great many times - Toller and Powerstock, and I think somewhere else, and then Bridport.

*There was never a station in Loders actually was there?*

No we used to try and get it but we could never get it. There was one time when my father got out at Loders and that was during the big Strike between the Wars and the train was being driven by a <sup>\*??</sup> and it stopped at Loders and he couldn't get it started again, so Papa hastily left him still trying to start the train. It was a feature of the place. I dare say it's all very much prettier now it's gone, but we were fond of it, and it was rather convenient. The train to Maiden Newton wasn't bad and you could then get down to Bridport from there, you changed at Maiden Newton. And also there were a good many places that were more or less isolated in the winter - the roads were bad, and they could then get down to Bridport.

*\*Cousin  
of his*

*Nettlecombe for instance - right in the depths, where there was a stop.*

Well it was Powerstock, but they could walk to it yes.

*And you were saying also about the church yard - you knew somebody who used to look after it.*

Well in those days it was all done - I think it was all done by hand, and there was a dear old man called Mr Pitcher who used to wear a black bowler hat, blue linen coat, and he had a long white beard - he was incredibly picturesque! And my mother said he looked like pictures of Father Time. And there was a glorious moment - the church yard cut across the two bits of our garden, and I lost my tortoise, and I went down to Mr Pitcher and I said "Mr Pitcher, have you seen my tortoise?" and I got bright blue eyes and a blank stare, and I looked round and I said "Oh look there she is" and I went to get it, and I've never seen so much relief in a man's face ever before. He'd obviously seen it and thought it was a devil that was going round dead bodies. It couldn't have been anything else; he couldn't have been so relieved otherwise. And of course I suppose a tortoise apparently crawling out of a grave it would look like an evil spirit, if you'd never seen one.

*Were there any other real characters in the village that you can remember?*

Well Bill Budden's Grandfather was a great character. Mummy said he was rather like Tess of the D'Urbeville's father, I mean very much more respectable but the same sort of thing. I think they were probably a Saxon family, probably always been there, and he was rather proud of that. And of course the Maceys - you're not going to publish this are you! The Maceys were carriers and they lived where Mona Edwards lived. And the carriers, I think you've got it in that book - they used to go and pick up parcels from Bridport which you'd - I think you must have given the orders to him, and they must have gone in, they must have produced the things and



he brought them back, and he had a cart and a horse and the horse was **abominably** badly treated. My mother said she couldn't report it because although the horse was abominably badly treated so was Mrs Macey, in fact Mrs Macey on the whole was worse treated than the horse, and therefore it wasn't fair to report the horse. But somebody finally did report them and they were told to have it destroyed, whereupon they promptly sold it to the gypsies, and then they got a car which practically never worked but as Mummy says you can't be unkind to a car so that was alright. And they had a son who was an arsonist, and he was put in prison - he escaped and again - they must have had links with the gypsies - he went to the gypsies for a bit and then he got back and his mother hid him for a bit and by the time he was let out everyone was bored and he was allowed to go on. He was half-witted, he married a half-witted girl and had a lot of half-witted children, so they were what you might call characters, though not very pleasant ones.

*Did you have a village Policeman?*

Yes, there was certainly a village bobby. Now he lived, I think it's where Horace Reeves lives now, though Horace Reeves' house has been very much done up, I think it's there, anyway it's very near there. We had a policeman right into the Second World War. READ

*And he used to come through the village on a bicycle I suppose?*

Yes. But there was a regular one I should have said until post-War times. I can't remember quite when it changed but it's comparatively recent. I would have thought in about the fifties.

*Tell me about the school and the Headmistress.*

Well the school in my day - and she was there I think for thirty years. She was a spinster from the North called Miss Wilkes, and she had a strongish Yorkshire accent, she was astonishingly outspoken about things. She was very strict - my father said the whole time he only had one complaint about her and he thought anyhow it was the assistant mistress's fault. She had her hair scragged back into a bun, large glasses, and she wore very old-fashioned coats and skirts and an uncompromising hat, and she used to bicycle to and fro from Bradpole, and although she was always saying how splendid the north was and how decadent we were in the south, when she retired she retired to Bradpole! And people liked her, she was very good, she gave them a good education, and I mean she was astonishingly outspoken. I can remember about the Maceys who I was talking about - I remember her saying openly in the class in front of me and a visitor and papa and all the children "She ought to be sterilised"! I didn't even know what the word meant then. At that time before the War it was an incredible remark to make. She was absolutely right!

*And at Christmas there was always a great party which your father organised.*

That's right. It was always - I had a birthday party with my friends on the 1st of January, the 2nd of January they had the school treat because they could eat up the buns. Oh dear! And it was - Mummy used to hire a



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bus for them, she used to say she wasn't having them arriving wet and cold it was bad, and they had - it was rather fun, it was the same conjuror who came two days, and an enormous meal round the big dining room; we had tables all over the place and a biggish meal. Then they had the conjuror and then papa gave each of them a present, and sometimes there was a Christmas tree, sometimes a cracker, but generally just papa and I gave out these presents. I think he used to get them from Hamleys and mark the things that were the right price and they were circulated round the school and the school marked out what they wanted and then they were sent for and then Hamleys did it in those days, I think they sent them back with the right names on them, I think it was all done by the shop. And the ones who were too old got 2s.6d. and they all got an orange.

*They really remember that actually.*

Yes I was talking to - again just as well for the ? I can't remember - very nice man who comes to church regularly and I said I remembered him in the Sunday School in a very tight blue velvet suit and I was always so sorry for him. Oh yes, he said, I hated that suit, I remember it quite well. It must have been about 50 years ago!

*And of course the Sunday School was flourishing in those days wasn't it?  
Who used to take it then?*

Mrs Hutton and I suppose Doris, who was the daughter. Mrs Hutton was the Clergyman's wife, but she was his second wife and she'd been a nursery governess so she was very well used to children.

*And it was carried on wasn't it?*

It was carried on - Theresa carried it on, Theresa Wilmot, and it went on right through the Wilmot era. At least I think it went on right through.

*And what other things can you remember that happened in the village during the year - I mean there was the Fete obviously.*

I think the Fete started in the twenties, and at one time there was a horse show at the bottom of the park, and that lost money so they didn't do it after a bit. But it's been going on and off ever since. I think they may have stopped it in the War; I think they probably did but I don't remember, I wasn't there myself. But otherwise it's been going pretty well ... I should think, absolutely.

*Was there anything else - well there was the Harvest Supper presumably.*

I think there wasn't you know. I don't remember any talk about a Harvest Supper - I think that's a fairly recent thing. I think there probably was one before the First World War, I think between the Wars, possibly because the farmers' wives were too busy there simply wasn't one because I do not remember it at all. There was a Women's Institute, of course; there was a Mothers' Union.

*Oh yes, the Mothers' Union in the village - there isn't now of course.*



No. I can remember the young Oliver Wilmott saying indignantly it ought to be called the Grandmothers' Union because nobody was young enough to be a mother!

*And was there ever some sort of ceremony or festivity when people used to come and pay their tithes, or their rent for the year, and something took place - they were given a supper or something like that?*

I think that's probably pre-First World War; I don't remember that at all. That is probably before my day.

3. *And when did you actually leave the village?*

Well I took a job in the War when I was 18 in 1940, I suppose, or was it '41. Anyway, I came back, I mean my family were there, I came back on leaves and things and I brought the children back. I was coming back to and fro until my father died in the sixties.

*So do you remember what Lodgers was like during the War?*

Yes, oh yes. We had soldiers billeted on us at the very beginning and then not again, and then we had the evacuees - we had London evacuees who took one look at Lodgers and fled back to London! I'd always been brought up, you know, you must eat up your rice pudding because the dear little slum children would have loved to have had it, and the dear little slum children looked at my rice pudding, spat it out and went back home!

*So in fact the evacuees didn't stay very long.*

The unaccompanied were very happy and they stayed, not necessarily in Lodgers but all round, and there was a canteen in Bridport which I used to go to for them, and the unaccompanied were generally perfectly happy, it was the mothers who couldn't stand it really.

*Oh some of them were accompanied by their mothers were they?*

Oh yes, yes, the beginning lot we had were all accompanied and they all hated it. And then we had another wave, and most of those went back, a few of them stayed on, not I think mostly in Lodgers - in the surrounding villages. And then we had a lot from Southampton and by that time the raids were much worse and the visitors from Southampton were far more frightened. They settled down far better. In fact we had two first, and then we had another two, all boys, one was called Gordon Carr ... never mind ... but anyway Mrs Carr came to see him with his six brothers and sisters, and that was alright, we spent a happy day together and Tibb took them down to the station - I had some petrol for that. Three days later she arrived with her six children saying she didn't like any of the other places they were evacuated in, she thought we were the best of the bunch and would we have her and the six children, which we did. She was a nice woman.

*And then they all dispersed, and did you lose contact?*



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I suddenly met one of them in a bus I remember in London, and one lot I think settled in Bradpole eventually, but I've lost contact yes. And of course I think the Southampton ones were all over the village - I mean it wasn't so far away, they were nearer being in the country and they weren't so different from us, and they settled down fairly well. And the soldiers - I think after the first pre-Dunkirk lot I don't think there were any actually billeted in the village: there were a lot round about Bridport, and we had the evacuation from Dunkirk - they came almost straight to Bridport. But that isn't Lodgers. Otherwise it was the usual story of rationing and ...

*Were people still making their butter and things in those days?*

Yes. I think it was probably slightly illicit, I'm not quite certain of the laws. There was a rather curious ... Mummy managed to buy a cow which she was allowed to do, and then she could have as much milk as she liked, but I think once you started making it into butter and things you were ... it's getting a bit grey, not black market but grey market. I'm not sure about that, it didn't really apply to me but ... and of course they had stuff from the garden. But that was the difficulty, I mean vegetables no doubt are very wholesome when they're boiled but they're not very nice if you go on eating boiled vegetables with nothing to flavour it. There was no cheese and the meat was dreadful. You got a chicken every now and then and you got fish, the fish wasn't bad, it was quite fresh fish, they managed that well. And then of course there was the British Restaurant in Bridport,

*Oh I remember those, they were terrible.*

They were pretty awful, but it was food! But I think things went on rather the same really - working parties - comforts for the troops.

*And were there land girls on the farms? Because a lot of the farm workers must have been taken off, the young men.*

I don't remember seeing them in Lodgers but I suppose they were there. Of course they weren't so much - I mean it wasn't as stiff as it had been in the First World War - I think quite a lot of the family farms the sons were given ... allowed to stay because it was an essential occupation. I don't remember any land girls, but there may have been some.

*I believe you say you know of a secret passage.*

Well there was always a story that there was a secret passage because The Court had originally been a monastery, the monks went perpetually to church including once in the middle of the night, and having come from France and they probably found our weather rather awful, they are said to have constructed a passage which led from the cellars of The Court through to the Crypt in the church. And we did find a curious sort of air hole in what is their - that lawn out at the back, do you know where I mean? In the middle of that, it was a rose garden and my father put it out to grass and when he was digging it out we discovered this air hole going down into apparently a rubble filled passage, and we think that was probably some sort of air hole to take them through, but the simplest way to discover it,

which we always rather wanted to do and didn't, was to open the Crypt and see because presumably there's a place there, and there's a rather odd cupboard cum passage in the cellars at The Court which is probably I should think the other end.

*And The Court was then built on the ruins of the monastery was it?*

Parts of the monastery are still there - a very thick wall as you go up the front stairs, and I think part of the cellars are probably ... it's always rather difficult to tell, like my Mill I mean there's always been a building there probably bits of it are very old but you can't tell which is which. It's a little easier with a smarter house like The Court but it's not very easy.

*When was the Mill where you now live a working mill?*

It was a working mill until the early seventies.

*Have you still got all the mechanism?*

No the mechanism was Victorian or late Victorian and we gave it to Sherborne School who wanted a project, and the wheel disappeared, I don't quite know how, but there has always been a mill there - it's mentioned in Domesday Book.

*Was that the first mill or were they the same vintage, yours and the Old Mill?*

I think this was the first one. I think that's called the Old Mill because it was closed first, but I don't know at all, I should think they're both pretty old. It was said to be the oldest working mill when old Harry Barnes died, and I was sorry, I was sorry to close it, but we wanted to live here. I mean it wasn't a viable thing by then, he kept it up because he liked it.