

OCTOBER 1998

H I S T O R Y O F:

OLD MILL HOUSE, 41 UNION ROAD, BRIDGE
AND THE LEMAR FAMILY

Notes written by Gwen Herbert (nee Lemar)

In the 18th Century some Huguenot families escaped from France during the French Revolution and came to settle in Kent.

One of those families was "US" - the leMar family - (later to be written as Lemar). Our Ancestors were Market Gardeners.

Two centuries later, our family, Mr. & Mrs. G.F. Lemar and daughters, Gladys, Margaret and Gwen, moved from Canterbury to Bridge. The reason for this was that Mr. H.E. Burniston, Coal Merchant in Canterbury, for whom my father worked, had asked my father to move to Bridge to expand the coal trade in Bridge and surrounding villages.

So, on 28th February 1933, we came to live in Old Mill House, Union Road, Bridge (later to be numbered No.41).

Old Mill House was built c.1730 and when we moved in, in 1933, there were very few houses in Union Road. There were none between Old Mill House and the Coal Yard (where my father worked) which was situated at the top of Union Road (where the Oil Distribution Depot is today). In the Coal Yard stood a Mill and in earlier times the Miller lived in Old Mill House. This is the reason why Old Mill House faces up Union Road; the Miller always kept an "eye" on his Mill! A Mill-stone is still in the front porch at Old Mill House. The Mill was demolished in 1955.

Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Hollands were the previous occupants of Old Mill House and they moved to No. 14 Union Road, Bridge.

My father, (Mr. Lemar) had to do an immense amount of work to Old Mill House, i.e. levelling the floors, making ceilings and redecorating etc. In one instance, in a bedroom, when he stripped layers of paper off down to the wooden partitioning, he found signatures and ranks of soldiers who it seemed had been billeted in the house. (I wonder which war they fought in?)

Old Mill House has only one half brick internal wall, all the other "walls" having wooden partitioning. There is an iron "X" on the back and front walls, securing an iron rod which runs through the house.

When we moved in there were just two gas lights and no other means of artificial light, so candles and hurricane lamps were used. The toilet was outside and there was a cesspool and water-well in the back garden.

After a few years a cement rendering was put over the old brick outer walls and the sash windows were replaced. Because of these alterations, the house is not a listed building.

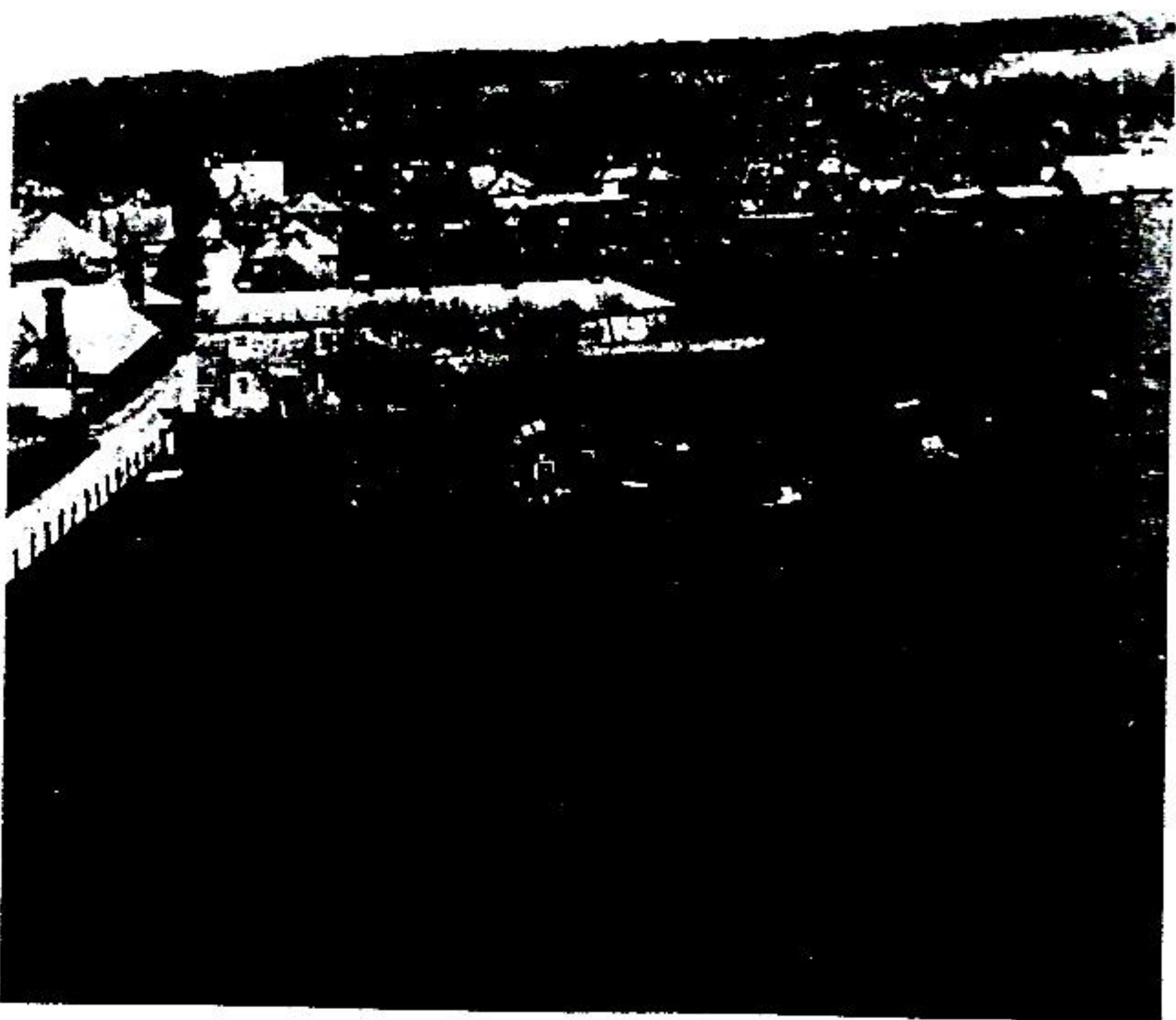
My father and mother (Mr. & Mrs. Lemar) died in 1980 and 1981 respectively and both are buried in Bridge Churchyard; we all attended the Church. My sister, Margaret, became organist at Bridge Church at the age of 14, holding the post for 14½ years. She married the local Policeman, moved to Gravesend and became organist at her Church there. She died in 1986.

Gwen (the writer of these notes) now lives in the West Midlands, but has always considered Bridge as "home".

Gladys, who worked for seven successive Matrons at The Union (later to become The Close and The New Close) from 1947 until her retirement in 1985 (38½ years) lived in Old Mill House until 15th September 1998 (nearly 66 years).

Old Mill House has deteriorated over recent years; it has been owned by four different landlords and the present Landlords offered my sister the move to "Mereworth", 55 Union Road, Bridge.

Ironically, Gladys has moved next to the very "reason" we moved to Bridge in the first place - the Coal Yard (now the Oil Distribution Depot)!



1933 →

A view of OLD MILL HOUSE taken from the MILL (note: no houses exist between the house and the mill)

→
THE
MILL
(which stood at the top of Union Rd. until 1955)



Old Mill House 1933/34



OLD MILL HOUSE, UNION ROAD, BRIDGE — September 1998 —





