

Village Echoes

Interesting Enquiries – 1

Riseden Postcards

A steady stream of enquiries arrives on the Archivist's desk with the majority relating to family research. It is often enough to direct these to our website where the Church registers have been transcribed together with photographs of gravestones. However, sometimes some quite unusual questions are posed one of which is related below.

In June 2020 we had an email from a gentleman in Walsall in the West Midlands wanting to know about the Blunt and Dengate families of Riseden. On enquiring what relation they were to him, his reply was not as expected. He explained that his hobby was collecting postcards and letters sent from military postings during the First World War. If they sound interesting he will try to research the sender or recipient. He had come across a bundle of letters addressed to 'Florrie'.

The letters came from two cousins who were on military service in various places as far away as India or, nearer to home, Rochester. The soldiers moved around, as might be expected and Florrie herself lived on the Isle of Wight and Ockley in Surrey during the War, reasons or occupation unknown.

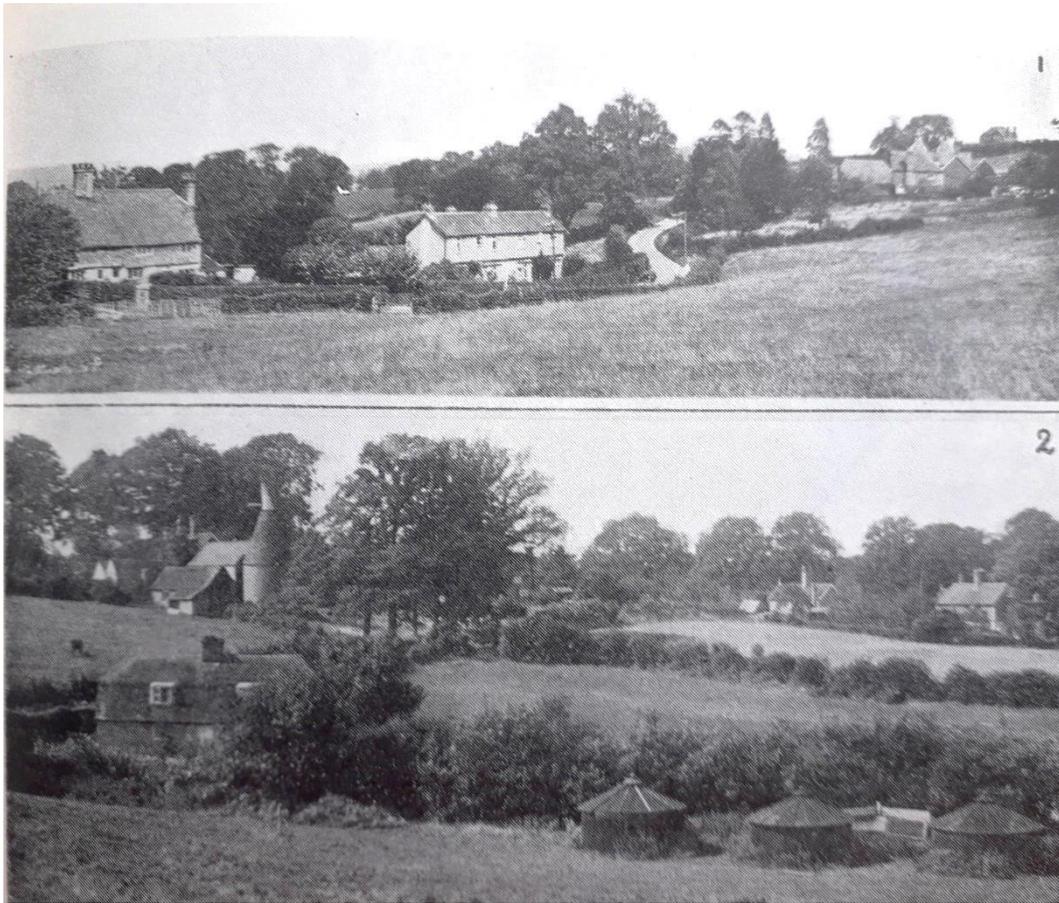
Riseden Quarter featured frequently in the letters but as he couldn't find this on a map the researcher was asking us where it was. It appears that Florrie was a Blunt, as was her cousin Edwin and her cousin Hugh was a Dengate. We were able to add to his information by referring to books and other records in the archives.

The Blunt family was one of the oldest and best known families in the parish. In 1935 Mr & Mrs C Blunt lived in one half of a set of cottages at Riseden. Across the road were two more cottages with more Blunts. George Blunt had been the tenant of Riseden Farm for 65 years until his death in 1916. There were also more Blunts in other locations in Kilndown and Goudhurst including Marlingate.

In 1935 the Dengates occupied St Michaels Villa, Forge Cottage and Fir Tree Cottage in Kilndown Village. Hugh had been a Sapper in the Royal Engineers. He was wounded on the Western Front in July 1918 and hospitalised in Bournemouth. In normal times he was an estate plumber and in WW2 he was in the Home Guard.

Towards the end of hostilities Florrie's long-time boyfriend Fred, who was also in the armed forces, decided to call an end to their courtship. This was all revealed in the letters, together with enquiries about the health of the many aunts and uncles at home. How was Aunt Nellie's eye and hoping that Uncle had recovered from his accident? Commiserations

were expressed on the break-up of Florrie's relationship (she married somebody else in 1921) and thanks for sending cigarettes. By 1935 Florrie was living back with her parents, Albert and Agnes Blunt in Riseden, as Mrs Percy.



The Riseden area in 1935

The cold facts of family research don't always bring to mind the human side of history but this cache of letters add so much to the basic births, marriages and deaths of our ancestors. At a time when war is very much on our minds it reminds us of the stories behind the statistics.

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