

Percy Harry Reed 1916-1982

Folkestone & District Water Company



Percy in 1973

By Paul Reed

Percy Reed 1916 - 1982

Folkestone & District Water Company

Standen Terrace, built in 1911 in the Victorian style, comprised of 4 dwellings in an acre of ground that was divided into four ¼ acre plots. The terrace sits in an elevated position facing South on the Alkham Valley road and was originally to house the staff who looked after the pumping station opposite. The pumping station was built in the 1890s and started pumping water in 1898. It is situated in the Alkham Valley in a hamlet called Lower Standen on the Alkham Valley Road approximately 3 miles from Folkestone and 6 miles from Dover. The cross roads at Lower Standing is the boundary between Folkestone District Council now known as (Shepway District Council) and Dover Rural District Council now known as (Dover District Council).



Standen Terrace No1 is on the left

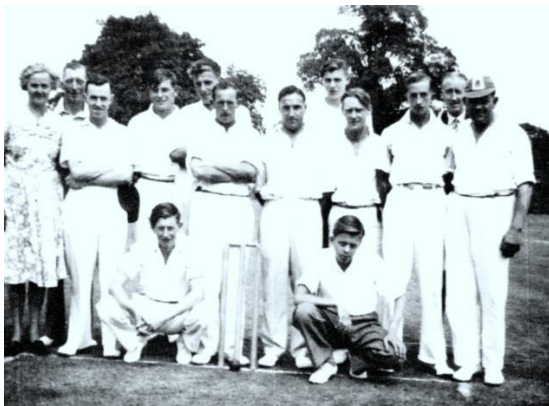
Percy Harry Reed married Kathleen Bannister from Pontefract, Yorkshire in 1938 and lived at No.3 Standing Terrace and later moved into No.1 when it became vacant sometime in 1940. Percy's parents, Percy Reed and Lily Reed, lived in Shearway House in Cherry Garden Lane, Cheriton, Folkestone. Percy Reed senior was a van driver for the Folkestone District Water Company. Percy Harry had two brothers, John who trained to be a vehicle mechanic and worked in Folkestone and maintained Spitfires and Hurricanes during the war and Ernest who was killed taking part in the D-Day landing at Hermanville Beach. Percy's Sister Eileen, being the youngest, was a telephone operator at the Folkestone telephone exchange and married Ron Vant who was a telephone engineer. Ron's father was a local builder and undertakers called Vant & Sons; their office was in Cheriton Road.

Percy and Kathleen had 4 Children: Helen the eldest, born in February 1938; James Percy Reed the eldest son was born in December 1940 in Pontifract, Yorkshire (as Kathleen and Helen were evacuated from the front line during the war and lived with Kathleen's relations

in Pontefract), Paul was born in March 1948 at 1 Standen Terrace and Christine was born in January 1955 in Folkestone Royal Victoria Hospital.

Helen trained to be a teacher; Jim did an apprenticeship with the Post Office Telecommunications, which later became British Telecom; following in his Uncle Ron's footsteps. Paul, aged 16, started a 4 year apprenticeship in August 1964 as a carpenter and joiner with Hayward & Paramor builders who had offices and yard in Shorncliffe Road, Cheriton, Folkestone and at Dover. Christine their youngest daughter studied at Salford University and became a science teacher in Stevenage, Hertfordshire.

Percy was a keen sportsman and liked Football and used to be a regular supporter of Tottenham Hotspur and often went to many home games with his friend Bob Martin. Percy was also in the Alkham Cricket team; when he scored 100 runs for his team, they gave him a new bat!

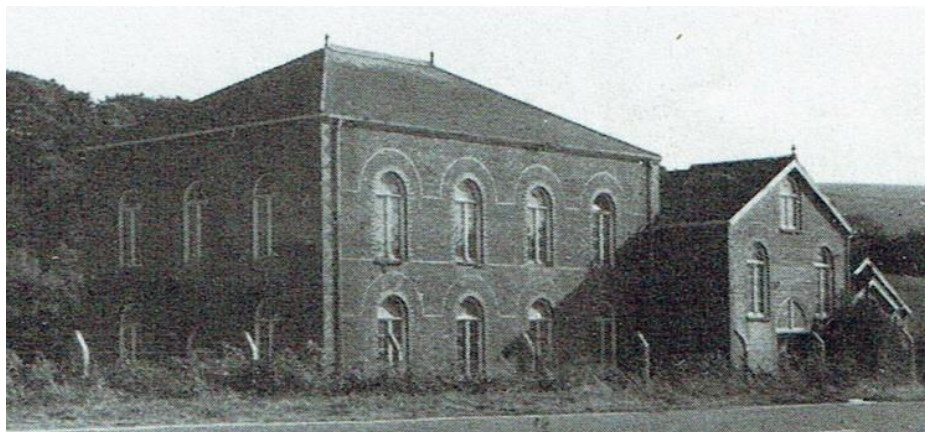


Alkham Cricket Team in the 1950s Percy is right of the stumps

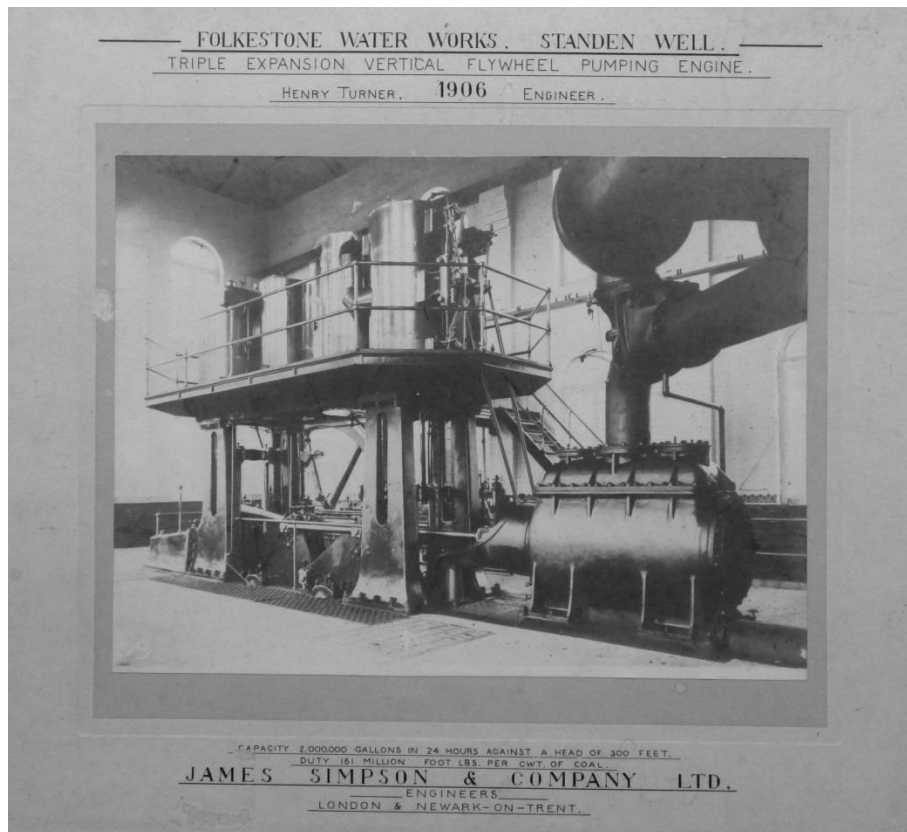


Percy playing cricket on the Alkham Green

Percy Harry was a fitter/engineer for the Folkestone & District Water Company and got his job via his Father who already was working for the company. Percy junior started work by maintaining the two steam engines which were housed in the cathedral-like building opposite Standen Terrace with his colleague Bob West who was a machinist and tool setter. Bob used to make all the spare parts for the steam engines while Percy did the fitting and maintenance. They also used to maintain the company's traction engine which was used to carry out mole ploughing installing new water mains.



Lower Standen Pumping Station demolished in 1981



Next to the 'cathedral' engine house was the boiler house which was fired by coal and later by coke. Stokers worked in shifts to keep the steam up so that the engine could run all day and night. There were two steam engines and two boilers so if one of the engines or boilers needed to be serviced they could keep pumping the water from the large well outside the building. When the steam engines became redundant they were replaced by electric pumps which Percy installed. The steam engines were scrapped and the 'cathedral' was demolished in 1981.



The Alchin 1173 Aquarius Restored

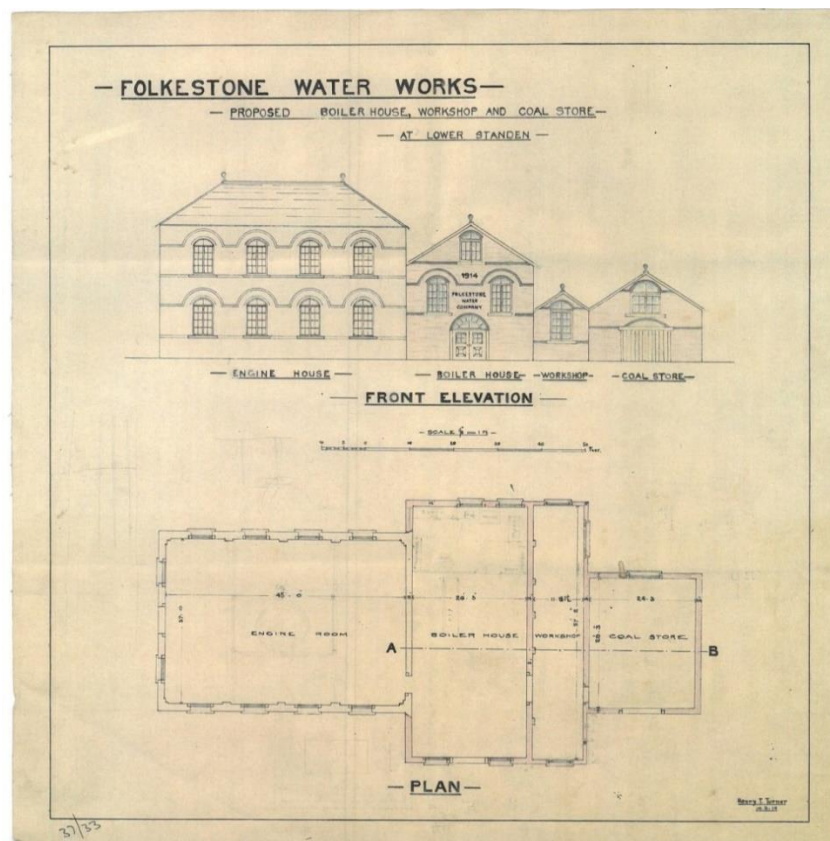


Aquarius at the Padgden's Rally in Elham 1957

Percy also maintained the diesel powered pumps at Drellingore pumping station with his colleague Mr Yeomans. The station was built by Otto Marks, building contractors, Folkestone. Otto died in 1958 and the company continued trading until 1971. The pumping station started operating in 1931. Percy worked on the supply department of the company and continued maintaining the company's pumping stations and boreholes in the Folkestone and Dover area and had a working team of fitters, electricians, and semi-skilled labourers to do the heavy work: Reg Palmer electrician, Dave Okely fitter, Dougie Richards and Wally Sharp to name a few. Mr Paul Powell was the managing engineer and Richard Monk was his assistant.

Standing Terrace in the 1940-60s

The Reeds lived At No.1. Cliff and Mary Hambrook with sons Peter and Geoffrey lived at No. 2. Peter worked for the service department of the F&DWC driving the JCB digger and the lorry. Geoffrey become a mechanic and worked in Folkestone. Cliff also worked for the company on the service side. Cliff was a keen gardener and every year he would dig his ¼ acre plot by hand. At No.3 Lived George Mannion with Mrs Maye Brindley who had three daughters Diane, Pam and Cherry. At No.4 lived Mrs and Mr Taylor; Mr Taylor was injured during the war, disabled and used to walk on crutches dragging his left leg. They were the first people to have a television set with a small screen and to get a signal they had to have a very tall mast in their garden. On the Queen's coronation everyone from the terrace and the neighbourhood crammed into their front living room to watch the ceremony in 1953 and to celebrate we had a party in the back yard of the terrace.



Plan and Elevation drawn by Henry T. Turner in 1914 showing proposed enlargement of the Boiler House and Fuel Store

The terrace was owned by the F&DWC and these were tied houses, all the occupants being employed by the company or retired from it. The Terrace had a back yard accessible from the side of No.1 and the side of No.4 with no fences or partitions. Behind each property was a pair of outside toilets and coal store which was also linked with a path to the toilet block behind Nos. 3&4. The toilets had only buckets and they were tipped onto the garden when full. Bert Ducatel the coal merchant from Ewell Minnis, Alkham would fill the coal store next door to the privy to the brim during the summer and the coal would last most of the winter. The kitchen/scullery had a copper which had a coal fire underneath to heat the water for washing and when the washing had finished the same water was heated later for the house hold to have baths. In 1964 the terrace still was not plumbed into the main drainage system.

At the top of the garden was a large shed spanning the 4 plots of garden. It is believed that this large shed was used to house the labourers who excavated the well at Standen pumping station opposite the terrace. When the well and the radiating tunnels at the bottom of the well were finished, the shed was no longer required as digs for the workers and was divided up into 4 for the use of the occupants of the terrace.



The shed at the top of the garden photo taken in the 1980s

Sometime in the 1950s, electricity was installed into the terrace; before that candles and oil lamps were used. Also around this time the Company installed a telephone in the cupboard under the stairs at No.1 so that Percy could be on standby and be called out if there was an electrical failure or a pump break down. The phone became quite a resource and all the neighbours would pop around to make a call or one of the Reed kids would do an errand to say there is a call for you! The Brindley sisters from No.3 made good use of the telephone!!

The Well at Standen Pumping Station

In about the mid 1950/60 the company decided to extend the radiating tunnels at the bottom of the well at Standen probably to improve catchment and the water demand. This

work continued day and night. The Company's men worked shifts and were lowered down the well in a large bucket operated by a winch at the top. Spoil was loaded into the bucket and hoisted to the top by the winch. The bucket had a hinge mechanism so the spoil could be tipped into a bogie. The bogie was a small metal sided tipping waggon on a 2ft gauge rails and was pushed along by an operator. Probably the work was done in the summer and the reason why they worked shifts was the urgency to get the work done before the well filled up with seeping water. Percy was fitting new pumps at the time and during a descent in the bucket something happened near the bottom and the bucket hinge mechanism broke and he fell out of the bucket and landed badly, breaking many ribs. There were no safety harnesses worn in those days, one just stood in the bucket and held on tight hoping nothing would go wrong! Percy spent a couple of weeks recuperating with his chest well bandaged up. The tunnel faces were worked by hand using picks and shovels, maybe a pneumatic drill was used to break down the chalk face. Does anybody remember this work being done and do they remember a compressor being used? Percy couldn't stand heights and suffered with vertigo, however, he wasn't bothered working above a 200ft deep well!

Dads Army

Percy mentioned once during a card game, which was a popular evening pastime with the neighbours before telly arrived, that he used to store boxes of ammunition, rifles and grenades under the stairs ready for the Home Guard to use. Quite a scary thought as the Battle of Britain took place over the Valley and if the terrace had been hit by a bomb it would have made a bit of a bang! Percy also mentioned that when the Alkham Home Guard was doing training under live fire one of their members of the Battalion was hit by a ricochet bullet and was killed, the commanding officer was court marshalled! This incident would be in the MOD records if this actually happened; I wonder who this unfortunate chap was?



Percy in Dads Army is in the front row left, photograph taken on Alkham Green with the cattle drove behind and in the distance is the Vicarage

During the period after the war to the end of the 1950s times were still hard, ration books were still in place; however, the residents of the terrace had fresh vegetables grown in the garden. Percy used to keep geese and chickens at the top of the garden and it was his youngest son Paul's job to collect waste veg tops from the neighbours and boil them up mixing in corn waste meal and bran to feed them. The chickens were ok but you had to lookout for the cockerel that had a tendency to grab the bowl before you had a chance to put the food out. The geese had a habit of getting behind you and nipping the back of your heels, very painful, wellies were a must. Once fattened up the geese had their necks wrung and were sold for Christmas dinners (Percy got one of his mates to do the wringing). Kathleen used to pluck them and sell the feathers. Unpasteurised milk was delivered every day from Uptons Farm in South Alkham.

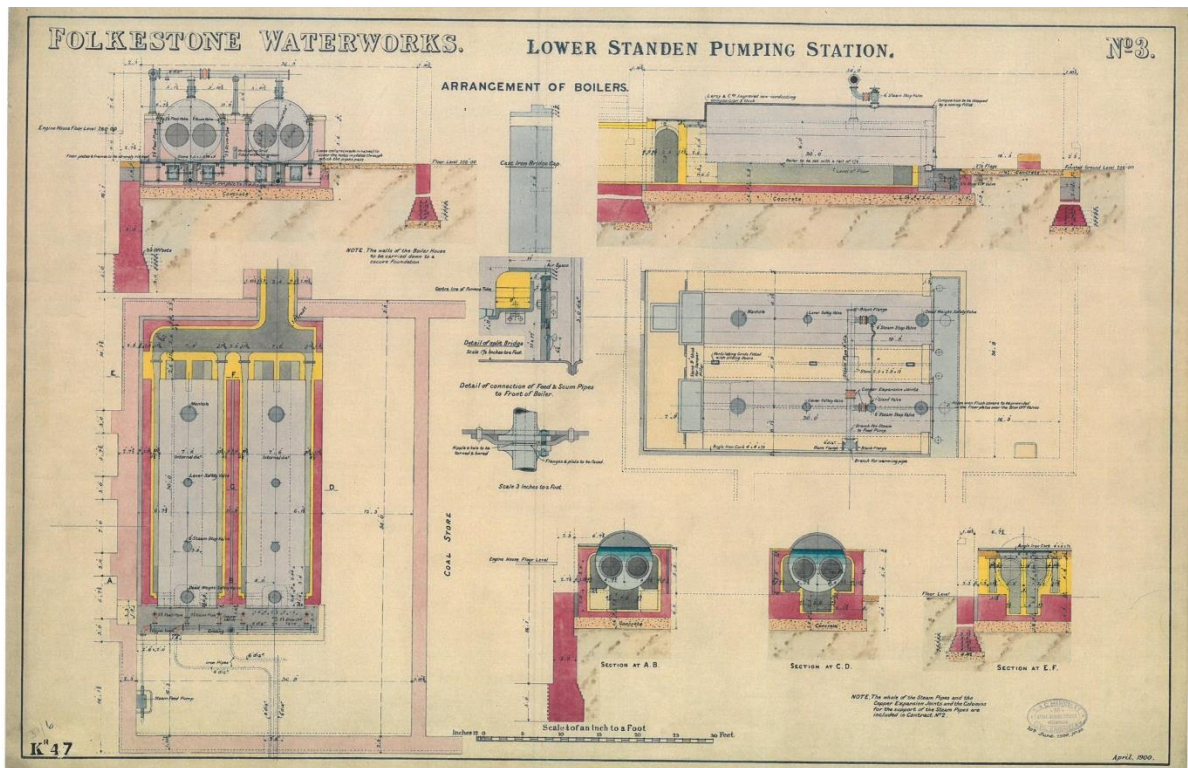
Without pocket money Paul would get up early in the mornings in September and October and pick field mushrooms on the valley banks in front of the terrace. With mushrooms piled high in his mum's big wicker basket he would take them on the 91 bus to Folkestone and before going to school he would sell them to Mr Mills who had the greengrocers at the bottom of Black Bull Road (it is now the closed shop next to Mario's Fish Bar). By the age of 10 Paul had enough money to buy his first bike and used it to ride to Stella Maris Primary School every day and at weekends and summer evenings would explore the country lanes around the Valley.

Reeds on the Move

In July 1964 the family moved to Cherry Garden Lane, Folkestone, still a tied property, after Percy was promoted, to be closer to Head Office. My Sister Christine recalls he used to go out at weekends, often at night, to check the reservoir water levels. She used to accompany him sometimes enjoying seeing the wildlife in the headlights as they crossed the fields in the works long wheelbase Land Rover pickup truck. She said it was brilliant being so high up and going off road. Then in the 1970s he could phone a number and it would automatically tell him the water levels, which amazed him and he would listen to the message more than was necessary and invite any visitors to listen too.

Percy had Parkinson's disease so retired early due to ill health and died 26th January 1982 aged 66 from a major stroke. Percy's wife Kathleen died at 97 Cherry Garden Lane, where they had moved in 1964, on the 11th July 1970 aged 58 from cancer. Helen their eldest daughter died on the 6th August 2010 aged 71.

Peter Bourner, engineer, took over from Percy when he retired.



Plan and Elevation of Boiler House

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If any reader would like to make corrections to the above article or would like to add texts and pictures please contact Paul Reed at Paulreed56@msn.com