# Letter by Peter Gallup of 16 St Swithun’s St, Winchester, Clerk in Holy Orders

## Written to F.G.Standfield, in the preparation of his book.

My father, Henry Curtis Gallup, was a well-to-do man of no occupation, who had been master of the Wilton Hunt before he purchased Bereleigh House, East Meon, and took up residence there in 1906. He continued to hunt.

At, or soon after, the outbreak of World war I my father volunttered for the Army and went off to Larkhill to train as a Gunner, taking with him Mark Neil his gardener, George Knight his chauffeur and his hunter.

As far as I know, none of them had any military experience. After their training was completed, the three went overseas together to fight the Turks.

In 1916 the East Meon Parish Magazine said: “We are very sorry to hear that Mark Neil and George Knight have been wounded. It appears that they, with Mr. Gallup, are besieged in Kut-el-Amra, but we are told that all is well with the garrison.”

In fact, Kut-el-Amara fell to the Turks, who took the surviving garrison prisoners. They immediately separated officers from men with a view to marching them to P.O.W. camps a considerable distance away in Turkey. My father, who survived great hardship as a prisoner, did no see Mark Neil or George Knight again after their initial separation and it presumed that they both succumbed to disease, which was rampant in the camps.

My father returned to England at the end of the war, but was never the same man. The effect of his experiences made his nerves very bad, and he became extremely impatient. He sold Bereleigh in 1919.

I was born in 1906, and therefore was only 13 years oldwhen my family left East Meon. I therefore have only limited recollections of the village in those days, especially as Bereleigh House was situated a mile from the village centre.

However, a few points that occur to me are:-

1. The Old Pest House, dated 1703, lies almost 3 miles (in a straight line) to the Northeast of East Meon, near the Seven Stars public house at Stroud. It was the normal practice for pest houses to be built as far away as possible from village centres, and to the North, East or Notheast so that the germs of infectious people would not be carried back on prevailing south-westerly winds. The Pest House at Stroud, subsequently re-named ‘Mount Pleasant Farm’, is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Wright.
2. There were a number of sarsen stones in East Meon , certainly one opposite the blacksmith’s forge, one at the former entrance to the old village hall, and several at Bereleigh[[1]](#footnote-1). Their original purpose was probably in connection with an ancient pagan site of worship, such as the well known stone circles of Wessex.
3. The “old font” removed from East Meon to Buriton in about 1922 may be of Saxon origin, or it may be of Norman origin.
4. An East Meon man, Nicholas Wright, contributed to the Armada fund on 8th May 1588, according to ‘Hampshire Notes and Queries Vol II 1884”.
5. According to Mr Gilbert Hobbs of Petersfield there is still a lot of Jutish blood in the veins of East Meon people, including those named Christmas, Kille, Blackman, Silk and Hobbs. He says they all tended to be skilled artisans, never becoming gentry, and never ending up in the Poor House.
6. There is a ghost of a Franciscan friar seen from time to time at various times in the road between East Meon and Buriton.
7. A halberd head was dragged out of the bed of the River Meon when the river was deepened &c in 1955, and subsequently found its way to a Petersfield antique shop, from which it was exported to Italy.
8. Country people, who when they say dark storm clouds approaching say: “It’s dark over Will’s mother’s” are probably unwittingly echoing a reference to the old pagan mother god who lives on the hill.

1. *Handwritten margin note: The stones were removed by my father (with the help of a steam traction engine from War Hill, Tigwell (which was part of my father’s estate) to form the winter garden at Bereleigh. The paving of the water garden includes former tombstones, removed from the graveyard at Winchester Cathedral as part of the ‘tidying up’ operations* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)