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Writers' Descriptions of RINGMORE

1907 - The South Devon Coast by C.G. Harper.

' Primitive indeed are the villages that lie away back from the sea in these parts. First comes Ringmore, where the ~~road~~ rock outcrops from the macadam in the main road, where the cottages are half-smothered in flowers, and where the domestic fowls that squatter and plunge in dust balls in the middle of the street are the only signs of life. Reminiscences of the old window-tax are called up by a house with a walled-up window, carefully painted with a pretence of being a genuine one of panes and sashes. Even the brass catch has not been forgotten by the artist in illusion, whose treatment is so literal, he must have been the fore-runner of the Newlyn School. The brass catch is rendered more than a thought too brassy, and the unfortunately painted panes are by no means convincing.

1953 - The South Hams by Margaret Willy - Published by Robert Hale Ltd.,
63 Old Brompton Road, London.S.W.7.
Photographs by Stephen Ford, Blandford, Dorset.

'It is interesting to notice along this stretch of coastline more than any other of the South Hams how often the lower Devonian rocks appear to change their texture and whole nature; and are varied still further by the direction and quality of the light playing upon them. Just before dropping down into Ayrmer Cove the cliffs are of warm red sandstone with rounded contours (one shape upreared against the sky with two holes burrowed right through it, is oddly reminiscent of a sculpture by Henry Moore). On the other side of the cove, in abrupt contrast to the humpy friendliness of red sandstone, come sheer slate masses, bluish-grey shading into ochre with surfaces as flat as a man-made wall without cleft or foothold. Farther on, from above Hoist Point, cliffs and rocks gleam a smooth and steely silver against the furrowed surface of the sea. On the western side of the cove beyond Ayrmer, from a certain angle down on the shore, the vertically grained slate resembles nothing so much as ancient wood, dead, grey and clean shaven of bark. One landward leaning mass in particular might be the stripped and riven trunk of some great tree split straight down the centre by lightning.

Re Ringmore Village.

Thurleston fails - for me at anyrate - to fulfil the promises of countless guide books, photographs and eulogies. Now with Ringmore it is quite different. Less lauded and consequently less known and visited, this really charming village between Bigbury and Kingston affords all the delighted surprise of a discovery made for oneself as distinct from an official Beauty Spot one has been instructed and expected to admire. Its white or cream washed stone cottages, with chimneys as tall and toppling and thatch as peaked as any in an illustration to a fairy tale, straggle this way and that, many of them tucked out of first sight down narrow, winding by-ways, and the village is threaded with overgrown footpaths green with nettle, hart's tongue fern and elder - where cow-parsnip, springs waist - and, in places, shoulder ~~high~~ - high, and giant periwinkle and lilac look over ivied walls

giant periwinkle and lilac look over ivied walls which show gardens and untidy orchards beyond. Perhaps the best group of cottages in an altogether engaging place is that on the corner nearly facing the post office - white stone walls under a sheltering thatch which has weathered mole grey; winking brass of knocker, letter box and door knob; tubs of scarlet and salmon pink geraniums on either side of deep creepered porches; a tortoiseshell cat blinking or an old dog asleep on shabby stone pavements unevenly worn down by generations of treading feet, as if smoothed by the constant wash of the sea.

The ancient grey church with the tiny spire fits in with its village remarkably well, standing high above the moss-roofed buildings of Manor Farm - whose good, rich smell of cow-dung fills the steep lane, and whose passing wagons gold-needle its banks and hedges with fallen straws - and above the Journeys End. Part of this inn, they say, was built in 1300; and, as the church - with the exception of the supposedly Saxon north transept, containing the original lancey windows with plain-pointed and pointed trefoil heads - is thirteenth century, both have stood here together above the sea for close on seven centuries. The Journeys End is one of the oldest inns hereabouts, although the renewed black and white exterior makes it look considerably younger, inside only the little windows and low-beamed ceilings of the original part suggest the ripeness of great age. A rival in the near neighbourhood is the Pilchard on Burgh Island - supposed to have been the haunt of smugglers, and fully conscious of its romantic reputation.

Devon Life - November/December 1968 Written and Illustrated by David Bowen.

Situated roughly in the centre of Bigbury Bay, with its beautiful coastal scenery and cliffs that vary in colour from red to dark slate, is Challaborough Cove and inland, just half a mile to the north, lies the unspoilt cob and thatch village of Ringmore. Writers describe it as 'very attractive', 'amiable, rambling - as pleasant as much of Devon once was', and mention that it has 'charming views for the photographer'.

Ringmore, most of which dates from the period between the 16th and 18th centuries, owes its preservation to its natural position in a wooded coombe among the hills: that is to say, largely to luck, for it would be difficult to adapt it to the requirements of the present commercial age to any great extent. Even nearby Challaborough, with its caravans, and the more residential Bigbury-on-Sea do not extend very far beyond their respective coastal positions due to the sharply rising contours of the hinterland and the narrowness of most of the lanes. And there are no towns near enough or large enough to attract suburban-type development at Ringmore. The small market town of Modbury is three miles to the north, on the A.379, while the larger town of Kingsbridge to the east, is five miles 'as the crow flies', but about twice this distance by road - which has to go round the Avon estuary.

So Ringmore stays peaceful. Although the village receives its share of holiday visitors who pause here for a while, one is not too conscious of the presence of the motor vehicle. Indeed the lanes in the lower part below the parish church (where one has no room anyway to turn a car) have about them a languid quality which, one feels, conveys the true spirit of the place. Even the village inn, which is situated down a leafy lane on one side of the coombe, gives an impression of wanting to 'stay away from it all' and is appropriately named the Journey's End.

But at one period of its history at least Ringmore was the centre of quite a commotion. It was during the Civil War, when the Rev. William Lane was the rector of the parish.