

PORTRAIT OF SHERE: By Thomas Wilkie

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PORTRAIT OF SHERE

Written and Illustrated By THOMAS A. WILKIE



An old village with a strange name, Shere slumbers peacefully at the foot of the Downs. Village life has centred around church and manor.

SURREY, with its neighbours Kent and Sussex, forms part of the "garden" of England.

The first elementary rule for a garden designer is that his garden should be full of surprises. The essence of a garden is that you should feel compelled to see what is round the corner. Here in Shere this has not been overlooked, for round every corner there is something interesting: old cottages, the tranquil stream, colour and friendliness.

Situated in the valley of the Tillingbourne, a tributary of the Wey Shere slumbers peacefully at the foot of the Downs. Its northern slopes, mostly open grass or wooded terrain, rise to Netley Heath 616 ft. above sea-level, while to the south are great expanses of open heather and firwoods.

It is an old village with a peculiar name, the only place in the world of that name. The name appears to be Saxon and must have been given by our Saxon forefathers when they formed a settlement here. In the Domesday Book, Shere is referred to as Essira. Old as the village is, it lacks none of the amenities that are expected today: indeed, it has been served by rail for 103 years, and has excellent 'bus services.

As in many of our villages, the village life has centred around the church and manor. The history of Shere Manor is

long and varied. Shere was once part of the ancient demesne of the Crown. Under Edward the Confessor, the manor was assigned to his Queen, Edith, daughter of Earl Godwin. She held it until her death, when William I appropriated it, together with all her lands. In 1086, the King held it in demesne, but William Rufus granted it to William de Warenne when he endowed him with the earldom of Surrey. In 1243-4 the manor was handed to John, son of Godfrey a

younger son of Geoffrey Fitz Peter Earl of Essex, whose grand-daughter carried it to the Butlers. The latter remained in possession until 1461. The manor then came back to the Crown, Henry VI gave it to Lord Audley whose son joined the rebels at Blackheath and was beheaded in June, 1497. The manor once again went back to the Crown. Next, Henry VII gave it to Reginald Brays, a distinguished statesman, Lord Treasurer of England and director of the King's great building operations at the St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and Westminster. In his family it has remained ever since. Here was the birthplace and home of William Bray the famous historian, who was born in 1736 and died there in 1832. Today Sir Joycelin Bray upholds the traditions of the village, and rules the manor lands.

The church of St. James is built of Bungate rubble with ironstone rubble, flints and miscellaneous materials. The shingled spire is a remarkable piece of mediaeval carpentry. In all probability Christianity came to Shere before the Norman Conquest, as early as the 7th century. In Saxon times a building was made of stone. When the Normans came, they were far too wise to destroy the many Saxon churches they found established



Shere's 18th century prison house once housed smugglers and cattle-thieves.

in Britain. Instead, they reconstructed these by using the walls and footings of the Saxon buildings and incorporating their own style. The Domesday Book records the existence of a church at Shere as early as 1087 probably built by the Saxons. Today, at the entrance, is a fine Norman doorway richly carved with chevrons and foliage. The church has been greatly expanded and added to throughout the centuries. Some of the oldest glass in the country is contained here, and several of the windows have beautiful 14th century tracing. The east window has a collection of pieces



Above right: Upper Street in Shere, with its quaint, old world cottages. Most of the village buildings are several centuries old.



Left, the mediæval "shingled" spire is the outstanding feature of Shere Church, which also boasts a fine Norman doorway and font. The east window contains 13th century grisaille glass.

of 13th century grisaille glass, stiff foliage, some of it, on a red background. The font is a fine specimen of Norman craftsmanship. The list of rectors is very interesting, the first being Ilarius in 1270. The family of Dunscombe were in succession from 1658 until 1843: six of this family held the appointment.

Most of the village buildings are several centuries old. Some houses have cellars which are too large to have been made for a lawful purpose! Smugglers and cattle-thieves frequented the dis-

trict in times gone by

My favourite approach to the village is from Guildford via Newlands Corner. The quaint, old world cottages and narrow streets, the footbridge over the road with flowering wistaria trained over its framework, all go to make an attractive picture completely unspoiled by the trends of modern life. Round the corner at the Forrest Stores and along Middle Street the old blacksmith's shop is passed, with some more 17th and 18th century houses. Next comes

the Tillingbourne stream, with the church standing at the head of the square. Nearby is the White Horse Inn (1600) and a line of weeping willows beside the river

When visiting Shere, one can cast away all thoughts of time and wander round the streets and lanes in delight. Shere, it has been said, "is one of the prettiest villages in Surrey, often claimed by many as the most beautiful and not without reason. It is truly part of England's "garden."

A "CATCH" A MINUTE

COMPETITION for a cup presented by *The Field* 44 years ago to Thames-side angling clubs is as keen as ever. This was evidenced on 16th November when the match took place under bad weather conditions on the Addlestree Club waters of the Wey. The home Club won with a 6 lb. 15 oz. 15 dr catch, with Chertsey Godalming, Woking, Weybridge, Byfleet and Send following in that order.

Mr R. Collins swayed the balance in Addlestree's favour by getting three bites in as many minutes, and landing bream which weighed 4 lb. 1 oz. 8 dr

A CENTURY OF PILLAR BOXES

THE bright red pillar boxes which are so familiar a feature of the British street-scene achieved their centenary in November this year for in the same month of 1852 seven boxes were installed in the Channel Islands. These early pillar-boxes were somewhat different from the round model we know today—square, or even octagonal.

Each town appears to have been allowed full choice of design, colour varying almost as much as shape, and it was not until 1876 that "Post Office Red" was finally adopted throughout the country

COMPTON POTTERIES

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breakfast cups, butter dishes and bold, sturdy jugs are particularly successful when designed in this way

The Potteries intend to make certain Coronation pieces which, again, will have nothing in common with the mass-produced article and which will appeal not to those responsible for providing souvenirs on a large scale, but to people who want, say one piece which will be truly worthy of the occasion and representative of craftsmanship in the county