

FARMING

Crockenhill, Eynsford and Farningham were well placed to supply fruit and vegetables to London. There were extensive market gardens in each settlement.

Food shortages led to an increased demand for home-grown food, with higher prices for farmers as a result.

Shortage of labour encouraged the increase of motorised vehicles and it was during the War that the tractor and the lorry became more common.

The labour force in Kent was reduced from 27,854 to 20,498.

Kent increased its acreage of crops by 43%. It came -
2nd for potatoes in increased acreage (behind Lincolnshire);
3rd for peas and beans;
6th for wheat (top came Cornwall);
8th for barley; 19th for oats.

Britain successfully increased food production, and the wheat harvest of 1917 was the best to that date.

LORRIES

It is unknown when the first lorry was bought by farmers in Eynsford, Farningham and Crockenhill.

The earliest lorries so far recorded in Crockenhill appeared in World War One.

The novelty and pride of owning a lorry is seen in photographs taken at the time.

Captions to photographs on separate sheet:

1. Caleb Lee & Sons' **Commer** or perhaps a **Palladium**. Driver Henry Harnett, son of village schoolmaster on mudguard with Dicky Field.
 2. John Wood had a **Dennis**, which did 12 m.p.h. in First World War (passenger in uniform).
 3. 1915 - Thomas Wood and Sons of Crockenhill bought a new **Hallford** lorry called 'The Factory Lorry' registration KT 7017, costing just over £782. It was scrapped in 1933. Here in 1928 at the Stone Hole, Green Street Green. The yard box on the left measured a man's work.
 4. 1916 - William Everest had a **Federal** lorry KT 303 (here in 1923). On 8 June 1916 Elsie Clements went to look at the new lorry and had a ride in it. Low number registration might mean it was used when bought.
- 1919 - Aleck Clements bought a lorry.

EARLIEST LORRIES IN CROCKENHILL



EARLY LORRIES

Caleb Lee & Sons' **Commer** or perhaps a **Palladium**, KT 9710. Driver Henry Harnett, son of village schoolmaster on mudguard with Dicky Field.



EARLY LORRIES

John Wood's **Dennis**, which did 12 m.p.h. in First World War (passenger in uniform).



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1915 - Thomas Wood and Sons of Crockenhill bought a **Hallford** lorry called 'The Factory Lorry' registration KT 7017, costing just over £782. It was scrapped in 1933. Here in 1928 at the Stone Hole, Green Street Green. The yard box on the left measured a man's work.

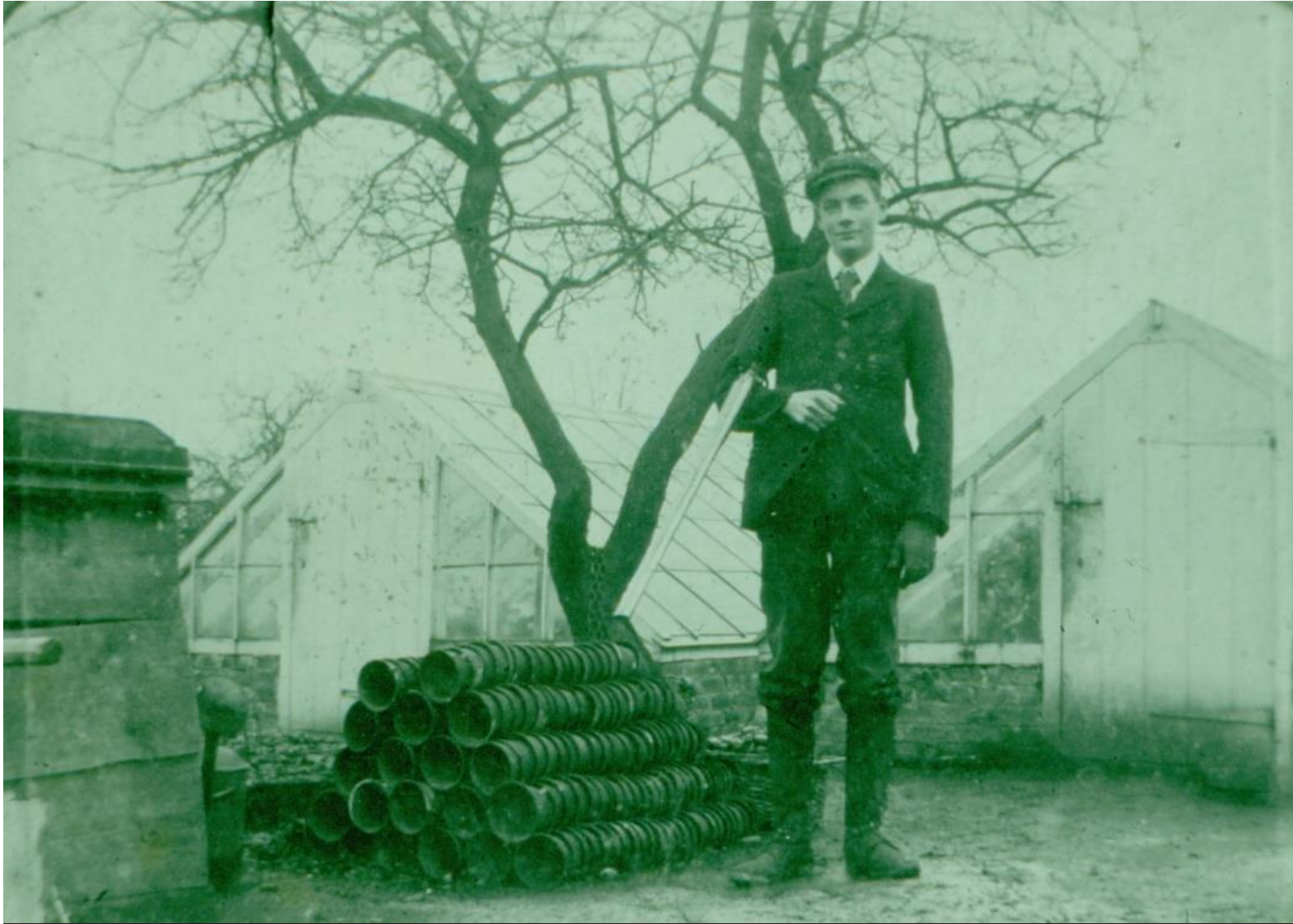


EARLY LORRIES

1916 - William Everest had a **Federal** lorry KT 303. Here in 1924 with young William Everest. On 8 June 1916 Elsie Clements went to look at the new lorry and had a ride in it.



GREENHOUSES AT TILECROFT, CROCKENHILL



Arthur Clements, Aleck's brother by greenhouses at Tilecroft, c.1915, just before he was called up. Note the stack of clay pots

GOSENHILL & TILECROFT FARMS, CROCKENHILL

Aleck Clements rented land from the Berens of Kevington, St. Mary Cray, at Boar's Hill behind Tilecroft, Stones Cross Road, where he lived, and land from the Hart Dykes of Lullingstone at Gosenhill and Cackets.

Elsie Clements' diary mentions some farm activities, but concentrates more on her life at home with the children.

From her diary Aleck seems to have had a mixed farm.

Livestock - sheep, cows, chickens

Crops - oats, hay, cauliflowers

The farm had greenhouses.

Fruit - apples, cherries, plums, redcurrants, blackcurrants, strawberries, raspberries.

Aleck bought and planted apple trees in a new orchard, and gave them a winter wash.

He might plough all day, plant vegetable crops or cart manure.

He often went to Borough Market, near Southwark Cathedral, by train in the early hours to see how his produce, which went by horse and cart, sold. After 1917 he was often given a lift to the market by lorry.

TRACTORS

Farm tractors were developed in U.S.A., but were designed for huge acreages of wheat. In Britain smaller tractors were required to cope with various field sizes and types of soil.

British tractors were developed in the early years of the C20th, but were largely exported, not being widely adopted in this country.

Thomas Wood & Sons bought a Burford tractor in 1917.

The earliest local record.



This was an American chain-track tractor weighing 25 cwt.

1917 - The Burford Cleveland tractor on trial at Ditchling, Sussex, where it was able to plough the heaviest Wealden clay.

BEATING THE SUBMARINE — The Burford Cleveland motor tractor hitched to a novel soil pulveriser.

HORSES TO TRACTORS

The pressure on farmers to increase food production was severely hampered by the requisitioning of horses by the military authorities.

Most farms used horse and man power, yet both were in short supply in the war years.

In 1916 Sydney Lee told Eynsford Parish Council that the Board of Agriculture was allocating horses to farmers who needed them for their keep, and if the animal died the loss would not be the farmers.



Typical horse-drawn balance plough at Charton Farm, Farningham, operated by W. Landridge, c.1910-1920?

Kent War Agricultural Committee lent farmers light draught horses, the use of a steam plough and controlled the sale of horses.

Most farms did not have their own steam threshing and ploughing engines, but hired them out in the peak seasons from firms such as Thomas Wood & Sons of Crockenhill.

ALECK CLEMENTS' FIRST TRACTOR - 1918

8 March 1918: One of his horses died, and he was unable to replace it at once.



Arthur Clements with horse-drawn plough at Tilecroft field, Stones Cross Road. Alf Brook with the plough, ?c.1910s

Timetable of purchase of tractor

2 April: To Dartford to order a tractor - two months wait.

3 April: Wire to say to say tractor coming next day.

4 April: Tractor arrived.

ALECK CLEMENTS FIRST TRACTOR - 1918



Lexie Clements, Aleck's son, recalled that his father's first tractor was a 'Cletrac' the trade name adopted by The Cleveland Tractor Company in 1918. It was not very reliable.

Use of the tractor

5 April: Took tractor to Gosenhill, where Aleck worked it for several days.

30 April: Mr Simmonds couldn't get tractor going all day, but next day it was better tempered.

Aleck made full use of his tractor and experimented with attachments.

28 May: Planned to hitch new tree washer to tractor - too close. Took it to forge for alterations.

29 May: Still going it tree washing with tractor.

30 May: Washer still at work, but draw-bar broke on rough ground - 80 gallons of wash ran out.

20 August: Aleck used tractor to pull self-binder cutting oats.

20 February 1919: Aleck sawing up wood with tractor.

EARLY TRACTOR



1937 Fordson N tractor at Cacketts Bank, owned by the Clements family.

After the first tractor, Aleck Clements adopted mechanisation, and was the first farmer in Crockenhill to run the farm on tractors alone. He was put down as half mad by other farmers, according to his son, Lexie.

INSIDE A GREENHOUSE, CROCKENHILL



Basil Wood in one of the numerous commercial greenhouses in Crockenhill - this one lay behind The Foundry growing chrysanthemums, c.1907. Elsie Clements tied 44 bunches presumably for market in late autumn 1916.

FARM STRIKE 1914

Headlines in Kent Messenger, 20 June 1914

THE KENT FARM STRIKE.

Affairs at Crockenhill.

MASTERS' UNCOMPROMISING ATTITUDE.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS.

AN ARREST FOR ALLEGED INTIMIDATION

SUMMONSES FOR LEAVING WORK
WITHOUT NOTICE.

AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE.

AGRICULTURAL WAGES

JUNE - AUGUST 1914 STRIKE, CROCKENHILL

Farm wages had traditionally been low, and after a membership drive many men in the Swanley district joined The National Amalgamated Union of Labour.

The farmers ignored the Union's request for recognition in 1913.

June 1914, after a ballot, farm labourers in the Swanley district went on strike.

Strikers' Demands - Recognition of their Union, and a minimum wage of 24 shillings a week with a half-day holiday on Saturday, without deduction of pay.

In fact the average wage for weekly workers in the village was 25 shillings.

Two farms were targeted - Messrs John Wood and Messrs Caleb Lee & Sons.

John Wood farmed 1600 acres with 15 acres under glass, and had 150 tied houses in the village. 50 men went on strike.

Caleb Lee & Sons farmed 550 acres, of which 400 were under fruit. 9 out of 10 of his men went on strike.

Several men were not re-employed and lost their homes. Other farmers also refused them jobs.

The strike ended with the declaration of war.

AGRICULTURAL WAGES IN WAR-TIME

12 March 1918 - Farningham Parish Council: A question of a minimum wage arose. The Chairman, A.E. Hannam, said it was unfair to farm workers to be told by Lloyd George to do all they could to assist farmers to produce food, when they had to live on a starvation wage.

Sir William Hart Dyke and Mr Wilson of Castle Farm said they paid 25s a week.

But one local able-bodied single man aged 21 only received 21s a week, with rent being deducted.

It was pointed out that some men received 30s a week, and a minimum wage would be unfair to them.

Decided - Posters announcing the minimum wage would be acquired.

2 April 1918 - Board of Agriculture & Fisheries said no minimum wage had been set, but able-bodied men were entitled to 25s a week, including rent.

Summer 1918 - The fixed minimum wage was 33s a week, from which farmers could deduct 20s per week board and lodging.

After the War fewer labourers were needed because of mechanisation, and many chose not to return to agriculture, but took other jobs instead.

FARMING - SHORTAGE OF ANIMAL FEED

MAPLESCOMBE VEGETABLE SHREDDING FACTORY

This operated during the War, in 1917 shredding mangel wurzels for cattle feed.

Late in 1917 it was taken over by the Government Food Production Committee. When visited by Dartford Health Inspectors it was found that the back shed where vegetables were cleaned was poorly lit and inadequately heated in cold weather.



Shorthorn cow with calf. Breed kept by William Alexander at Home Farm, Eynsford in the war years