

## BRANSCOMBE PROJECT HISTORY SNIPS

### *Following the trail ...Barbara Farquharson & many others*

This is an example of how one thing leads to another ... one person to another ... about where memory meets history ... and how sometimes it takes nearly a dozen people to answer a simply question!

May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021: **Frances Thompson** who lives in Australia sends an email to the **Revd Stephen Martin**, Rector of St Winifred's. She says she'd got –

*... family letters from summer holidays in 1908, [with] a great deal of detail about Branscombe. One of the family, Revd Dr John Charles Cox quite likely took a service in the church during the month they were in Branscombe. ... He also had quite an argument with the sexton ...*

*[She wanted to find out more about] Sea View, the house they stayed at. 20 minute walk from the beach ... run by Miss Rosina Dean and her brother Richard Dean ... [with] 10 guest bedrooms. [Rosina was] described as quite a tartar. [She's not been able to locate any] house called Sea View ...*

The Rector passes the letter to **Jill Johnson** and she passes it to me. My first reaction: Ah yes! I remember hearing about the Deans, brother and sister - Dick and Rosina. They built Millers Lea. It's said that there was very little money and they'd built it more or less by hand. ... Village gossip also murmured about an incestuous relationship ...

Jill talks to **Mike Fielden**. His mother, Mary Wilcox, and the family lived at Millers Lea for many years. He says the house was haunted by a bad-tempered woman who might have been Rosina ... He thought Sea View was the earlier name for Still Point – the house below Millers Lea.

**Sue Dymond**, Branscombe Project member and sleuth extraordinaire, gets on the case:

*May 5<sup>th</sup>: At first glance it seems Rosina married her brother, but that can't be right in a small place like Branscombe!*

*May 6<sup>th</sup>: You might be interested in my sleuthing ...Richard married a Rosina in Sidmouth then moved back home after an acrimonious split. So two Rosinas..*

This seems to explain the confusion ... and the unfounded talk of incest!

Barbara consults **Betty Rowson**, the oldest villager in Branscombe. She has a formidable memory. She agrees that Sea View was the earlier name for Still Point and said 'they used to let rooms'.

May 7<sup>th</sup>: Barbara reports to Sue Dymond:

*Betty has rethought things, and is now sure that Still Point was called Seaward. The close opposite is, even today, called Seaward Close ...*

*She thinks that the house next to Millers Lea, now called Cobblers, used to be called Sea View.*

*But the lady from Australia said that it had ten bedrooms – Betty says it only has five ...*

May 11<sup>th</sup>: Sue Dymond has checked the Census returns and the details mount up:

*1851 (census); the Dean family live in a house at Church. There's Enoch the father (24), Harriett his wife (25), Richard the son (2) and Reuben who was a baby. ... Enoch was a cordwainer [cobbler] and Harriett a dressmaker.*

*1861: the family are living at Castle and the wife is now a lace dealer. More children have been born ... George (7), Angelina (5) and Harriett (1).*

*1871: Enoch is now a pork butcher and grocer and they live in a grocer's shop. Several more children have been born – Sarah Jean (8), Edward (7) and Rosina (3).*

*1881: Enoch has gone back to being a shoemaker; Harriett a lace manufacturer. Their address is **Sea View Cottage**, which is positioned between Bank and New Castle on the Census return.*

*1891: Enoch, still a shoemaker is living with his wife Harriett and daughter Rosina in two houses next door to each other **They 're both called Sea View***

*1911: Enoch 's died and his widow is now a Lodging Housekeeper at Sea View. She's 84. Rosina's still there, and so is her brother Richard. .... **The house is said to have ten rooms.** In March 1912 Harriett dies at Sea View, and in October the house is auctioned off at the Masons Arms.*

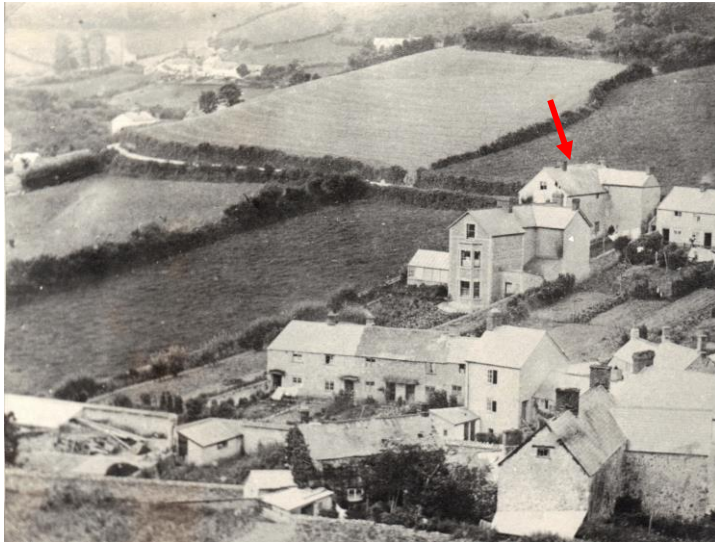
Looking at the Kelly's trade directory, Sue found that:

*Harriett 's already letting apartments at Sea View in 1906. By 1910 the apartments are in the name of Rosine. By 1919 Rosina's at Millers Lea ... and by 1939 she's running Millers Lea as a boarding house under her married name of Light.*

So what does this add up to? –

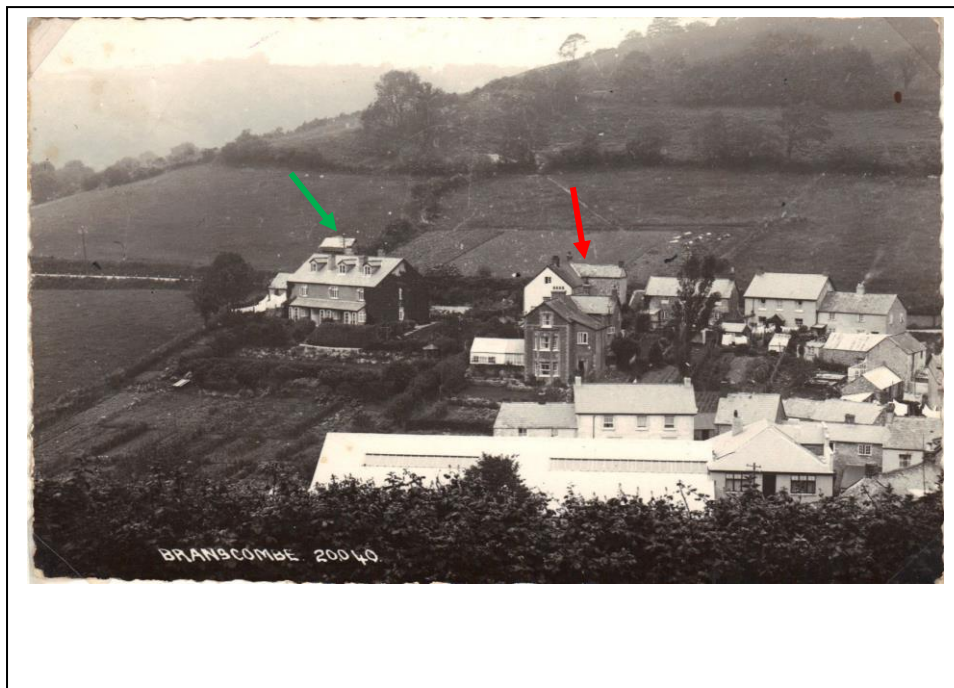
1, In the nineteenth century Census returns Sea View lies between Bank and New Castle. Since Millers Lea didn't exist this locates it where 'Cobblers' is today.

2. In 1891 the name Sea View is given to two adjoining cottages and between them they have ten bedrooms. It is still listed as having ten bedrooms in 1911. This tallies with the Rev. John Cox's 1908 description.



*Joan Doern* went through the postcard collection.

*This one shows Sea View before Millers Lea was built.*



*This one shows Millers Lea to the west of Sea View.*

Research – at least our research – frequently takes off in different directions. So having located Sea View, we followed the fortunes of Dick and Rosina. Here's Sue at work again:

*Richard Bartlett Dean was twenty years older than Rosina. He joined the navy when he was eighteen years old in 1866 and retired in 1883 on a pension.*

*He married Rosina Daniell of Sidmouth in December 1882. The marriage was not a success – he seems to have been something of a drunkard and a*

*brawler and already in '82 was up before court after an argument and fight had ensued between thirteen people, including his mother and father.*

*By 1890 there's a deed of separation and Richard is paying Rosina £13 a year. But by 1894 he reckons she's committing adultery with Samuel Cudmore. He tries to get a divorce, but fails. Up before the court in 1899 He says he can't work because of his health, that he now lives in Branscombe, and that he'd bought a house in London but sold it in 1887. "He afterwards bought a house in Branscombe for £150 but sold it for £12 to his sister as it was heavily mortgaged." (Western Times 5 May 1899).*

It seems likely that the house he bought in Branscombe and then sold to Rosina was the one alongside Sea View. This might explain why both houses were called Sea View. Things went from bad to worse and in 1901 Richard is up before the Official Receiver in Exeter to meet his creditors. He died at Millers Lea in September 1923, aged 75.

And Rosina? Well, somewhat surprisingly, she got married in 1938 at the age of seventy-one to Claude Light who is twenty years younger. It was a curious marriage - Claude lived in an outhouses whilst Rosina presided over the guest house. Opinions about Rosina varied. According to **Betty** -

*She was not a bad-tempered woman. She was nice, and she used to let the let the village men come by for a drink after work. Betty's father used to pop in sometimes - her mother thought he ought to come on home and not spend his money ...*

Betty says Claude was a bit simple. His family came from the New Forest; he may have visited Branscombe as a young man when his sister Eva married Bertram Dean who lived at Culverwell. Bertram and Eva and their two small children, Betram Vere and Elizabeth Millvina, set off in 1912 to America on the *Titanic*. Bertram went down with the ship, but Eva and the children were saved. When, over ninety years later, little Millvina, the youngest survivor, was interviewed by **Christina Squire**, she said -

*Some of her fondest memories were about her childhood holiday's staying with her Aunty in Millers Lea.*

We thought we were nearing the end of the trail when Barbara was rung up by **Ann Barnes**. She's ninety years old but still vividly remembers being evacuated in 1939 with her baby sister and her gran. They were first lodged with - yes - Rosina Light at Millers Lea!

*She was very fussy - once you'd come down for breakfast, you weren't allowed upstairs. Rosina wanted to train her to be a house-maid, but her father was angry about this - as a free mason he wanted her to do better - like working in an office.*

Ann Barnes remembers Mr Light living in the outhouse, and explained that Rosina had got married because she didn't want to be an old maid – she wanted to be a 'Mrs'!

I've grown quite fond of Rosina. After we'd sent our findings to Frances in Australia, she came back with more stories –

*Avice [one of the Cox family] says the road from Seaton down into Branscombe was terrible, and they got off and walked their bicycles down it, but Miss Dean said that she always rode down that hill.*

And another family member, Bertrand, reports:

*The landlady Miss Deane ... is a great talker and doesn't mind much what she says. She informed us the other day that she and the butcher had been discussing a lady visitor and had come to the conclusion that she wore nothing at all under her skirt ...*

There are still a couple of unanswered questions. When did Sea View cottage get renamed Cobblers? Was it in memory of Rosina's father, Enoch Dean? We think not. Sea View changed hands many times after the sale in 1912, but the person people remember is Mr Perkins. He was a cobbler. He came from Yorkshire and had a club foot –

**John Ward:** *He must have died before the war I should think. But he was a huge man, and the coffin was too big to bring down the stairs, they had to take him out of the window and slide him down a ladder. It was sash window, see, so it didn't take a lot of doing.*

It seems likely that Cobblers was named after Mr Perkins.

The other question that Frances had asked has stumped us. Who was the sexton who had a run-in with the Rev. Cox? We know that in 1895 '*the verger, a cobbler, who has a little wayside cottage hard by, shakes his head dolefully.*' But would the verger also be the sexton, and would the 'doleful' verger still be around in 1908? And, anyway, we don't know his name. What might the row have been about? It could have been about the state of the churchyard to the south of the church, or about the interior. Both were in fairly parlous condition. But equally, it could have been about something quite different. We give up – maybe, some day, some-one will come up with an answer.