

THE POSTCARDS OF EASTCOTE - Part 1

by Bernice Bath

Picture the scene - School Manager at a Special Needs School looking for a hobby. Little did I know the day I casually went to my first postcard fair and bought a card of Eastcote it would lead me to becoming a deltiologist. This article shows the area of Eastcote up to the beginning of the Second World War. I have tried to choose images that (as far as I am aware of) have not been published before.

Postcards were first introduced into Britain by the Post Office in 1870 at a cost of half the normal posting of a letter. They were made of pale buff card measuring 3½ ins. by 4¾ ins. On one side, printed in purple, they had the inscription 'POSTCARD - THE ADDRESS ONLY TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE', the royal coat of arms and a half penny stamp with a profile portrait of Queen Victoria. The other side of the postcard was left blank for the message.

From 1895 the size became 4¾ ins. x 3½ ins. and was known as court cards. The address was written on one side. The reverse bore a small picture leaving sufficient space to write a message. The law also changed to allow a stamp to be affixed to the card.

From 1899 the standard size of 5½ ins. x 3½ ins. already in use in other countries was accepted in Britain. The address still had to be written on one side of the card; the other side being for the picture and message. These were known as undivided back postcards. So far I have not seen any of Eastcote.

In 1902 the Post Office changed its rules and the card backs were divided into two halves - one for the address (on the right), one for the message (left). There was a space in the top right hand corner for the adherence of a stamp. This left the front free for an illustration such as a local street scene or house dwelling. (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1
Eastcote Place published by Vincent Photo,
C.R.T, posted 20 March 1907

Great Britain was the first country to allow this practice. The introduction of the one penny rate in 1918 made the picture postcard a runaway success. With up to several deliveries a day this was the equivalent to the modern day text or facebook. People would for example post a card in the morning to their butcher and receive the meat order in the evening. Several photographers printed their pictures of families on postcards rather than ordinary photographic paper.

In 1926 the Post Office allowed a min. size 4 ins. x 2¾ ins. and a max 5⅞ ins. x 4⅞ ins. Most early cards were real photographs and the publisher anonymous. (Figs. 2a and 2b)



Figs. 2a and 2b
Eastcote Cottage, Field End Road,
posted 23 Dec 1909
(See Fig. 2b below)

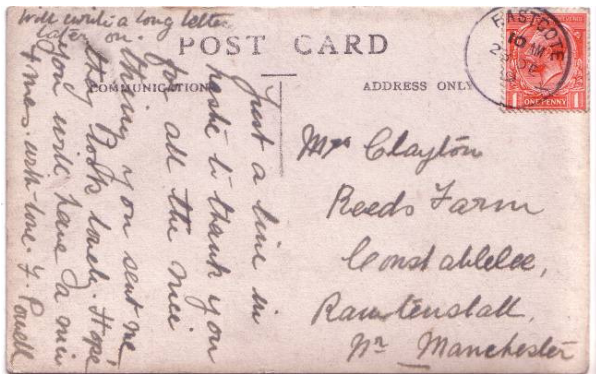


Fig. 2b

Eastcote Halt opened on the 26 May 1906 two years after the extension of the Metropolitan line to Uxbridge. This proved to be a popular destination for families visiting for the day or on holiday.



Fig. 3

The River Pinn published by the Metropolitan Railway Co, c. 1909

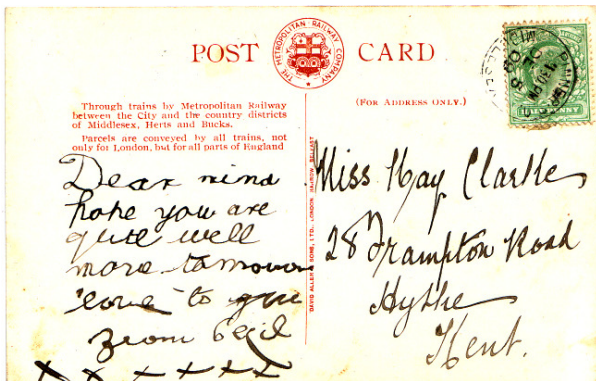


Fig. 4

Back of a another card published by the Metropolitan Railway Co. posted 5 December 1909 (The front of this card is the picture of Field End House Farm illustrated on page 48 of Eastcote a Pictorial History 1)

Figs. 3 and 4 are part of a series of official cards issued by the Metropolitan Railway Company showing various destinations along the route.

The Pavilion Recreation Ground (now demolished), Field End Road, (Fig. 5) organised various events such as donkey rides, games, music and dancing.



Fig. 5

Pavilion Grounds, Field End Road, c.1912

The Ship Inn, Joel Street (now demolished) was another innovative place in the 1920s with its tea garden, concerts and dancing.

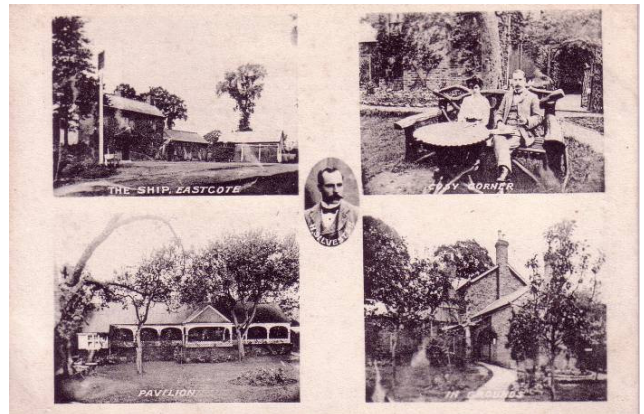
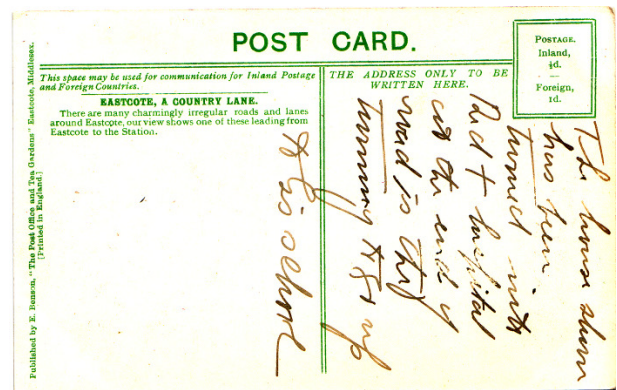


Fig. 6

Multi-view of the Ship Inn, c.1910

The 1911 census lists Harry Silvester (shown here in the postcard) (Fig 6) aged 43 as the publican with his wife. They had three servants (potman, gardener, barmaid) and a boarder (civil engineer) living in the household at that time.

Some entrepreneurs and tradesmen recognised the commercial benefits of the postcard and took advantage of this to advertise their services. Mr E. Benson who owned the Post Office and Tea Gardens published a set of green back cards describing Eastcote as having many charmingly irregular roads and lanes (Figs. 7a, 7b, 8a and 8b). Neighbouring villages such Pinner did the same by another publisher called Herbert W. Alvey, Stationer and also Uxbridge by J.W. Brown, Stationer.



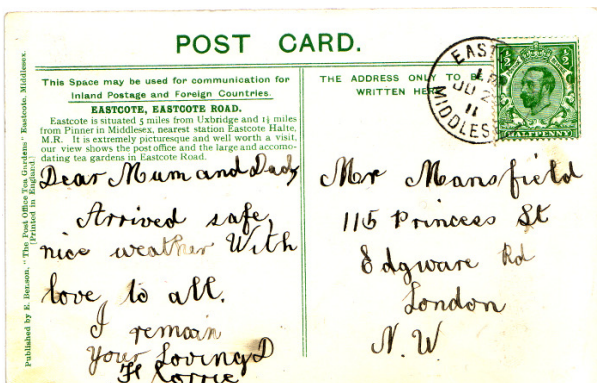
Figs. 8a and 8b
Field End Road, Eastcote,
published by E. Benson, c.1911



The picture and message on this card is very interesting and confirms Field End Lodge (now Tudor Lodge) as a VAD hospital during the First World War.

I am only too aware that it would be politically incorrect today to call St Vincent's a Cripples Home (Figs 9a and 9b). There was probably a stigma to being admitted to the hospital as suggested by the message which sadly reads:

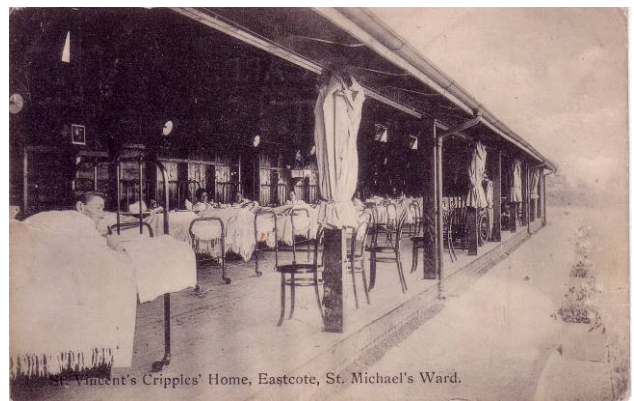
Dear Queenie Thank you very much for the bow and letter. I hope that Bartes did not convey my news to school as I want to be talked about as little as possible. About the garden party I'm afraid I shall not be able to come. I don't know if I would come if I could for reasons that I will explain later. Love to you ... to you from K Brosnahan?



Figs. 7a and 7b
Eastcote High Road, published by
E. Benson, posted 29 June 1911



Fig. 8a



Figs. 9a and 9b
St Vincent's Hospital, Eastcote,
posted 29 June 1914
(See Fig. 9b below)

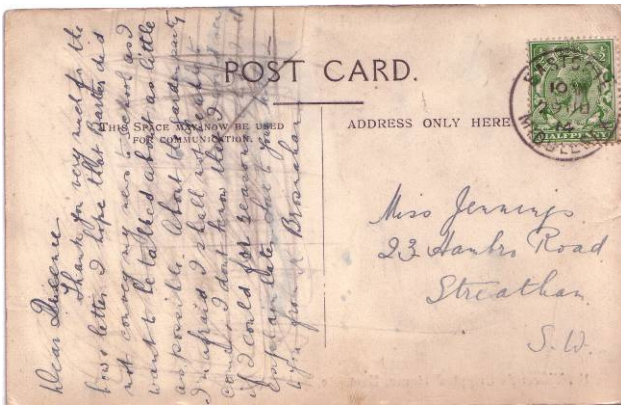


Fig. 9b

The Ship public house catered for local and large company groups from London and was a very fashionable stopping place for cyclists and walkers passing through the village.



Fig. 10
Group taken at the Ship Inn,
Joel Street, 1923



Fig. 11
Group taken at the Ship Inn,
Joel Street, 1925

These groups are likely to represent annual works outings. A similar captioned card dated 1921 has been identified as a group of

milliners from Carlton & Prior on their annual trip to the Ship Inn². If anyone has any ideas who the groups may be of (Figs. 10 and 11) I would be very interested to hear from them.

The following cards are in the same series and show Field End Road before any development on the east side (Fig. 12). Lime Grove looks much the same as today with only the noticeable absence of traffic and parked cars (Fig. 13).



Fig. 12
Field End Parade, Eastcote, c.1932



Fig. 13
Lime Grove, Eastcote,
posted 29 Aug 1932

Fig. 14 is one of my favourite cards. In my collection I have some other cards published by Hilda of Eastcote (Fig. 15). So you can imagine how excited I was to get a picture showing her actual shop. Hilda Mary Anderson was described in the 1933 and 1937 Kelly's Directory as confectioner, tobacconist, fancy stationer, & lending library - 6 Devon Parade.



Fig. 14
Devon Parade, Eastcote, c.1938



Fig. 15
Eastcote Memorial, Field End Road, c.1938

I have only been collecting for a short period but I am now thoroughly hooked and passionate about it. It has given me a lot of joy and pleasure researching the area and gaining a fascinating insight into Eastcote's rich heritage.

If anyone has any information on Eastcote which they are willing to share with me, for example card titles, publisher or date posted I would be very grateful if they could email me on bbath@btinternet.com.

The story will continue in Part II which covers the years from the outbreak of World War II.

References

- ¹ *Eastcote a Pictorial History* published by Ruislip, Northwood and Eastcote Local History Soc. 1984.
- ² Weis, Rene J. A., *Criminal Justice* published by Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1988.