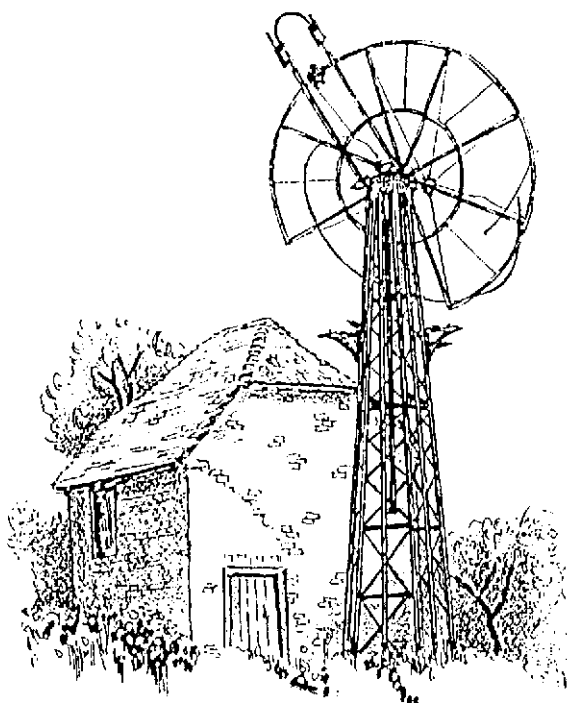


CRUX EASTON



STAGE
2000

*This project is part of STAGE 2000 Basingstoke & Deane
Borough Council's Millennium Initiative*

THE HAMLET

The Hamlet of Crux Easton is situated 650ft. above sea level in north-west Hampshire, a small cul-de-sac bordering the long distance trail known as the Wayfarers Walk. In early records the name appears as Estune (11thC), Eston, Eston Croc, Crookes Estone (13thC), Crockeston (14thC), and Crookes Eston (17thC).

In 1856 traces of early human habitation were found in the garden of Crux Easton Rectory: a Roman era burial of a woman (the skeleton is now in Reading museum) and an urn identified as a New Forest thumb pot (since lost). The Rector, the Rev. J. Bagge contributed an article on this to the Journal of the British Archaeological Asscn. (Vol.36, pp 123/4).

During the reign of Edward the Confessor (1005-1066) Crux Easton was held by Linxi but at the Conquest (1066) it was given by William the Conqueror into the possession of Croc, who is assumed to have been warden of nearby Chute Forest. It remained in the possession of his family until 1207 when a descendant, Avice, married Michall de Columbers who owned land near Vernham Dean and held hunting woods near Andover.

In 1441 Nichola, the last of the de Columbers, married John de l'Isle from the Isle of Wight. The de l'Isles', or Lisles, continued to hold the chief wardenship of Chute Forest and the lands which went with it for seven generations until the last of the elder branch of the family, the 7th Sir John Lisle, died about 1540.

Sir John's direct heir seems to have been his aunt Elizabeth Philpott who lived at Thruxton, near Andover. She, or one of her heirs, succeeded to the land and wardenship of the forest which they retained until the reign of Charles I (1625-49) when part of the ownership was transferred to a Mr. Hughes. The remainder was transferred by Charles II (1660-85) to the Duke of Albemarle in 1660 and thus ended the association of Croc's descendants. However, wishing to preserve the family name, Sir John left his estates in the Isle of Wight to Lancelot Lisle a member of a different branch of the family and it was a descendant of his, Edward Lisle, who having lost three children to smallpox in London decided to retire to the country and bought an estate in Crux Easton about 1692.

Edward Lisle became a keen agriculturalist and made copious notes on good farming practice in the district; he grew a variety of crops in a viable rotation system and was known to use fertiliser in the form of malt dust. His intention to publish his notes was not realised until after his death when his son Thomas, Rector of nearby Burghclere, published them under the title "Observations in Husbandry". The book became a best seller and copies are preserved in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the Winchester Public Library.

Edward Lisle (whose aunt Dame Alice Lisle was sentenced to death in her old age by Judge Jeffreys for harbouring two men who had taken part in Monmouth's rebellion in 1685) had 20 children and nine of his daughters built a grotto near the SW corner of what is now known as Grotto Copse. His youngest daughter, a talented artist, decorated the inside of the grotto and painted portraits of friends on surrounding trees. The auctioneer's sale catalogue of Crux Easton Rectory in 1928 credited her with the execution of the plaster ceiling in one of the rooms. The poet Alexander Pope, a family friend, wrote some verses in praise of the sisters and their grotto which are included in his published works:

Here, shunning idleness at once and praise
This radiant pile nine rural sisters raise,

The glittering emblem of each spotless dame
Clear as her soul and shining as her frame.
Beauty which nature only can impart
And such a polish as disgraces art.
But fate disposed them in this humble sort
And hid in deserts what could charm a Court.

About 1770 the Lisle estates were eventually sold to John Burton an ex-headmaster of Winchester College. Later the land became part of the Carnarvon Estate until 1939 when it was bought by Capt. Leonard Hill (a publisher of technical journals which included the titles World Crops and Dairy Engineering) and is still in the ownership of his family.

The site of Croc's manor house is now lost but a later one was said to have stood in the centre of the village at the western end of the avenue of lime trees though all traces of it had disappeared by the beginning of the 20thC. A series of earthworks and brick-arched tunnels radiating from the site remain a mystery; they were closed up in the 1930's. The lime trees were dated as being at least 200 years old in the 1940's - sadly less than half the original number are still standing.

Early records show the village had 10 households in 1428 and a 1676 census records a population of about 35: even as late as 1897 Crux Easton consisted only of the Church, Rectory, school, farm house and pub plus about a dozen scattered cottages. Today there are 25 houses, (the Porchester Estate cottages built in 1947, Charters in 1953 and New Cottages in 1960 being the most recent additions to the village). Most of the original cottages have been combined/converted into single dwellings and extended. Two houses near the now disappeared manor are still known as The Kennels; the present Manor House was originally Manor Farm; The City, a row of five cottages is now two houses; Three Legged Cross was the pub until 1954 and de Havillands was a bungalow built by Sir Geoffrey de Havilland as a weekend retreat and lived in by his sister-in-law. Other properties like Faithfulls and The Alders reflect the names of generations of local families.

Geoffrey de Havilland, son of the Rector, founder of the aircraft company made model aeroplanes in a workshop at the Rectory: he also built a motor bike and in testing it down the slope to the Rectory crashed into the church wall. He and his brother also amused themselves by shooting at the church bell to make it ping. He built his first aeroplanes in Fulham, London and transported them to Seven Barrows below Woodcott to test. At the second attempt the plane took a series of hops off the ground landing heavily, breaking some of its piano type rigging wires. All the Crux Easton school children were given a half day off to witness this event.

Later, he made regular "flying" visits to Crux Easton to see his family and often took the local people for short flights. Old Mrs. Alder in her 90's reputedly took her umbrella with her, while Mrs. Greenaway talked for years of her 'cloud hopping'. One of the fields on which he landed is known as the Lands although it is not certain he always used the same field: in C. Martin Sharp's book 'A History of de Havilland' it says that automatic flaps were tested in a field that had a gradient of 1 in 9. On March 10th 1924 a DH50 was test landed at Crux Easton.

The Simplex wind engine in the centre of the village is very rare, possibly being the only one of its kind remaining in its original position in Southern England. Constructed about 1891 by John Wallis Titt of Warminster it was originally used to grind corn and to pump water from the 450ft. deep well alongside: the water went into a reservoir opposite where the Porchester Estate cottages now stand and supplied only the Manor (Farm) House. The well house is about 100 years older than the wind tower and in 1920 the firm of Martin & Wilcox explored the possibility of finding extra water with a deeper borehole but the exercise proved unproductive; for some reason a local (unmarried) man was sent down to the bottom of the well in a bucket and it was said to have taken 20 minutes to winch him back up. It is thought the tower began to deteriorate when men being taken for WWI caused a labour shortage and later many young men left the village to work at the de Havilland

aircraft factory. It was listed Grade II in 1991 and renovated with a Heritage Lottery Grant in 2000/2001.

During WW2 the Ministry of Agriculture appointed area representatives to tell farmers what they had to grow in the "Dig for Victory" campaign. Nicknamed Little Hitlers these people had "carte blanche" as overlords with power to evict farmers from their property if they didn't comply. In Crux Easton instructions were given to grow potatoes; Capt Hill explained that the ground was unsuitable: nevertheless they were still planted, harvested and put into clamps. They all rotted.

The similarities and differences in farming today and yesteryear are interesting. Harvest still finishes about the end of September and winter crops are planted in early October. Lisle stated that it took one man a whole day to harvest two acres but if 20 men did the work they could harvest 40 acres a day: at the start of the 21stC 40 acres a day is still harvested but now by one man and a machine (though the cost of the machine is far greater than the wages of the 20 men).

Up to the 1940's horses (Suffolks) were used on the land. Beef and dairy cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens and ducks were raised; wheat, barley and oats were grown and haymaking was still done by hand. Today most of the land is arable growing oil seed rape, peas and modern strains of cereals.

For one and a half years on his release from prison in 1944 Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Fascists, lived with his family in Crux Easton House (the former Rectory). He was restricted to a three mile radius of the village and had a Det.Sgt. assigned to make sure he didn't stray but who was not billeted in the village!

Crux Easton telephone exchange (now in the Science Museum in South Kensington, London) was housed in the building opposite the Three Legged Cross and opened in 1936 with nine subscribers: one of the smallest in the country with a two figure exchange, the only access was through the manual

exchange in Newbury by dialling 01. It did not have a dialling tone only a series of clicks, the ringing tone being short blasts on one level. It was closed in 1971 when subscribers were transferred to the five figure Highclere exchange. Crux Easton still has a red K6 (Gilbert Scott) public telephone box which originally had an AB coin box needing 1d coins.

In the early 20thC the Three Legged Cross, the public house, was run by the Greenaway's. Mr. Greenaway died in a shooting accident in 1930 and his son, Jack, and his wife came home to help run the pub. There was no bar as in modern pubs, Jack would bring the beer from the still room in tankards. In 1954 the licence (together with others from this area) was transferred to the Greenham Common Air Base and Jack became a smallholder supplying the village with milk for many years. He was a churchwarden for 47 years.

THE CHURCH

The existence of a church is recorded in the Domesday Book and a Norman church was standing on the site in the 12thC. The present church built in 1775 by Mrs. Lisle replaced an earlier one and there appears to be no record of why this happened but it was described in the parish register of the time as 'this hideous structure'. Some Norman flintwork can still be seen in places round the base on the North side of the building.

The church was restored in 1894 by Mrs. Wake of Manor Farm, the main feature of this being the transposition of the door and a window on the south side of the nave. The door which appears originally to have been in the middle of the nave was moved to its present position and replaced by the existing window in which, it will be noticed, the panes are square rather than rectangular and the sill is wider than all the others.

The lintel of the original window can be seen above the porch. The seating was repaired, the font moved and the floor relaid at a cost of £90.00. A porch was constructed at a cost of £15 and the faculty (permission to do the work) cost £7.6s.4d.

The Rev. William Caudwell, refused to have anything to do with this work and wrote to a diocesan official 'Mrs. Wake collected and kept the money. It was done entirely against my wish as I had hoped in a few years time to have been able to have a better and more church-like building, as the present one is more like a barn than a church'. To record this restoration a chestnut tree, allegedly with a parchment beneath, and a stone were placed at the crossroads.

Another restoration took place in 1993 (but this time with no negative remarks recorded) when a Georgian style East window was installed in place of an ugly Victorian one, the nave ceiling replaced, a new vestry built and the roof repaired. The total cost at the end of the 20thC was over £6,500. During this work advice was taken to visit St. Mary the Virgin, Avington, one of the few remaining unaltered Georgian churches in Hampshire, to see its windows because a surveyor doing a structural report in 1990 had commented that we had 'a nice little Georgian church which had been spoilt by inappropriate Victorian alterations'.

About 1643 William Woodward became Rector. In 1649 he heard news of a new preacher in the area from London who claimed to be Christ, the Messiah. This man, William Franklin, having been given notice to quit his lodgings in Andover moved into Crux Easton Rectory with a woman he called his Spouse of Christ, as the guests of William and Margaret Woodward. The local clergy becoming alarmed at the "multitudes of people" flocking to Crux Easton to hear Franklin preach (many of whom became disciples) applied to the local Justices to issue warrants against both Woodward and Franklin. Margaret Woodward confirmed in court that Franklin was "her Lord and her King" and although the Rector tried to deny his claim that the man was Christ, it was proved that the

Woodwards had allowed Franklin and his Queen Spouse to lie together "in an adulterous way" under their roof. The Judge ordered Margaret Woodward be indicted for a Bawd, William Woodward had his living sequestered and they were evicted from the Rectory.

In 1897 the Rev. Charles de Havilland, father of the aircraft pioneer, had been bought the living by his father-in-law 'to release his daughter from the drudgery of life in Nuneaton'. Charles was described as a red-faced, thick set man with a small frail wife who hurried round the parish in a pony trap. On her death he married again to a shrewish woman who made his life a misery.

For part of the 19th century the Rector of Crux Easton was also minister of Woodcote but by the early 1920's the vicar of Ashmansworth had become the incumbent of both parishes. In this way the three parishes were administered until 1968 when the parishes of Crux Easton and Ashmansworth were combined with Highclere (Woodcote combining with St. Mary Bourne). All three parishes still retain their separate identity.

The pulpit is 18th century. The font, also 18th century, is Italian work, the stem and bowl originally having no connection: the much mutilated figures are believed to represent the bringing of the little children to Our Lord.

A set of communion plate was given in 1707 by Lady Mary Phillips of Garrendon, Leicestershire whose daughter Mary married Edward Lisle owner of the parish. The bible and two service books were presented by the patron, the Earl of Carnarvon, in 1880. Electric light and heating were installed in 1953. The carpets made in the 1980/90's and the altar frontal - the Millennium project in 2000 - were worked by members of the congregation.

The earliest registers giving details of baptisms, marriages and burials from 1702, are informal and contain

various notes about the parish: previous records had disappeared before the induction of the Rev. Shepard in 1827. The formal registers begin in 1812. The earliest gravestone is dated 1825 and the churchyard was extended eastwards about 1926. Some headstones were laid flat in 1953 and many others have since disappeared.

The Rectory (now Crux Easton House), being no longer required when the parish was combined with Ashmansworth, was sold in the 1920's.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

A school for up to 30 pupils was built in 1874 at a cost of £344 and opened with 21 children on October 31st 1881 with Sarah Brown as the Certificated Mistress. There were several changes of Mistress until October 5th 1891 when Benjamin Honell commenced as the first Headmaster, with his wife as sewing mistress. The Attendance Officer visited regularly, as did the Rector.

In 1899 when the school year began on July 3rd there were 48 children on the register and by October 4th, 53. The pupils included children who walked daily from Binley, Woodcott and Ashmansworth; it also took children who were visiting the village and evacuees during WW2.

The pretty gabled house now a private dwelling, almost opposite the churchyard, was the school. The school mistress lived in No.1 The Kennels which for many years was known as The School House.

The school was closed on the re-organisation of the national educational system by the Education Act of 1945 but the register finishes at 1943.

Some extracts from the School Register

May 17th 1901 'no children attended as they all had measles'.

December 1st 1910 'The Rector (the Rev. Charles de Havilland) came this morning to tell the children about the success of his son "with regard to his aeroplane" in which they have taken a great interest and, to celebrate the event, a half holiday was granted'.

February 5th 1912 'The school is very cold, one degree below freezing at 9am and later only 38deg. The ink was frozen for the greater part of the day'.

December 3rd 1912 'School still cold. Cleaner promised to light the stove earlier'.

In 1912 'Fred Goodman excluded for unhealthy condition of head'.

November 11th 1919, Armistice Day, 'Work suspended from 11am to 11.02am'.

April 8th 1921 'Classes taken into the play-ground to see the Eclipse of the sun at 9.15am and 9.45am'.

January 28th 1936 'Although a holiday most children attended school to hear the funeral service of his late Majesty King George V broadcast and then went to the memorial service at Ashmansworth at 3pm'.

July 3rd 1924 'Ellen Rutterford passed Junior Scholarship'.

August 1st 1935 'Miss Maberley called to inspect needlework to be exhibited at Ashmansworth Flower Show on August 3rd'.