

responsibility in the Army and became a member of the High Council as Commissioner for Canada.

The communal life of a country village is usually enhanced by the presence of always one, and very often many quaint and perhaps 'simple' characters, and Stock is certainly no exception to this rule. Owing largely to the spread of education, the traditional "Village Idiot" is now but a legendary figure of past days, but within living memory one can recall many amusing characters who might almost lay claim to this title. The inability to read or write on the part of many villagers often resulted in humorous episodes, as for instance that of an old lady whom the writer knew, describing to a friend a "Refrigerator" as "one of they new-fangled machines to hatch chickens in."

Then there was the well rememberd old gentleman who attended Church very regularly every Sunday morning, who used to walk the length of the village street in his shirt sleeves—wet or fine—with his umbrella under one arm and his jacket and waistcoat over the other, and on arrival at the Church porch, he would there finish his dressing!

There was another worthy old gentleman who attended the Congregational Church, and who invariably fell asleep at sermon time usually waking himself and startling the congregation with a loud snore, and always turning round in his seat to see where the noise came from!

Another well-known character in the village was a venerable looking gentleman who had a passion for tidiness in his garden. He carried his passion to extremes and was sometimes to be seen scrubbing the small stones and filling up the worm-holes with an eggspoon!

The presence of these worthies and many others almost as quaint greatly enriched the parochial life of the village.

CHAPTER III

SOME INTERESTING BUILDINGS

THE buildings which are of the greatest interest in our country villages, both historically and architecturally, are usually our Churches, and while the Parish Church of England is, as a rule the finest specimen of architecture and the greatest interest to the antiquarian, the Churches of other denominations should not be overlooked, as they often contain points of interest.

The Roman Catholic Church of Stock, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel is attached to the mansion known as Lilystone Hall on the road leading from Stock to Billericay. This Church was built in 1875, chiefly through the instrumentality of the Gillow family who resided at Lilystone Hall. The south-west wall of the Church, which owing to the peculiarities of the site is not orientated, is circular, and the whole building is very massive, the thickness of the walls being some three feet. The Church is well worth a visit, and the interior decoration is much admired. The altar is a fine piece of work, and the Church generally is reputed to be one of the prettiest of the Roman Catholic Churches in the county. There is a gallery at the north-east end, and the Church seats approximately 100 worshippers. There are memorial brasses to members of the Gillow family, some of whom are buried beneath the foundations of the walls. There is also a tablet in memory of the Rev. Monsignor Cologan, who was priest here for 37 years. A handsome memorial board is affixed to the north-east wall in memory of those connected with the Church who gave their lives in the Great War. Although the Church is attached to Lilystone Hall it is quite public, and admission can usually be obtained at any time. The presbytery, the residence of the Priest, stands on the opposite side of the road at the top of the hill.

The Parish Church dedicated to All Saints, stands in a commanding position at the summit of the hills and makes a charming picture when entering the village from Billericay. The Church consists of a nave, north aisle, chancel, tower and porch, also an organ chamber which is of more recent date than the main building.

Part of the Church probably dates back to the eleventh century, the tower, porch and north aisle having been added in the fourteenth century. The large fan-light above the West Door, is a fine specimen of fifteenth century carving. There are five stained glass windows, two erected in memory of former rectors, the Rev. E. J. Edison and the Rev. E. P. Gibson. The tower is a noble specimen of the carpentry of the period, and the clearing away of old cupboards and vestries which was done in 1926, has revealed its beauty in a striking fashion. There are no altar tombs in the Church, but a number of slabs and brasses in the floor will interest the visitor. There is also a memorial to Sir Richard Twedye by the side of the pulpit, which has a particular interest as it was this Knight who built the almshouses at Stock, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. These Almshouses, which form one of the historical spots in the village, are still standing and are occupied by worthy old folk.

There are a number of tombs of outstanding interest in the Churchyard, among them being the large family vault of the Prior Johnson family opposite the west door. A popular belief among the children is that if one runs seven times round this tomb and then places one's ear against the railings, the singing of the angels may be heard! In the north east corner of the Churchyard, which was reserved in olden days for the "excommunicated, unbaptised and heretics", are several Roman Catholic altar tombs. The Roman Catholics now have their own cemetery.

In 1904 the Churchyard was enlarged by the addition of a new piece of ground, (given by the late Mr. W. Dunn, of Lilystone Hall), this part now being used exclusively for burials, and still called by some of the older inhabitants "The New Churchyard." The Churchyard contains approximately between 7,000 and 8,000 remains. There are three entrances—the main one from the High Road and two footpaths.

The Congregational Church which stands in the High Street, is a well-proportioned edifice built of red bricks manufactured in the village. The seating accommodation is about 200. It was erected in 1889 and the spacious School-room at the south end was added in 1906. The seating and interior woodwork throughout is of pitch pine, and the decoration is plain but dignified. There are no monuments in the Church, but there are two foundations stones in the north front wall bearing the names of Mr. E. A. Brunwin and Mr. W. W. Duffield, two well-known and staunch supporters of Congregationalism in Essex during the nineteenth century. There are also special commemoration bricks in the west wall of the School-room giving the names of those who were associated with the work in 1906.

It may be interesting to the reader to take a walk through the village and note some of the older buildings, and the sites of others that have gone.

Starting from the Wash and proceeding up the hill we come first to the mansion known as "Lilystone Hall." This was built in the reign of William IV, on the site of an old Manor Farmhouse known as "Stock House", probably part of the Manor of "Blounts" (or "Blunts"). This was for many years the residence of the Prior-Johnson family.

The Almshouses which, as previously mentioned, were founded by Sir Richard Twedye in the sixteenth century, are worth noting. These have lately been restored, and are in good condition.

Continuing our walk from the Church Green, another site of interest is the garden of Church Green Cottage where formerly stood two old cottages with quaint bow-shaped windows. These were demolished about 1897. "Church Green Cottage" itself was originally two cottages, but it is now one house.

Where "The Lodge" now stands, there was once an old hostelry, the name of which is believed to have been "The Rose." Very little that is authentic appears to be known about this except that it stood open to the road with a "green" in front, similar to that at "The Ship" Inn on the Chelmsford Road.

The present Rectory, on the right-hand side of the road, was built on the site of the old Rectory (which dated from the fourteenth century) about 1735.

The two old cottages on the left-hand side of the street should not be missed. These are known as "Tudor Cottages" though only one is now in a habitable condition. This has an original "Bottle" chimney stack, and a fine ceiling of oak beams on the ground floor.

Where the "Rectory Hall" now stands was at one time a 'saw pit' where timber was brought in the rough state to be cut up by hand.

Continuing along the High Street to "The Square", we notice a very old building, "The Cock" Hostelry, which stands on the boundary of the parishes of Stock and Buttsbury, the dividing line running through the taproom. An interesting feature of this building is the huge old chimney, a relic of the days of sweep boys. An old tale told in connection with this is that two men,—one a sweep and the other a burly farmer—were having an argument as to which of them was the faster runner. The sweep maintained that he was, and offered to compete in a race with the farmer, on condition that he be allowed to set the course. The farmer un-

suspectingly agreed and the race commenced from the middle of the Square towards the Green, the farmer easily keeping up with the sweep. After doubling back down the High Street, however, the sweep entered the taproom of the "Cock" and headed for the chimney. The farmer having agreed to follow whatever course the sweep took, found much to his dismay that his bulk did not permit him to ascend the chimney, and so the sweep won the wager!

A small cottage on the left, a little way down "Swan Lane" attracts us as a building at least two hundred years old, and one on the right known now as "The Farthings" is another specimen of eighteenth century work.

Where Buttsbury Terrace now stands there was at one time a 'Malting' where malt was made in large quantities. This was demolished in 1890, and the present houses erected on the site.

Continuing (now in the parish of Buttsbury) we see some old cottages on the left facing the Village Green. Here again are red brick buildings probably built with local material, but these have been considerably altered since they were originally constructed.

Where there is now the handsome rhododendron garden of "Greenwoods" once stood two more cottages, but these were demolished as long ago as 1865. On the right hand side, facing north-east stands a quaint old cottage which was probably standing at the time of the 'pottery' business, and is presumed to have been the residence of the proprietor.

Turning to the right along the road leading to the Common the first building we see is quite interesting, though it has been considerably added to and improved since originally built. It is the old "Jolly Millers" beershop, now known as "The Bakers Arms". It will be recalled that Morant speaks of a mill at Stock in 1437, and it was adjoining this building that the mill stood. There is also evidence that a mill was standing here in the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was one of the old wooden "post" mills on a round brick base and could be turned on a swivel to face any direction according to the wind. Part of the old granary may still be seen. As mentioned in Chapter II this mill was moved to a site in the present Mill Meadow in 1845.

Adjoining the garden of the "Bakers Arms" is an old building which was apparently one time part of the Mill property. This building was used as a Day School by the Nonconformists for many years during last century and is still known as "The British School."

Continuing our walk 'round the Common' we see on our left a narrow lane which is really a *cul-de-sac*. leading only to fields and farm lands. This is known as "Birch Lane", and at the far end

is an old cottage which was formerly kept as a beerhouse, and known as "The Cherry Tree". The licence has long since been done away with, but the old house remains, also a fine cherry tree in the garden.

Returning to the main road we pass into the Mill Road, and find ourselves opposite "Well" or "Small Gains" Lane. At the corner of this lane, which takes its first name from an old well in an adjoining field, there formerly stood a pair of quaint old cottages, which were demolished in 1893.

Continuing down the Mill Road one notices on the left a group of dwellings up a short bye-lane. An old cottage has lately been demolished here, but the pair which are still standing glory in the name of "Pantile Hall", derived presumably from the make of tiles with which they are roofed. There is also one larger house which is remarkable for its exceptionally low ceilings, the ground floor rooms appearing to be little more than six feet in height.

We come next to a row of brick built cottages standing well back from the road on the right hand side with spacious gardens in front. These are some of the oldest dwellings in the village and they stand as originally built, with little if any structural alterations. One of these cottages bears the date 1447, but the authenticity of this is open to doubt. These cottages are now privately owned, but were at one time the property of the Parish and are still known as "The Workhouse Cottages." Running down by the side of these cottages is a narrow lane leading to the Common and known as "Workhouse Lane." There are three groups of cottages and also a single one down this lane, but none of these call for any special attention. They are all probably 18th century buildings.

Almost opposite "Workhouse Lane" is the entrance gate to what was once a garden belonging to an old cottage which formerly stood here. Both garden and cottage have now disappeared, but the gateway remains. This cottage which was demolished in 1904 was one of the numerous "bakehouses" of the village, and had a large brick oven attached. Here for many years a 'baking' business was carried on, but in this connection it should be remembered that the term 'baker' did not necessarily mean the same as the term is generally used to-day. Nothing, or very little was *made* on the premises, the oven being chiefly used for baking other people's food. This was in the days before the modern kitchen range, and ovens in the ordinary cottage were an unknown luxury. At the cost of one penny it was possible to have your 'Sunday dinner' cooked here safely while you were at Church, and it was quite a common sight to see a stream of people going to the bakers' to fetch their mid-day meal after the Church service.

Further down the Mill Road, we pass the garden of the house known as "La Roseraie." On the site of this garden there once stood a large barn which was open to the road, where threshing was carried on in the season. For many years this barn was said to be haunted by the ghost of a headless woman, and the tale gained popular belief to such an extent that few would pass that way at night alone. With the removal of the barn, however, the ghost was apparently 'laid' as the superstition has entirely died away.

Adjoining "La Roseraie" are two older cottages standing sideways to the road, and facing the Roman Catholic School. Between this School and the road is a large garden and on this site there stood formerly four cottages in two pairs. Two faced the road and two faced S.E., forming—with the two still standing—three sides of a square. One pair had a thatched roof, and one cottage was yet another of Stock's numerous beershops, and was known as 'The Pig and Whistle.'

Here we come to the Wier Pond, a well-known feature of the village which is thought to have been one of the sources of water supply in the days of the early Britons, as its position indicates that it is the remaining one of the four corners of an encampment.

Passing the "Weir Pond" on the right and four old cottages on the left, we notice a little further along three very old dwellings, one of which is now in ruins. The largest one on the north end, was originally known as "Tyle" or "Pottery" House, another reminder of the industry which has passed away. This stands with very little alteration practically as it was built, in the 16th century, or early 17th.

The last building in the Mill Road has an interesting history; it is an 18th century house, and during the last 25 years has been used in the interests of a great variety of trades, having been in quick succession a baker's, a greengrocer's, a fishmonger's, a milliner's and a butcher's. The house has a large brick oven at the back.

On the right-hand side is the picturesque "Bear Inn," with the village smithy opposite, and this brings us to the High Street, which we have already visited.

Before concluding a perambulation of the village there are two more sites which should be noted. The first is the narrow strip of grass at the S.E. end of the "Weir Pond." Here for many years stood the village 'Cage.' In olden days before the machinery of law and justice had been developed, petty offences such as drunkenness and disorderly conduct were dealt with summarily by incarceration in the Cage, which seems to have taken the place of the stocks, that are just as often to be found in other districts. As far as it has

been possible to discover the Cage was a wooden building about 8 ft. square, with iron bars in front, not unlike the cages seen in the Zoo to-day. Any person arrested for drunkenness was taken by the village Constable and deposited in the Cage, usually for one night only, though the term of the imprisonment varied according to the gravity of the offence. Stock then abounded in hostelrys and beershops, there being no fewer than 10 in and around the village (four of which have disappeared) and drunkenness was said to be rife. Saturday evening was the favourite time for a drunken brawl, and it was the delight of the village youths to bait the prisoners in the Cage on the Sunday morning, before they were released. The Cage was removed by the authorities about 1850, and unfortunately there appears to be no record of its disposal.

Also in Mill Road opposite "Moat House" is the old burial ground belonging to the Congregationalists. This has long been disused as a burial ground, but it was on this site that the first Congregational Church or 'Independent Meeting House' stood. This was built in 1812, and it stood here until 1910, when it was no longer required for religious worship and was therefore pulled down. It was a plain rectangular brick building, seating about 150 persons, and it was used regularly for worship for about 90 years. There were marble tablets in the Church to the members of the Moss family who were stalwarts of Congregationalism, and these tablets may still be seen affixed to what was the north boundary wall of the little burial ground. There are about 15 graves in this piece of ground, some of which were formerly under the floor of the Church.*

The question of education is always an important one, even in a village, and a word must be said here about the various schools of the district. The oldest school building is the National School standing on the brow of the Hill almost opposite the Parish Church. This school was built in 1839, and apart from minor alterations and improvements remains very much the same to-day as when it was erected. It is the chief school of the village, and is under the control of the Church of England.

The other School building is St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School, which was erected in 1892, chiefly through the liberality of the Gillow family. This is undoubtedly one of the finest buildings in the district. It stands just off the Mill Road, and the best view of it is obtained from the meadow where the Roman Catholic Cemetery is situated. It is a lofty structure of red brick, well lighted and ventilated, and has accommodation for some

* Further interesting facts bearing on Nonconformity in the village are given in Chapter IV.

200 scholars. There is a statue of St. Joseph in the south-west wall.

In addition to these Schools, there are numerous houses which have been used as private schools at various times, but with the increase of travel facilities to Chelmsford, Billericay, and other neighbouring towns, these private schools no longer hold the position they once held, and most of them have been discontinued.



CHAPTER IV

NONCONFORMITY

IT is no exaggeration to say that Essex, as a county is richer in Nonconformist history than any other in England, and to get a true idea of the history of a Free Church in an Essex village one must perforce go back much farther than the actual date of the formation of the Church into a corporate body, must indeed go back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and witness the grim and silent struggle for liberty of conscience and freedom of worship, a struggle which has lasted through many generations even down to our own time.

During the fifteenth century the records of this part of the country are rather scanty, but early in the sixteenth century we have evidences of the struggle for religious freedom which was taking place throughout the country. In 1527, John Tyrel of Billericay was apprehended on a charge of heresy and was burnt. He is mentioned in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" (32-41). The death of Edward VI, in 1553, and the accession of Mary to the throne marked the commencement of a long and fierce struggle for existence on the part of Evangelical Religion, the history of which is written in letters of blood. The determination of Mary to restore the Roman Catholic order of worship throughout the country met with stern opposition from the humble folk of this county who had ever been lovers of freedom and justice.

On April 26th, 1553, Thos. Watts of Billericay was apprehended and brought before Lord Rich, and he suffered martyrdom at Chelmsford on 14th June, 1555, being burnt at the stake. David in his "Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity" records in vivid language the last moments of this brave soul who gave his all in the cause he held so dear.

The persecution continued with unabated fury during 1556 and in that year three persons from Billericay and Great Burstead were sent up for trial with a letter to the effect that "they were not conformable to the orders of the Church but that there was no

doubt that by the punishment of these and others sent before, this district could be brought to good conformity." Two of these Elizabeth Thackvel and Joan Horns, were burnt together at Smithfield, on 18th May, 1556.

With the death of Mary, in 1558, and the accession of Elizabeth things became easier, and one of the first acts of Elizabeth was to release all who had been imprisoned for conscience sake during Mary's reign. Unauthorised preaching of the Gospel was, however, strictly forbidden, and public worship according to the rites of the Church of England only was allowed. During the first year of Elizabeth's reign the New Prayer Book was issued, and conformity to this was strictly enforced.

In 1593 an Act was passed "for the Preventing and Avoiding of such Great inconveniences and perils as might grow by the Wicked Practices of Seditious Sectaries and Disloyal Persons." This Act provided that "If any person above the age of sixteen years should obstinately refuse to come to Church for the space of a month, or be present at any assemblies, conventicles or meetings under colour of exercise of religion, he should be committed to prison, there to remain without bail or mainprize until he should conform" which he was required to do by making public and open submission in a form which demanded that he should say among other things "I do humbly confess and acknowledge that I have grievously offended God by absenting myself from Church, and in using and frequenting conventicles, and I am heartily sorry for same."

The Rector of Stock at this time was William Pindar, who was instituted in 1580. In a survey of the double beneficed men, given in David's "Annals," Mr. Pindar 'Parson of Stocke' is mentioned. The other living he held was Springfield, where he resided, the parish of Stock apparently being in the charge of a Mr. Newton, Curate. Pindar was succeeded by William Symonds in 1587.

The accession of James I. to the throne in 1603 was hailed by the Evangelicals with sanguine hopes, but they were doomed to disappointment. In his speech at the opening of his first Parliament the King said "The Puritans and Novelists I call a sect rather than a religion, who do not differ from us in points of religion as in their confused form of policy, being ever discontented with the present government and impatient to suffer any superiority, which maketh their sects insufferable in any well-governed commonwealth."

James soon followed his ominous words up with deeds, and in the same year (1604) new canons were issued to which many of the conscientious clergy refused to subscribe, and persecution began

again in earnest. By the end of 1605 (according to David) no fewer than 300 ministers were either silenced or deprived of their livings. This persecution continued intermittently until James died in 1625 and Charles I succeeded to the throne.

In 1629, the Rev. Thomas Hooker of Little Baddow was apprehended on a charge of non-conformity and brought before the Court of High Commission. So highly was he esteemed, however, that a petition was signed on his behalf by 49 Essex ministers among whom were "William Pindar, Parson of Stocke," and "Thos. Clapton, Rector of Ramsden Bellows." Hooker was acquitted and soon afterwards made his way to Holland and eventually joined the Pilgrim Fathers in New England.

Events now moved from bad to worse, and during the years 1630-1640 the strife and discontent spread to all parts of the country.

Charles summoned his fourth Parliament in 1640, and the Elections were held in early April. The members for Essex included Sir Francis Barrington, Sir Harbottle Grimston and Sir Henry Mildmay. Charles found this Parliament anxious to reform the Church, and as they expressed it "to remedy the diseases and distempers which are in our body politic." This did not please the King, however, and he dissolved the Parliament on May 5th after a life of only three weeks. For a time an attempt was made to govern without a Parliament, but this failed, and another Parliament was summoned to meet in November 1640.

One of the first acts of this Parliament was to appoint a Committee to enquire into the lives and conduct of scandalous ministers of the Church, and in June 1641 an Act was passed forbidding any clergyman to hold two livings, and also that if any clergyman should be absent at one time 60 days from his living, he should 'ipso facto' forfeit it.

As mentioned earlier, the Rector of Stock was William Pindar who succeeded Symonds in 1619. He also held the living of Langdon Hills, and it is probable that he resided there for it would appear that a Curate was appointed for Stock, as an entry in the Parish Registers reads as follows:—

"1625, 22nd May.—Dorothy Pepper, daughter of Bartholomew and Anne, was baptized by me, Richard Cole, Curat de Stock." This Mr. Cole apparently succeeded Mr. Newton in the curacy.

A special committee for Essex was appointed in 1643 to interview the clergy, and arrange for the sequestration of the livings where such was deemed necessary. Notwithstanding a Proclamation by the King declaring this Committee to be illegal and their

enactments to be treated as null and void, the work of sequestration was proceeded with, and by 1646 many of the clergy had been removed from their benefices.

At this time the living of Buttsbury was held by Richard Foster. Articles dated November 29th, 1645, were exhibited against him, and it was agreed between him and his parishioners that he should leave, and the living was sequestrated with his consent. (see David's "Annals" p. 220). This living was sequestrated to Henry Bartlett, but the return made in 1650 was: "Paul Negus by petition of some in the libertie; an insufficient preacher." It would seem that this parish was no more fortunate in its new Rector than it had been in the old. Mr. Negus did not live to see the Restoration and to suffer the consequent ejection which doubtless would have been his lot. He died in 1659, and an entry in Stock Parish Registers reads:—

Burials: 1659, 18 Feb. Paul Negus, Curate of Buttsbury."

Mr. Pindar was removed from the living of Stock and Langdon Hills in 1643, and according to a memorandum in the Parish Register, "One Holmes, and one Duke and Martin Simpson were put in by Parliament." The return for the Parish in 1650 was "Mr. Duke, by sequestration; a very weak and insufficient preacher."

Duke was apparently succeeded by Mr. Martin Simpson who held the living until the Restoration, when Pindar recovered it, but Mr. Pindar seemed to have had no wish to return to the scene of his former labours, and he removed to Springfield in 1661. The living of Stock was then taken by Charles Hool, the famous schoolmaster and grammarian, who was instituted on December 10th, 1660.

Such is the record of the first Independent ministry in Stock. Unfortunately there is still much that is obscure as it seems evident that chroniclers of the Restoration period were anxious to find favour in the public eye, and found it convenient to forget largely, both the vices of the Anglican Clergy and the virtues of the Parliamentarians.

The story of the Great Ejection of 1662 and the many hardships which many conscientious clergy were called upon to endure, is of course a matter of history. In 1689 however, the Toleration Act was passed, and organised persecution became but an unhappy memory.

The great Evangelical Revival of the 18th century had a marked effect in Essex, and by June, 1798, the Essex Congregational Union had been formed with about 32 Chapels throughout the County. From the year 1795 to 1825 about 27 chapels and places of

worship for those called "Independents" were formed in Essex, among them being Stock, Ingatestone and Wickford.

An outstanding name in connection with the growth of nonconformity in this district is that of William Moss, a member of the well-known Moss family living at Thaxted in north Essex. The family were moderately wealthy and their chief business seems to have been corn milling, an industry for which Thaxted had been noted for many years, and of which the Moss family probably held the monopoly in that neighbourhood. William was born in 1774 and about the year 1796 he married Mary Green of Felsted. Having served his apprenticeship in the milling trade he left Thaxted for Stock where he purchased the post mill which stood in the meadow where the present mill stands. Business prospered, and the present brick tower mill was built about 1800.

It may be mentioned that the Moss family history has several interesting points in view of the nonconformist activities of William Moss. One of his ancestors was the famous Dr. Robert Mosse, Dean of Ely Cathedral in 1713, and Chaplain to Queen Anne, whilst two other members of the family also held high positions in the Established Church: Dr. Charles Moss, Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1766, and his son Dr. Chas. Moss, Bishop of Oxford in 1807.

It may be that William Moss was converted to the cause of evangelical nonconformity by the services at Thaxted Independent Church, or it may have been an echo of the great Revival which had swept England under Wesley and others. The fact remains, however, that as soon as William Moss arrived in Stock he gathered round him a small band of religious minded folk, and under the guidance and supervision of the Ministers of the various Churches in the surrounding district the first Independent or Congregational Church at Stock was formed in 1801.

There was, of course, as yet no building, so the little company met regularly for worship in the Mill House where Mr. Moss resided. Before any private house could lawfully be used for worship a licence had to be obtained from the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese, and a copy of the application for this licence is still in the possession of the present Congregational Church at Stock. This reads as follows:—

"These are to Certify Whom it may Concern:—

That on the day of the date here of the Certificate hereunder written was duly Registered in the Commissary Court of the Lord Bishop of London for the parts of Essex and Hertfordshire and the same is in the words and to the effect following (viz.):— TO THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD, Bielby, by Divine permission Lord Bishop of London, WE whose names are hereunto subscribed being Protestants dissenting from the Church of England,

called Independents, in and near the parish of Stock in the County of Essex, in your Lordship's Diocese, do hereby certify to your Lordship that part of a building in the aforesaid parish of Stock belonging to Mr. William Moss, is intended to be used and set apart as a place of meeting for religious worship for Protestant Dissenters of ye above persuasion, AND we do hereby desire that the same may be registered in your Lordship's Court pursuant to an Act of Parliament made in the first year of ye reign of their late Majestys King William and Queen Mary, entitled an Act for exempting their Majesty's Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penalty of certain laws. WITNESS our hands this 10 Day of August, 1801:— John Thornton — John Mabbs — Joseph Gray — William Moss — . Dated at Chelmsford the twelfth day of August in the year of our Lord, One Thousand, Eight Hundred and One.

(signed) J. O. Parker,
Deputy Registrar.

This house continued to be licensed for worship for some twelve years, but in 1812 a plot of land was purchased in the centre of the village at the rear of the house known as "Tyle House" (which still stands). A subscription list was opened, and in the following year the first Free Church building in Stock was erected on the ground adjoining "Tyle House" garden. This building was opened for worship in 1813. Services were at first only held on Sunday evenings, but later on in the afternoons also. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining suitable preachers, morning services were not held regularly until some years later, though there was usually a morning service once a month.

The Indenture confirming the purchase of the land for the erection of the Church, bore the signatures of the following eighteen people: William Jarvis, Sarah Jarvis, Joseph Woodcock, William Moss, (Rev.) Benjamin Hayter, (Rev.) John Thornton, (Rev.) David Smith, (Rev.) Samuel Douglas, George Threadgold, John Mabbs, George Rolph, James Mabbs, John Adey, Thomas Hodges, William Johns, Daniel Blyth, Thomas Milbank and William Gladwyn.

William and Sarah Jarvis were the original owners of the property and Joseph Woodcock was a Deacon of the London Road Congregational Church, Chelmsford. Rev. Benjamin Hayter was the first minister of the Congregational Church at Ingatestone, being ordained there from Hackney College in 1813. In 1815 he undertook the oversight of Stock Church in conjunction with Rev. John Thornton and remained Pastor of the two Churches (Stock and Ingatestone) until 1831.

Rev. John Thornton was minister of the Independent Church at Billericay for 40 years (1800-1840) and was the prime mover with William Moss in the formation of the Church at Stock. He was a gifted preacher and an author of no small literary talent, publishing

in all some twenty-three books. His memoirs issued by his son shortly after his death, give some very interesting accounts of his work in and around Stock district.

Rev. David Smith was the Independent minister at Brentwood and Rev. Samuel Douglas was minister of the London Road Church, Chelmsford.

Mr. George Threadgold was a native of Stock and engaged in the milling business. He was a rival of William Moss in this trade, but they were the closest of friends and his son married a daughter of Mr. Moss.

Messrs. John and James Mabbs were brothers and both engaged in farming and were Deacons of the Independent Church at Billericay. Mr. Thomas Hodges was a native of Little Baddow and a Deacon of London Road Church, Chelmsford. Mr. John Adey was a brother-in-law of Mr. Moss and was a baker by trade. Mr. William Johns was a native of Chelmsford and a Deacon of London Road Church. He was also the first Treasurer of the Essex Congregational Union. Mr. Thomas Milbank was a native of Little Waltham and a Deacon of the Baddow Road Church, Chelmsford. William Gladwyn was one of the founders of the Essex Congregational Union.

When the Rev. Benjamin Hayter left in 1831 the Church invited the Rev. James Mercer of Wickford to take the Pastorate of the Church at Stock. This he consented to do and the two Churches were united under one pastorate until 1835 when Mr. Mercer removed to Devonshire.

It was about this time that the Church at Stock felt able to support a minister of their own and a call was sent to the Rev. John Eames Isaac, of Peterborough, to become their minister. Mr. Isaac accepted this invitation and his Recognition Services were held on March 24th, 1836. No fewer than eight ministers of the surrounding churches took part, and a stirring account of the services is to be found in the old records of the Church. Mr. Isaac remained at Stock until 1852 when he accepted a call to Colyton in Devonshire, where he died in 1858.

In 1852 the Rev. George Moore became minister of the Church at Ingatestone and the two Churches were once again united under his Pastorate and he continued to minister to the Churches at Stock and Ingatestone until 1860, when he removed from the district.

For two years the pulpit was occupied by various preachers from Chelmsford, and from 1862 to 1864, Mr. George Palmer of Chelmsford, was the Lay Pastor of the Church.

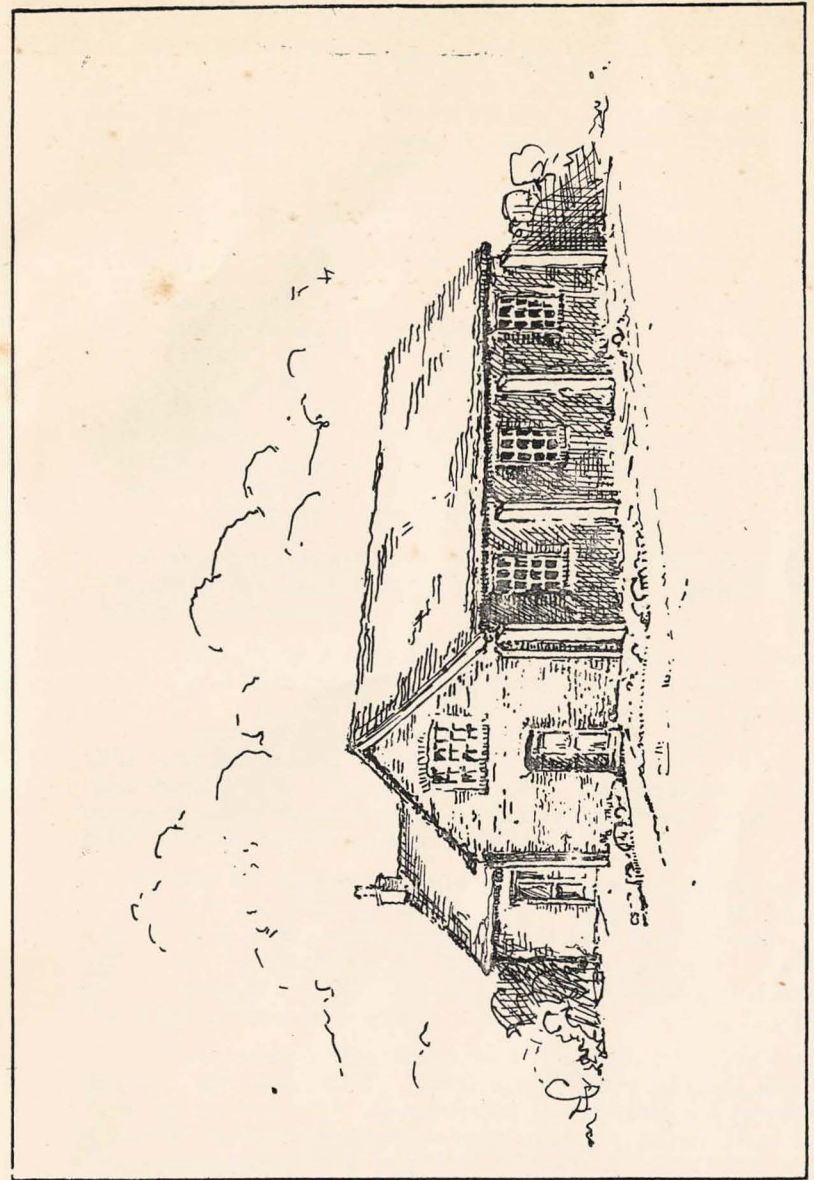
In January 1865 the Rev. Anthony C. Gill accepted a call to the Pastorate which he held until the end of 1867. He was a diligent and

earnest worker and did much to consolidate the work of the Church. For a few months the pulpit was occupied by students of Hackney and New College and in March, 1868, Rev. W. E. Darby of New College became the minister, but he remained for only a year and he removed to Chippenham. It is interesting to note that Mr. Darby had a very distinguished career and held Pastorates at Bath, Sheffield, Plymouth and Watford. He was Secretary of the Peace Society from 1888 to 1915, and the Hon. Degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him for his work in connection with the international relationships between England and the United States. He died in 1922 at the age of 78.

The Church building which was erected in 1813 was a plain rectangular edifice measuring approximately 40 feet by 20 feet, with a small vestry at the east end. It was built of red brick with a slated roof. The windows were square and the glass plain. The furniture and pews throughout were of pine stained dark and varnished. The seating capacity was for about 120. There was a central aisle, and the pews were of the square "box" type, each closing with a door. There was a gallery along the east end with a seating capacity for about 40. The only means of lighting was by candles until 1875 when the first oil lamps were brought into use. Two large candelabra were suspended from the ceiling, each bearing 12 candles. These were on an endless chain, so that by raising one the other was automatically lowered. There were also a number of candle sconces round the walls. For many years, of course, long tallow candles were used and these usually required 'snuffing' at least once during the Service. The snuffing of some 40 candles was a somewhat lengthy process and was usually carried out during the singing of a long hymn. It is of interest to record here that when the building was being demolished in subsequent years a pair of solid brass candle snuffers were found between the wood panelling and the brick wall, having apparently slipped down into that position by accident.

The Services were simple and plain with the exception of the music, which might almost be described as elaborate. The hymns used were from Dr. Watts's Collection, and as few of the congregation could read, the hymns were 'given out' by a Deacon. The better known ones were read out a verse at a time, but the lesser-known ones two lines at a time. Many of the hymns had ten or twelve verses and the tune often entailed the repetition of one, and sometimes more lines of each verse, so it can easily be imagined that the musical portion of the Services occupied some considerable time.

The first "instrument" used was an ordinary tuning fork and it was not until about 1835 that a clarionet was brought into use. This was followed by a violin and flute, and later by a violoncello.



THE OLD CHAPEL, STOCK, 1812 - 1910

The "orchestra" occupied seats in the gallery around a square baize-covered table on which the music was placed.

The great event of the year was the Church Anniversary when friends assembled from far and near, and the Services then held were very much the same as they are to-day. The tea between the afternoon and evening Services was laid on tables in a large shed in the Mill Meadow, or sometimes in the base of one of the post windmills.

The Jubilee was celebrated in 1862, and elaborate notices of this appeared in the Essex County newspapers.

Following the departure of Mr. Darby in 1869 the Church was without a Pastor for nearly two years but in 1871, the Rev. Thomas Osborn became the Minister. He was a gifted scholar, and in addition to his ministerial duties he also taught in the British School, and later he carried on a private school at his own house. Mr. Osborn held the Pastorate of the Church until 1880, when he accepted a call to Battlesbridge Church. He remained in residence at Stock, however, for some years after this, and continued his school until his death which took place in 1885.

During the years 1880-1884 the pulpit was supplied by students from one of the London Colleges and also by lay preachers from Chelmsford and elsewhere.

In 1884 efforts were made to revive the work of the Church, and Mr. W. J. Nurse was elected as Secretary which office he held until 1909. In 1884 the Rev. A. Kluht of Billericay and Rev. J. W. Houchin of Ingatestone were elected joint Pastors of the Church, and they held this office until 1887. This new effort soon made itself felt in various ways. The congregations greatly increased and it became apparent that steps would have to be taken towards providing a larger building.

In 1885 Mr. William Webster presented to the Church a piece of ground in the High Street, and it was at once decided to take steps towards raising the necessary funds for a new building. An appeal for subscriptions in 1886 met with generous response, and by the autumn 1887, sufficient money was in hand to warrant the commencement of building.

Unfortunately at this time, the Church was again without a Minister, the Revs. Kluht and Houchin having resigned the co-Pastorate early in 1887. However, the new building was proceeded with, and the Opening Services were held on Easter Day, 1889 with a performance of the Cantata "Esther" on the Easter Monday.

In 1888, Mr. Walter Humphries,—a lay preacher, was invited

to undertake the charge of the Church, and he served the Church faithfully until the end of 1890, when he became Pastor of a church in Cambridgeshire.

Again the Church was left without a Minister, but the work was carried on, and in October 1891, Mr. Francis Pile who had been a Town Missionary in Birmingham, was invited to the Pastorate. He accepted the invitation, and during his ministry the new Church was freed entirely from debt and various repairs and alterations were carried out to the old Chapel which was adapted and used for the various social gatherings of the Church.

From 1894 until 1901 the pulpit was supplied by students from Hackney College, and among those who visited Stock during this period are several whose names have since become well-known in Free Church circles.

During the summer months of 1900 the interior of the Church was thoroughly renovated and re-decorated and improvements made in the ventilation, etc., the services in the meantime being held in the Rectory Hall.

A special Church Meeting was held in October, 1901, to consider the advisability of inviting the Rev. C. M. Longhurst to become the Minister. Mr. Longhurst accepted the invitation of the Church to become the Pastor for a limited period. This invitation was subsequently renewed and Mr. Longhurst remained as Minister (by annual appointments) until June 1909.

In August 1903, the owner of "Rose Cottage" (the house adjoining the Church and now "The Manse") consented to sell this house together with the surrounding land, and as the Church had long desired to secure this house and the ground for a Sunday schoolroom, it was decided to purchase. A mortgage was arranged, and various friends of the Church assisted by loans and the purchase was completed in the early autumn.

A Sub-Committee prepared plans of the proposed new Schoolroom and these, after various alterations and revisions, were finally passed, in March, 1906. In the meantime the members of the Church and Congregation had worked strenuously to raise the necessary funds for the building of the Schoolroom and it was found possible to commence the work in July, 1906. The foundation stones were laid on July 17th, 1906, by Mr. C. A. Morris, of London; Miss Caldecot, of Ingatestone; Mr. W. J. Cook, of Brentwood, and Messrs. A. Sanders and G. James of Birmingham, as well as by a number of the younger members of the Church. The Schoolroom was opened in the autumn of 1906, and has since proved invaluable for Sunday School work and the many social activities of the Church.

In September, 1907, the old organ at Fryerning Parish Church was purchased and removed to Stock and after a thorough renovation it was brought into use and has since proved to be of great value in the musical portions of the services. It is of great interest to note that this organ was built first as a "barrel" organ in 1826, by Flight & Robson, and remained in use as a "barrel" until 1870 when it was rebuilt by Rust, of Chelmsford, and re-constructed as a single manual organ. It then remained in constant use in Fryerning Church until its removal to Stock in 1907.

At the close of the year 1908, the Rev. C. M. Longhurst felt compelled to retire from the active Ministry, and when he retired in June, 1909, the Church made him a handsome testimonial.

In February, 1910, Mr. J. W. Jarvis reported that the old Chapel building had fallen into such a bad state of repair that a considerable sum would be required to put it in a safe condition. However, it was felt that it would not be worth while to spend money on the old building, and Mr. Jarvis was therefore authorised to pull it down and lay out the ground with ornamental trees and shrubs, as a disused burial ground. This work was carried out in 1910, thus bringing to its end after nearly a century the first Free Church building erected in Stock.

In 1910, the Rev. E. J. Hammond, of Oxford, accepted an invitation to the Ministry and his pulpit eloquence and winning personality quickly became widely known in the district, and the congregations increased rapidly during his Pastorate.

In 1913 the Church made a final effort to clear off the mortgage remaining on the Manse. A bazaar was held in October which, with sums collected by individual members, resulted in a sum of £175 being raised. The whole property was thus freed from debt, and the deeds handed to the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

The Church was perhaps at this time more prosperous than ever before in its history, but a great sorrow befell the Church and congregation when in December, 1915, their beloved Pastor died. Mr. Hammond was the first Minister of the Church to answer the "great call" while holding the Pastorate, and his loss was very keenly felt. He was loved and esteemed by all.

The Church during this most difficult period of history (the Great War), was greatly helped by friends from neighbouring Churches and the pulpit supplies were well maintained. The Rev. R. Partner, formerly of Plaistow, who was living in retirement at Hutton, offered his services as part-time Minister, and these were gratefully accepted.

In November, 1917, the Rev. Theo. Devine of Ipswich, accepted

a call to the Ministry and remained at Stock until June, 1923, when he left for Mayfield, Sussex. He was an earnest worker, and his departure from Stock was much regretted as both he and Mrs. Devine had greatly consolidated the work of the Church, especially among the young people. Mrs. Devine's work was especially valuable as leader of the Women's Meeting and organiser of a Guild for the girls of the village.

Fortunately the Church was successful in finding another Minister and in December, 1923, the Rev. W. Herridge of Chalfont St. Giles, accepted a call to the Pastorate. Mr. Herridge served the Church well for two years, and his work as leader of the Young People's Society, is perhaps the best monument to his memory. He remained at Stock until October, 1926, when he accepted a call to Billingshurst in Sussex, where he passed away in 1929.

Although without a Pastor for over a year, the work of the Church was well sustained, and in August, 1927, it was found possible to invite the Rev. Thomas W. Mason, late of Rayleigh, to the Pastorate. Mr. Mason accepted and he very nobly carried on the work especially among the Young People of the Church and village.

In 1928, during the tercentenary celebrations of the birth of John Bunyan, Mr. Mason dramatised a considerable portion of "The Pilgrim's Progress", and under his direction this was performed as a Pageant at Stock on August 4th. This was perhaps the most ambitious undertaking the Church had engaged upon for some years. The Pageant was produced in seven scenes with Prologue and Epilogue, and there were no fewer than eighty-five characters in costume. Those taking part were recruited chiefly from the younger members of the Church and Congregation, but many inhabitants of the village not directly connected with the Church, also rendered valuable assistance, and the performance will doubtless go down in the annals of Stock as one of the finest achievements of the Church and incidentally of the village itself.

Mr. Mason concluded his ministry early in 1930 and was succeeded by the Rev. G. MacGregor Tutt, of Polegate, but the latter was compelled by ill-health to relinquish the Pastorate at the end of 1931. At the time of writing the Church is under the able leadership of the Rev. G. C. Lambert, M.A., B.D., who commenced his ministry in April, 1932.

Such, briefly, is the story of the Congregational Church at Stock.

CHAPTER V

THE VILLAGE OF TO-DAY

THE condition of the roads and the means of transport were very poor during the middle ages, and it was not until the early part of the nineteenth century that these conditions showed any improvement.

In 1840, the Eastern Counties Railway (later known as the Great Eastern Railway Co., and now the London & North Eastern), commenced building their line from London to Norwich, and thus opened a new era for rural districts. With a station at Ingatestone, it was possible to reach London from Stock in about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours, though few ventured on this hazardous journey in the early days of railways.

The next line to be built in the county was the London, Tilbury & Southend Railway from Fenchurch Street. Southend is, of course, the nearest seaside resort of any importance to Stock, being some 18 miles distant by road, but there was now a station at Pitsea only 10 miles away, and although some still preferred to drive right through to Southend, many more went via Pitsea to enjoy the experience of a railway journey, which by this time was not regarded as quite such a fearsome adventure.

In 1888, the Great Eastern Railway decided to build a line to Southend, and it was proposed to make a junction with the main line at Ingatestone and to run a line through Stock to Ramsden and Wickford, thus avoiding a deep cutting at Billericay. However, when this scheme was mooted, Stock landowners rose in fierce protest against this "encroachment of modern civilisation on their peaceful domains" and such strong representations were made to the Railway Company that they altered their route and made the junction at Shenfield, with the result that the nearest Railway Station is some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Stock instead of at the foot of the hills by the "Wash" as was originally proposed. A Station at Billericay however meant the opening of a new world to many of the villagers, and looking back to-day one is tempted to think that after all the fact of the station being $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant instead of half a mile

from the centre of the village is not an unmixed blessing. Who shall say ?

The early years of the twentieth century marked many improvements in the public services. The roads were better cared for, and among other conveniences were the erection of additional pumps to obtain a better supply of drinking water.

In the days before motor transport, the only public conveyances were the carriers' carts which ran twice weekly from Stock to Chelmsford, while the only conveyances to Billericay Station were the milk carts, which made the journey night and morning from the local farms, and often had a number of passengers sitting among the churns !

In 1913, the "National Steam Car Company" commenced a daily service of motor buses between Stock and Chelmsford, and in the following year this service was extended to Billericay.

In the dark days of 1914-1918, Stock bore its share of sacrifice and hardship, and its position in the county made it a place of strategic importance in connection with the preparations for defence against a possible enemy invasion. The village formed part of the Second Line of Defence between London and the coast, and the area all around was heavily entrenched, particularly towards the south and east.

Within a week from the declaration of war in August, 1914, a battalion of infantry was quartered in the village, the first troops being a battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment, about 1,000 strong. This Regiment afterwards fought with distinction in France.

Two or three empty houses were used as mess rooms and temporary barracks, but the majority of the troops were billeted in private houses, each householder taking one, two, or more soldiers according to the accommodation available. The various Companies held daily parades in the streets, "A" Company in the lower High Street, "B" Company on "The Green", "C" Company on the Common, and "D" Company in the Mill Road, and so on. There were frequent test alarms, usually in the middle of the night, when all the troops were turned out and paraded in full kit on the Common or taken for a short route march. The main road through the village was frequently used by troops on their long route marches, and often some ten or eleven thousand soldiers would pass through the village in a day. The effect of all this excitement on a quiet country village may better be imagined than described.

Detailed instructions for the evacuation of the district in the

event of an enemy invasion were issued to all householders, and arrows were affixed at street corners indicating the route to be followed in any concerted movement for leaving the area. Happily these precautions had never to be put to the test.

As Stock lies in a direct line from London to the Continent it was consequently well in the danger zone of the German Air Raids. Fortunately no bombs were dropped in the village, the nearest bomb falling just outside Billericay. The village was, however, surrounded by gun and searchlight stations, and the chief danger during an air raid was from the shrapnel and shells of our own guns. Several houses narrowly escaped being wrecked and in one instance a shell penetrated the roof of a cottage in the village and passed through two floors, burying itself in the foundations outside.

On the occasion of one Zeppelin raid, an airship was damaged in one of the petrol tanks, and descending low she dropped this tank which fell in a garden about a mile south east of the village. Souvenir hunters were soon busy, and many people secured pieces of the metal work before the authorities removed the tank.

The air raid in September, 1916, when two airships were brought down in Essex, was a memorable day (or night) in the history of this district. One of the Zeppelins was fired by an attacking aeroplane and fell in flames at Little Burstead about three and a half miles away. Great excitement prevailed, and during the day following thousands of people passed through the village on their way to view the wreckage.

The Armistice on November 11th, 1918, was fittingly celebrated by the ringing of the Church bells, and by services of thanksgiving in all the Churches.

In the summer of 1919, the signing of the Peace Treaty of Versailles was marked by festive gatherings all over the country, and Stock was not behind. A dinner to the old inhabitants, sports and a tea for the children, and a concert in St. Joseph's School, were among the features of the celebrations.

In 1920 a public subscription for a War Memorial resulted in some £400 being raised, and the handsome monument was erected on the Village Green. This monument takes the form of a square base with four seats and a shaft surmounted with a carved finial depicting a crown and laurel wreath. It is constructed of Portland Stone throughout, and the names of those who fell in the War are inscribed on the four sides of the plinth. The memorial was unveiled by General R. B. Colvin (afterwards Lord Lieutenant of the County), on November 28th, 1920. Around this Memorial is held a short

united service on each anniversary of Armistice Day, and the two minutes silence is fittingly observed.

The social life of the village has been greatly enriched of late years by the formation of various societies, notably the Women's Institute. This Society was formed in 1918 and is affiliated to the Essex Federation of Women's Institutes.

Another scheme which has proved very beneficial to the village is the acquisition of the Village Hall. This building which stands in the Mill Road was erected in 1923 as a private concern, and let out on hire for various meetings. A movement inaugurated in 1926 resulted in the formation of a Limited Company which purchased the Hall for the benefit of the Village. The Hall is now used for social functions of all kinds and has already been of great service to the district.

The year 1924 was marked by great improvements being made to the main road through the village by the Essex County Council and the building of the handsome stone bridge over the Wash at the foot of the hill. About this time also a public telephone exchange was opened in the village.

After the War, the increasing popularity of the motor car and motor cycle was very evident, and motor vehicles have now almost entirely superseded horse-drawn vehicles. The only horses to be seen are those used on farm work and the carting of materials over very rough roads, and for the ever popular sport of fox hunting.

The carrier's cart, and the milk cart are now almost forgotten and the National Steam Car Company, now the Eastern National Omnibus & Transport Co., runs a frequent service of buses all over the county. Buses pass through Stock at very frequent intervals to places as far distant as Harwich, Tilbury and Southend, but the village while no longer isolated from the outside world, still retains much of its old-world charm, and long may it continue to do so.

THE END.