

Wye Historical Society



A re-enactment, in 1949, of the arrival of Hengist in Pegwell Bay

Courtesy of the Kent Messenger Group

Newsletter December 2020

Society Matters

In this month's edition we bring you another three articles from local authors and an introduction to our 2021 enterprise 'Dig for History' If the Newsletter proves popular then we might continue publishing with pre-views of upcoming talks and other occasional items of interest together with Society news of a general nature.

Another topic which might be of interest would be a regular 'From the Archives', short articles taken from our own or Wye Heritage Trust collections.

Let me know how you feel about these suggestions and if you have items you wish to submit but are not sure how to present them, then we can find an expert to help you to prepare and present your idea.

All communications please to Tim Betts, via email at timb164@btinternet.com

Or by post to our Secretary, Priscilla Deeks, 42 Chequers Park, Wye, TN25 5BA

A committee meeting was held by Zoom on Thursday 10th. (Thank you to Rosie for hosting) The committee supported the development of Paul's idea of a Wye centric dig by members and friends on plots of their own land, items discovered will be analysed by experts and guidance on how to prepare a trench will be given, there are details about this enterprise in this newsletter, next months will contain further details. The request for £5 membership fees for 2020/21 has been well received and many generous members have paid the full subscription (my grateful thanks to them) we have received subscriptions from around half of our members, so if those who have not yet paid, would do so at their earliest convenience, we would be most grateful.

Please send your subscription to: - Wye Historical Society, Lloyds Bank, Ashford, 30-90-28 Account No. 00468410, including your name in the payment reference.

Alternatively, you can post, or hand deliver to our Treasurer, Anna Clark at

Burrington, Cherry Garden Lane, Wye, TN25 5AR. Please remember to quote your name and email address.

Finally, a follow on from last month's article on William Harvey, Revd. Rodney Schofield informs me that William Harvey's grandparents lived in Hastingleigh, so even closer to home than we thought.

You may recall in the last newsletter, we asked for questions and comments, three questions have been submitted.

1. Does anyone know details of the two people who feature in the blue plaque on the church wall and who clearly came to an unfortunate end?
2. Does anyone know about a tunnel in Wye, constructed in World War Two?
3. Does anyone know why Church Street is wide at one end and narrow at the other?

The Society is thinking of holding a webinar in January in conjunction with Our Place Wye.

The intention is to cover three topics of local historical interest, with the session lasting up to an hour. If anyone is interested in doing a presentation on a topic they have researched, please do contact Tim Betts. We would appreciate any support you can give.

Whilst we are still unable to meet members may be interested in furthering their local knowledge through reading, we have several books in stock which may be of interest.

Brook – A village in Kent	£8
The College of Wye	£5
Hinxhill	£3
Lady Joanna Thornhill	£6
Window on the Church of England	£4
Wye Parish Church	£4
Walk Round Wye (leaflet sets)	£5

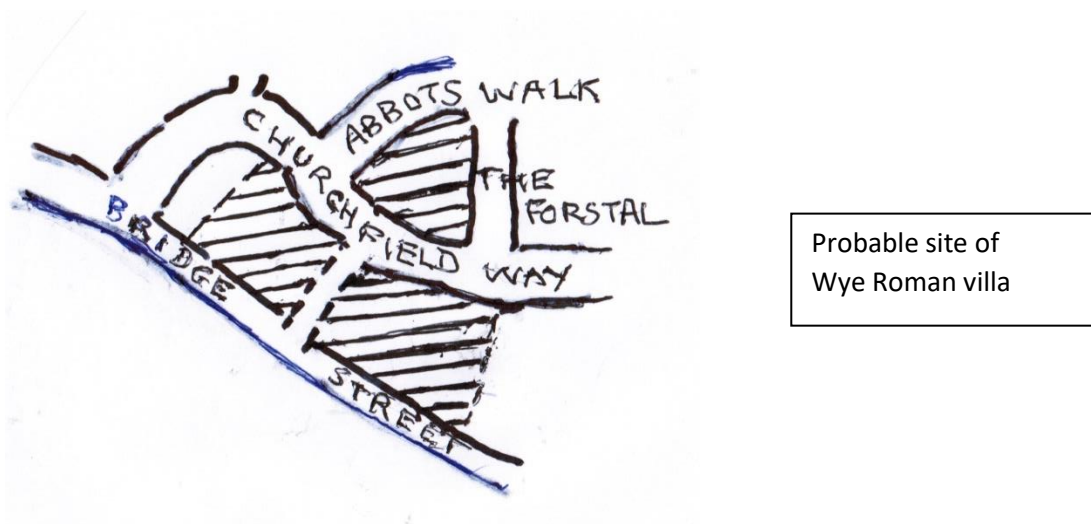
To order a copy, please contact Maureen, at saxe@btinternet.com

Any other suggestions you might have both for the newsletter and the Society in general would be most welcome, every suggestion will be given full consideration by the committee.

WYE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

'Dig for History' project

The W.H.S. Committee has been considering activities that can take place in 2021, even if COVID restrictions continue throughout the early part of the year and has approved an archaeological project to reveal more about Wye in Roman times. The *New History of Wye* pictured Roman Wye as an estate comprised of a large house surrounded by farmland on which there were small industrial units linked to local agricultural and mineral resources, e.g., pottery kilns, primitive iron smelting and blacksmithing, the drying and storage of grain and possibly the processing of wool and leather. The big hole in the evidence was the location and nature of the large house at its centre, which would probably been surrounded by outbuildings and smaller cottages. Over the years there have been three reports of Roman building material being dug up in the Churchfield Way area, and it is highly likely that the habitation site was under the built-up part of Wye village. The area of most interest comprises Churchfield Way, The Forstal, Abbot's Walk west of the junction with The Forstal, the north side of Bridge Street and the allotments behind.



The plan for the first part of the year is to encourage householders to dig small trial pits in their gardens, in convenient places of course! A suitable size would be a metre wide, two metres long and a metre deep. Objects which were not obviously modern would be kept, with a note of depth, ready for appraisal by a knowledgeable person who would also examine the section shown in the pit. Pit sections of interest and

significant finds would be photographed and retained for cleaning and expert appraisal. This would involve Dr. Paul Wilkinson who has agreed to be our consultant and would film suitable footage for possible inclusion in the B.B.C. 'Digging for Britain' Series. Promising areas could be further investigated by geophysical survey.

From the historical point of view, the country estate of Roman times seems to have survived to be the 'royal vill' of the Anglo-Saxon period, a seasonal residence of the Kings of Kent and a minor regional centre as head of the 'Wyewara Lathe', extending into the Weald as far as Hawkhurst. This continued as the rich and extensive manor that William the Conqueror gave to Battle Abbey, whose boundaries survive in the unusually extensive parish of Wye. To being able to trace this unit back to Roman times gives Wye an especially rich local history.

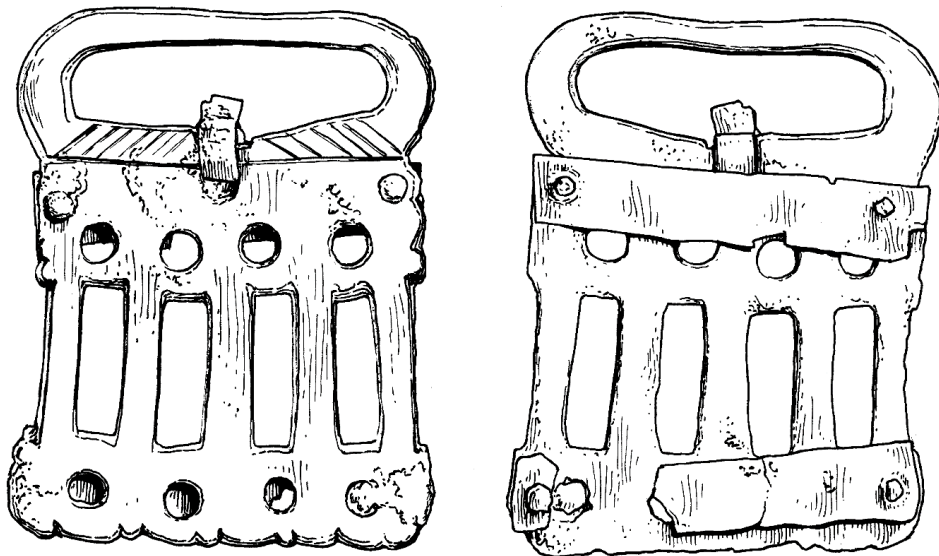
Paul Wilkinson, and probably several assistants, will direct the second part of the project, on farmland to the south of Wye. Jim Bradshaw some years ago discovered a rubbish pit filled with late Roman material from around 400 A.D., which included copper coins, a dagger, and a military style belt buckle. The style of belt buckle has been linked to small groups of well-armed Jutish immigrants that were allowed to settle as 'federates' (*foederati*), ostensibly to 'protect' the civilian population after the departure of the Roman legions. The intention is to make a geophysical survey of the settlement site associated with this rubbish pit and verify the results with a few small exploratory trenches. The history of Kent at this period depends mainly on sources from several centuries later of uncertain reliability, as may be judged from the accompanying article. Historians have been looking to archaeological discoveries for indications of what really happened.

PAUL BURNHAM.

HAS WYE ROMAN ROOTS?

It was probably in the year 409 A.D. that the last Roman soldier left the province of Britannia. The effect on life was shattering. Coined money ceased to be imported, taxes could no longer be collected and provincial and municipal government collapsed. If you could grow your own food and could barter for other necessities, life continued fairly comfortably, but with a constant edge of anxiety. For three centuries fighting had been left to the professionals, and in their absence, it was inevitable that law and order would break down. The most unscrupulous and domineering people took charge. In those days, the top man was called the *Tyrannus*, the tyrant, and it appears that in immediately post-Roman Kent this was Vortigern. To maintain his authority and to protect coastal communities from seaborne raiders, he needed hard men accustomed to violence. Adventurers from tribes outside the Roman Empire, including some who had come as raiders, were ready to hand, but they would require to be rewarded with land and/or regular food supplies. So, groups of such immigrants were recruited on an agreed basis, and were called *foederati* (from Latin *foedus*, an agreement or treaty). To indicate their status and authority they wore a uniform with a distinctive brass belt buckle.

Small communities of *foederati* were imposed upon the owners of large estates, and this seems to have happened at Wye, where there was a Roman estate, as described in the *New History of Wye*. On a small hillock to the south of the village, digging a ditch in the late 1960s revealed late Roman material including one of the distinctive belt buckles of the *foederati*, a dagger and some small copper coins from the latest period (330-380) from which Roman coins are commonly found in Britain.



Late Roman belt buckle from Wye

The best-known group of invaders who became foederati are the three boat loads of refugee warriors and their families who landed in Pegwell Bay in 449 A.D. (or by another calculation 428 A.D.). Their leader was called Hengest, and the background to their coming is described in the *Beowulf* saga. Hengest and his followers were originally settled in Thanet. According to the *Historia Brittonum* of Nennius (c. 800 A.D.), Vortigern wished to marry Hengest's daughter, and gave lands near Canterbury in return for her. Obviously, this has led to speculation about the exact location of the land. One possible clue is in the origin of the name *Hinxhill*. The oldest form of the name, in a Saxon charter of c. 864, is *Hengestesselle*. In old English *selle* means 'seat', so it was 'Hengest's seat'. In 1291 the name had mutated to *Henxhell*, and since then *Hinxhill*, thus obscuring its original significance.

After establishing himself on his new estate, Hengest fell out with Vortigern, apparently because promised supplies had not materialised. Vortigern would have needed to gather fighters from the well populated areas: North East Kent and the Medway valley. Hengest's war band met him at Aylesford. If he were starting from Hinxhill, he could have marched swiftly along the foot of the Downs on the trackway established in prehistoric times. Hengest was victorious at Aylesford, albeit according to tradition his brother, Horsa, was killed. As recorded in Bede's *History*, Hengest then established the Kingdom of Kent, which continued for more than 300 years. He ruled in association with his son Oisc, who became sole king in 488.

But where was the land that Vortigern had given to Hengest? As Hinxhill has always been a tiny place, it seems likely that this was part of a larger estate. A local historian, Mrs. E.V. Paterson, drew attention to Kennington (originally *Cynetun*) and, even nearer to Hinxhill, Conningbrook (*Cynebroke*). 'Cyne' means 'royal', and Kennington was a royal manor in later times. But Wye would seem an even stronger candidate. It was not merely a royal possession of the Kings of Kent, but was a *royal vill*, a seasonal royal residence where a local bailiff would gather rents paid as foodstuffs to feed the court during their annual stay. It was also the administrative centre of *Wye Lathe*, a district extending into the Weald as far as Hawkhurst. In this way the Roman estate survived through Saxon times to be given by William the Conqueror to Battle Abbey. To this day Wye has an unusually large parish, whose boundaries are probably very like those of the Roman agricultural estate. Perhaps Hinxhill was an outlying part of this, so that the recent addition of Hinxhill to Wye parish has unexpected historical roots. But whether this is true, or not, our proposed 'Dig for History' campaign should help to take the origin of Wye as a significant settlement back four hundred years from Saxon to Roman times.

Paul Burnham

When St Eustace came to Wye ...

Were the inhabitants of Wye at least partially to blame for the recapture of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187 and the subsequent failure of the Third Crusade (1189–1192) to seize it back from him? This was certainly the Crusade's main objective, and although Richard the Lionheart was successful in taking back the coastal cities of Acre and Jaffa, the return of French and German troops to Europe then left him with no alternative but a peace treaty with Saladin. The Treaty of Jaffa (signed on 2 September 1192) granted Muslim control of Jerusalem, with the proviso that unarmed Christian pilgrims were now allowed to visit the city. This was not seen as an entirely satisfactory outcome, and when Innocent III became Pope in 1198 he resolved that a further attempt should be made to conquer Jerusalem.

Military force was not, however, the only weapon needed. Innocent became aware that spiritual reform was also necessary – as detailed in a work entitled *Flores Historiarum* ('Flowers of History') which dates from the early 1200s. It was compiled by the chronicler Roger of Wendover, a monk of St Albans Abbey, and is presumed to be moderately accurate at least regarding events of recent origin (his writing has a tendency to be rather colourful and at times overstated). His writings were subsequently used by the more celebrated Matthew Paris as a basis for his own *Chronicles*. Roger recounts that it was in Jerusalem itself that a 'divine letter' had appeared in the later 1190s, castigating Christians for their heretical tendencies and poor Sunday observance, thereby suggesting that this laxity was the principal reason why God had not granted victory to the Crusaders. The letter came to the notice of Pope Innocent, who around the year 1200 'immediately commissioned priests to be sent out into every region to preach the purport of the letter'. Matthew Paris continued:

Amongst these men the abbot of Flaye (a Cistercian monastery in Normandy, St Germer de Fly, where the abbot was later entombed), **Eustace** by name, a religious and learned man, set out for England, and there shone forth in performing many miracles: he landed near the city of Dover and commenced the duty of his preaching in a town called **Wi**. In the neighbourhood of that place he bestowed his blessing on a certain spring which his merits was so endowed with the Lord's favour, that, from the taste of it alone, the blind recovered sight, the lame their power of walking, the dumb their speech, and the deaf their hearing: and whatever sick person drank of it in faith, at once enjoyed restored health.

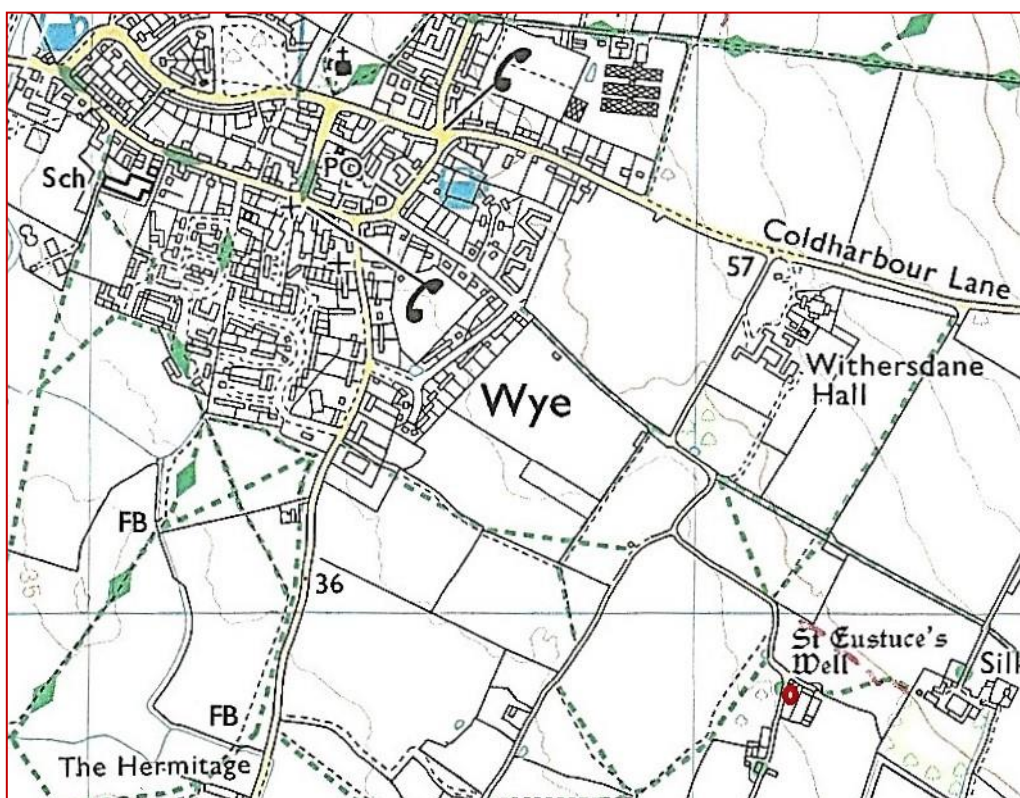
He goes on to tell of a woman with dropsy who drank the spring water: she at once vomited up two large black toads, which turned first into dogs, then into asses. However, a sprinkling of the water soon caused these monsters to disappear 'leaving behind them traces of their foulness', and the woman was henceforth completely well again! The site of this spring at Withersdane can still be seen today, just one kilometre from the present St Ambrose' Catholic Church. When the latter was built in 1954, 'St Eustachius' was actually proposed as its patron, but he lost out to the more substantial historical figure of St Ambrose.



Of course, Eustace's visit to Wye was only the start of his mission:

Afterwards going about from place to place, from province to province, from city to city, he by his preaching induced many to relax in usurious habits, admonished them to assume the Lord's cross, and turned the hearts of many to works of piety: he also forbade markets and traffic on Sundays.

His success, alas, was shortlived, since 'many returned to their old customs, like dogs to their vomit'. This relapse presumably included at least a few of Wye's parishioners – and we may further observe that the Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) never ventured beyond Constantinople, which it disastrously sacked and plundered.



Rodney Schofield

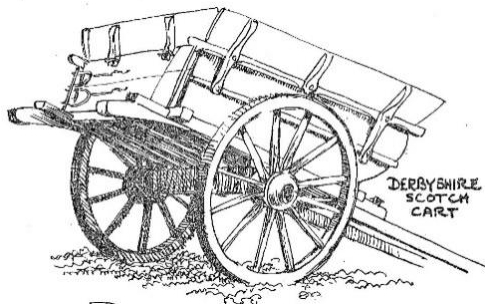
Agricultural Museum Brook - Carts and Wagons

Graham Bradley

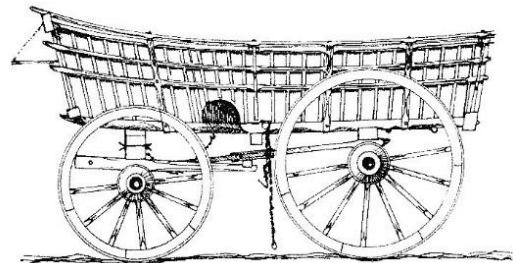
The agricultural museum in Brook is now run by a trust but for many decades it belonged to Wye College. Various items of Agricultural equipment, dating from the late 18th century onwards, are kept in a beautiful 14th century barn and an oast house dating to 1815. The museum is open to visitors on summer weekends and for small groups by special arrangement. Amongst many other things, the collection contains four wagons, two carts and 20 exquisitely made scale models of carts and wagons.

Names other than cart and wagon (sometimes spelt waggon) have been used in the past for these agricultural workhorses. Tumbril is sometimes used for a cart and wain can be used for either a cart or wagon. One thing, though, is universal:

a cart has 2 wheels and a wagon has 4.



Scotch Cart



Lincolnshire Wagon

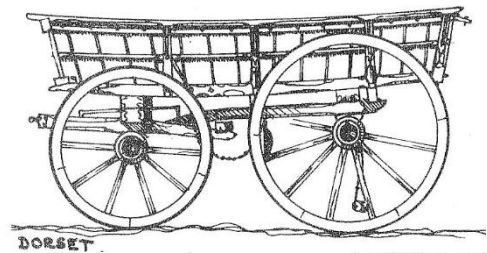
Carts have been in use in this country since at least the 4th century B.C. when the Glastonbury lake village was inhabited. Being lighter than wagons, they are more easily pulled by just one horse or ox. They have a smaller carrying capacity than wagons but have the advantage of greater manoeuvrability and are easier to use in hilly districts. Carts for use on the farm were more robust than those used solely on roads by tradespeople who usually had the luxury of attached springs. Most general-purpose carts on the farm had a tipping mechanism which made it easier to empty their contents.

Wagons were introduced into this country by Dutchmen in the 16th century. A coupling pole linked the front and rear axles together and there is a pivot on the front axle allowing greater manoeuvrability. The front wheels are generally smaller than the rear wheels so that the wheels can turn more before hitting the side of the wagon body.

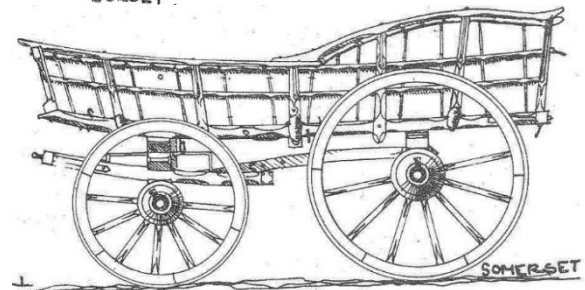
A fully loaded wagon was higher than a laden cart and the doors made in barns before the 16th century were not high enough. This led to doors being enlarged on one side of old barns over which a porch was often constructed. Once emptied, the wagon could be taken out of the smaller door on the opposite side. This is the arrangement in Brook barn, the barn having been built in the late 14th century and the porches added in the 16th century.

Wagon design varied from region to region mainly in the design of the body rather than the undercarriage which was fairly consistent throughout the country. The designs can be broadly classified into three types:

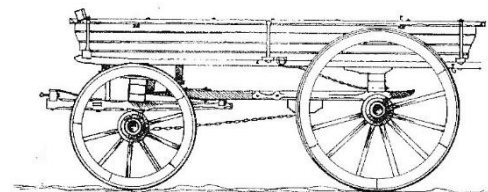
***Box wagons:** Although this is basically a box on top of the undercarriage there are still several differences in detail from a relatively simple box, e.g. Dorset wagon, to a more sweeping design, e.g. plank sided Hereford wagon.



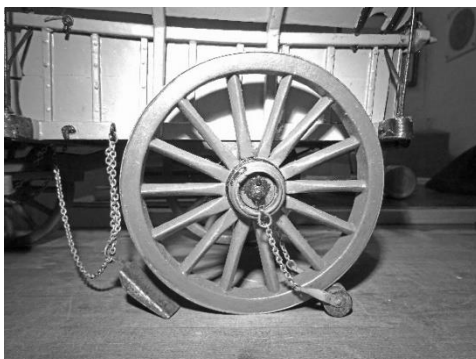
***Bow (hoop-raved) wagons:** The top timber on the side (the top rave) is hooped over the rear wheel producing an elegant looking wagon e.g., Buckinghamshire and Somerset wagons.



***Boat, Barge and Trolley wagons:** These were simpler, factory made, wagons in which the sides were angled outwards giving the appearance of a boat or barge, and when flat, a trolley. The wagon shown is a Midlands Barge Wagon. There is some overlap in these terms.



In some wagons the carrying capacity could be increased by the addition of a timber frame (ladders) at the front and back. In other wagons, poles could be inserted at each corner of the wagon as with the Kent wagon in the museum. The carrying capacity was increased in some wagons with an outrave hanging over the side of the body which also served to protect the wheels from debris.



A braking system would be required if the wagon was used in hilly areas. Two types of braking systems can be seen in this model of a Sussex wagon. There is a roller scotch which stops the wagon from going backwards and a wedge-shaped skid pan (drug bat) which is helpful in slowing the wagon as it goes down steep slopes.

Two of the wagons in the museum were used locally. The Kent wagon was used on Court Farm in Brook when it was owned and farmed by the File family (from about 1900 to 1957). One interesting feature is the name and address on the back. You can just see that the name Brook has been painted out and it is believed that this was done during the last world war to avoid giving information to a potential German invading force. The Coulter wagon was presented to the museum by Dorothy Coulter who will be remembered by many people in the village. The wagon was one of the vehicles used for a carrier and carter business run by her father who kept his horses on what is now Jarman's Field residential development and Orchard Drive.



Kent Wagon



Coulter Wagon

The undercarriages were almost universally painted red but the colour of the body was more variable although each county tended to have a traditional colour. For example, blue was the colour for Kent wagons and yellow for Midland wagons.

At the moment the museum is closed because of Covid 19 but, hopefully, it will be open next summer. Why not come along and enjoy an afternoon with us? Find out more on our web site: www.agriculturalmuseumbrook.org.uk

