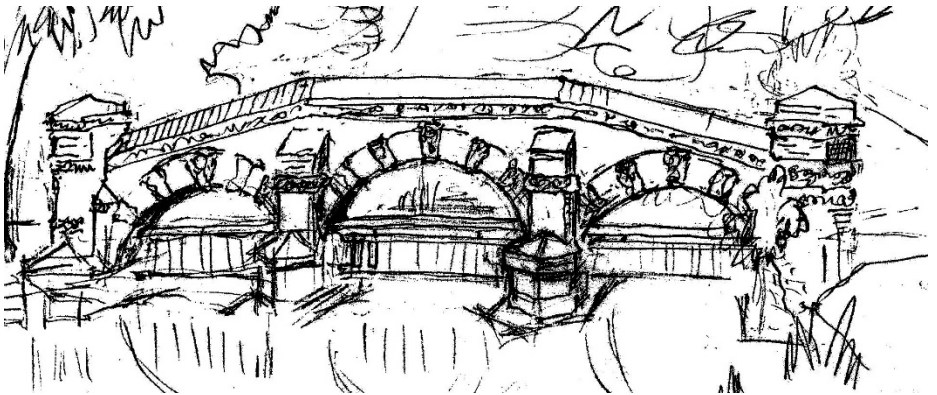


Farningham

A Walker's Guide



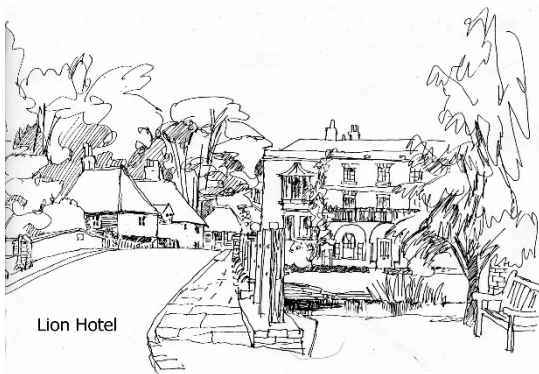
Farningham Cattle Screen
(restored in 2008 by Farningham Parish Council
with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund)

As we approach from the hills on either side, it “forms the most beautiful and picturesque landscape that can be imagined.”

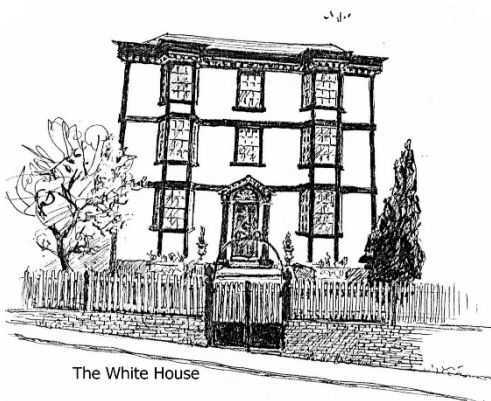
Hasted, 1797

Welcome to Farningham Village

Start from the bridge over the river Darent by The Lion Hotel [18thC]. The structure like one side of a bridge (see front cover) is said to be a cattle screen dating from the mid 18thC. Before the 16thC bridge was erected, the shallow river was crossed by a ford which fell out of use in the 19thC, but you can still see where it entered the water.

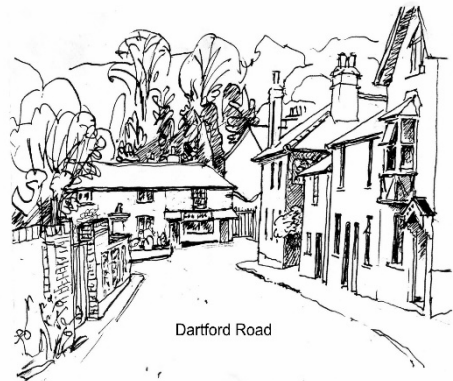


From the bridge (rebuilt in 1773) there is a good view of the Lion Hotel. Leave the bridge and walk up the High Street past the Lion Hotel. Over the wall behind it you can see part of the Tudor building at the back (below).

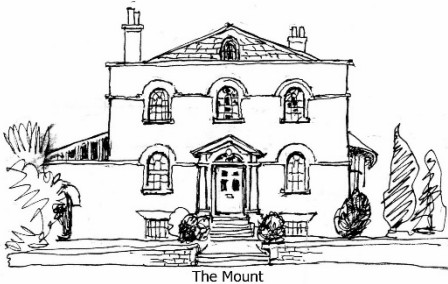


The black and white house on the next corner is the White House built in 1743 for a surgeon. Cross this side-road (Dartford Road) to the Chequers PH [late 18thC]. A few yards up Dartford Road you will find an old flint wall. Almost facing you is a recess in the wall called a *bee bole* shaped to take an old straw hive called a *skep*.

Go back to the Chequers PH and turn right up High Street passing Saddler's House [18thC], once a harness-maker's. A little farther, behind an old garden wall, is The Cottage, perhaps the oldest house in the village. Then comes Fernwood [18thC] and abutting it, The Nook [early 19thC], formerly the Bricklayer's Arms.



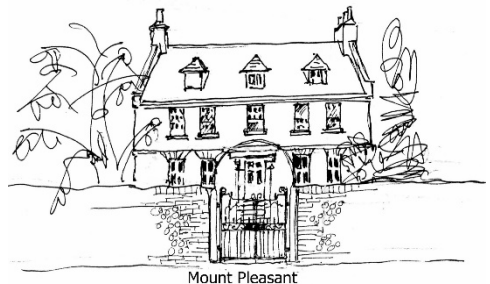
Cross the High Street into Sparepenny Lane which gained its name in the 18thC when a penny could be 'spared' by using this lane rather than the Sevenoaks turnpike at the other end of the village.



The first building on the right up here is The Mount, an elegant Regency house, built in 1820 for William Colyer. From here you have a view over Farningham (and Eynsford) to the hills on the other side of the valley.

A Roman villa once stood on the far side of the river below you.

A few yards further on is Mount Pleasant, an early 18thC house, and then Hampton Court House built in 1740 and named after Edward Hampton, its first owner.



(Further out along this lane, on the left is a roadside memorial to an RAF pilot sadly shot down for the third and final time.)

Retrace your steps to the High street and back downhill towards the bridge. Most of the buildings on the south side of the street were shops, some dating from the 17thC with shop frontages remaining.

Back at the bridge, rest your arms on the gate on the right, opposite the Lion Hotel and look around. Below in the mill leat you may see some trout feeding. On the immediate left is Bridge Cottage, built in Gothic style in the late 19thC, and Mill Cottages dating from the seventeen hundreds.

Ahead is Farningham Mill, *"a corn mill built on a most expensive mechanical*

construction" by the Colyers in the 18thC to replace Anthony Roper's mill of 1610. The Domesday Book noted a water mill in the manor in 1087.

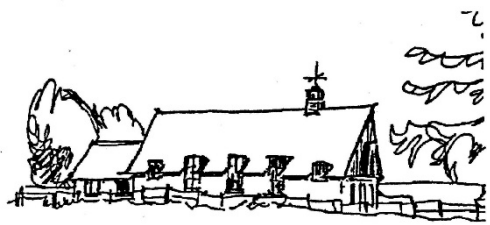
In 2013 the mill was restored with some new-build houses on the left.



FPC marked the 2000 Millennium with the erection of the oak post on the left, with a depiction of Wadard on top (more detail on next page).

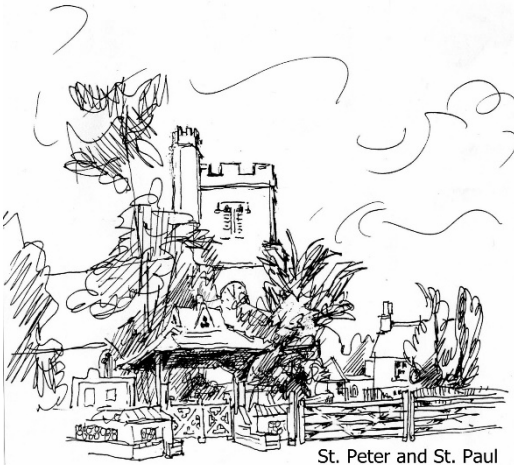
Cross over the road and walk on towards the church. First, on the left, behind the low flint wall lies Market Meadow named for the monthly market and yearly Fair held here until the last century. A castle once stood on it and in Tudor times the Ropers built a manor house here. When a new house built in the 18thC burnt down, the house opposite became the Manor House, where William Bligh (once captain of HMS Bounty) lived for a time.

Still on the left, beside the meadow, is the village hall whose weathervane shows Wadard, who was an intendant (quartermaster) to William the Conqueror (of 1066) and held land in the manor of Farningham. Wadard is depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.



The Village Hall

Next is the fine flint barn, formerly George Barn - an outbuilding of the manor and now converted into private dwellings.



St. Peter and St. Paul

Cross the road to the church of St. Peter & St. Paul, and note the white house (1717), Old Parsonage House (behind Acer House, a converted Bank). It was the parsonage from the 16thC until replaced by a vicarage [now Glebe House] on the far side of the church. The nave & chancel date from the 13thC and the lower part of the church tower was erected 15thC - but the top section was added in the early 19thC.

Inside this church are some floor brasses - and a 15thC font of rare design depicting the Seven Sacraments. On the wall opposite the organ is the monument to the family of Anthony Roper (grandson of the earlier Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, who disagreed with King Henry VIII about the King's divorce of Catherine of Aragon and paid for it with his head).

The church's West Window destroyed by bombs in 1941 was to be rebuilt and the vicar at the time wanted it to show Charles 1 and Elizabeth of Hungary - but there was much argument until when George VI died in 1952 a compromise was reached and it was agreed to show the new H.M. Queen Elizabeth II opposite Charles I - and it became (and obviously still is) the first church window to depict our new Queen.



In the churchyard is a handsome low stone building with a cupola and spire. This is the mausoleum of brothers, Thomas Nash (d.1778), a very wealthy calico printer, and his brother, John, a physician. They came from a local family, with no known connection to John Nash, the Regency architect.

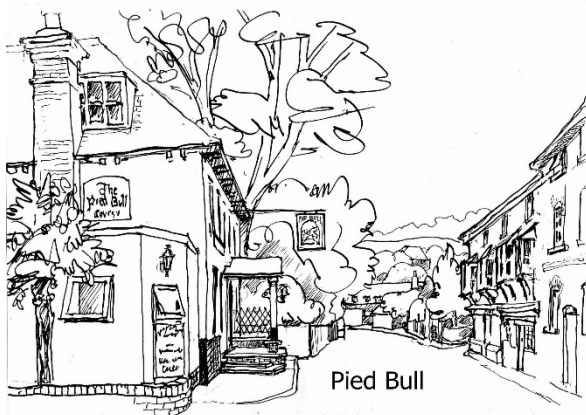
The Bakery is the weather-boarded house opposite the church. The last baker retired in the early 1970s but the fine 19thC bread oven in the former bake house is still in working order. Hodsoll House, next to The Bakery, is from the 18thC. Its red brick neighbour, Farningham House, was built in 1745 by J. Pratt of the Bull Inn. The Colyers added the large extension behind its garden wall in the early 19thC but the cottage on the other side is 17thC.



The lane (Horton Way) beside the cottage leads to George Meadow where cricket has been played for at least 135 years since Farningham Cricket Club was founded in 1857.

On the other side of the High Street stood the village school, until the 1973 one was built in Eynsford.

In the High Street past a row of old cottages on the left note the projecting upper storey windows. Opposite is the Bull Yard. The Pied Bull was already a large inn in the 17thC but imagine the scene in the 18thC and 19thC when it was a stage coach house on the main Dover road with stabling for fifty horses. Later it was the terminus for horse drawn and then motor buses (latterly the 21 / 21A) from London until 1972. The Pied Bull records go back to 1587.



The white weatherboard building, The Old Club House, next to the Bull yard, used to house the Village Club for nearly 100 years until 2011. It stands by the entrance to The Croft, a good looking Regency house, almost hidden by another of Farningham's old walls.

In a cottage opposite lived a celebrated hymn writer who used the name Marianne Farningham but whose real name was Mary Anne Hearn. The cottage set back from the street at the end of this row was once a forge.

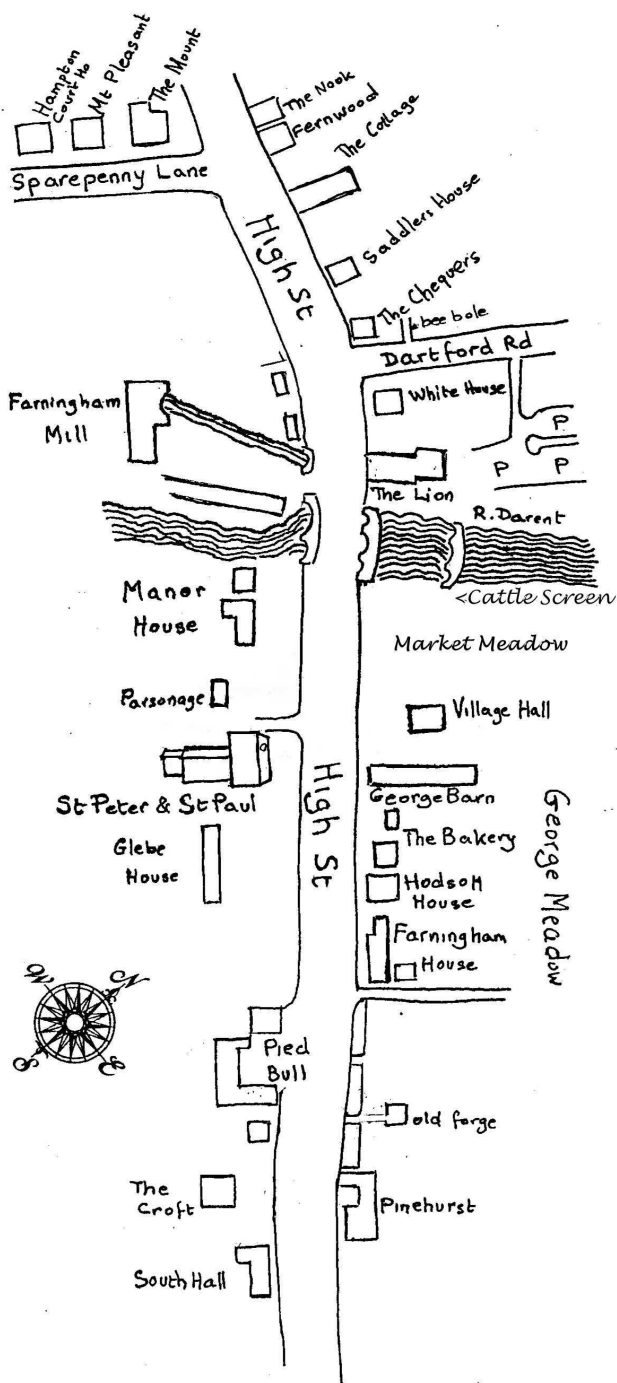
Beyond the cottages on the left, the seven 19thC houses form South Terrace. The post office used to be at No. 1, the pharmacy at No. 7 and in Pinehurst [early 19thC], lived a doctor named Slaughter!



On the right, the white house opposite is named South Hall. In the early 18thC it was a simple, double fronted red brick cottage. If you look carefully you can see the bump in the roof and changes in parapet level showing where it has been extended.

Now at the end of our tour we can go back and seek refreshment in the village!

Alternatively, take one of the pleasant walks which start from here: to Maplescombe and Knatts Valley; along the river to Franks Hall, or in Farningham Wood, a nature reserve of ancient woodland (SSSI), which has been coppiced for centuries, possibly since Roman times.



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