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INTRODUCTION

These Witheridge Memories have been collected by us.

Most were obtained in conversation. A few were sent to us.

These are the memories of the people themselves.

We hope you enjoy them.

Peter and Freda Tout and John Usmar.

We thank all who have helped us,

especially Terry and Sandra at Chulmleigh Resource & Information Centre.

MRS E. WILLIAMS (CHEMIST'S SHOP, WEST STREET).
NOTES OF DISCUSSION ON 18.5.77
WITH MR AND MRS P. TOUT AND MR J. USMAR

Mr Williams outside his Chemists Shop.

Mrs E. Williams ("E.W.) was born Emily Palfreyman in Ebrington's Row (in North Street, demolished in the early 1970's to make way for the Appletree Close development). Mrs Williams left the village in 1914 and returned in 1929 with her husband to set up the Chemist's Shop.

Schools

Before 1914 there was a horse van that served as a school bus to bring in kids from the Creacombe/Bradford area. It was driven by Ned Partridge's father of Lower Park. Children are said to have walked from Rackleigh, although why they did not attend Worlington School was not explained.

Kids used to buy "three ha'penny busters' (large buns baked by Churchill's and Whitefields) for their dinner.

When members of the Benson family taught in the "bottom" school ("church as opposed to "top" school (Chapel)) they brought in a great ash stick from Bradford.

There was much rivalry between the two schools and battles were said to have taken place - "the schools were always up against each other." The Church school kids used to refer to the others as the "tuppenny ha'penny methodies." At parliamentary election time all the kids wore party colours to school - mostly liberal yellow at top school and conservative blue at bottom school. Feelings ran high at election time - for example, up at Ebrington's row, E.W. remembers that her mother refused to allow the kids with yellow favours in the gate to the front of the houses and so prevented their procession from passing along the front. (The backs of Ebrington's Row houses were cob outbuildings at the road edge.)

E.W. recalls that the Church Room had once been a private school but was used as a Drill Hall and that "old Vigilo" taught reading there at a fee of sixpence a week.

Church Choir (pre 1914)

Discipline was very stern under the Rev. Benson. Youngsters who hoped to join the Choir became probationers and had to attend regularly at practice. However, until a place became vacant and they could move into a proper choir seat they did not qualify as members for choir privileges such as the annual outing. E.W. recalls her

disappointment as a probationer at being told by Mr Benson "you're not in the choir and you're not going on the outing." Her mother took her in spite of this. For the outing, the Bensons provided a free lunch. The open horse-brake from Thomas's ("rivals with Tidballs") used to take the party to Lapford Station to catch the train to Exeter and on to Exmouth. There was no cover to the horse-brake but "the summer was always fine and we never needed a cardigan in those days." Mr Thomas stabled his horses behind what was later to become Mr & Mrs Williams' shop.

Choir practice took place twice a week in church. As the shops didn't close until 8 p.m. in those days, practice began at 8.15 p.m., and "if you weren't there sharp, you got no mark. " For one practice the harmonium from the bottom school was brought up by "two big boys"; for the other, the organ was used. The player was blind Robert Hooper from the house beside the Angel now known as Paradise. Hooper was also a piano tuner and basket maker. He was a good musician and was taught new tunes by Mr Benson.

Each choir seat was numbered, and all the choir books were set out and numbered so that members collected their own as they came in.

The Cathedral Choirmaster thought little of them on one occasion and is remembered as saying "you might as well give them a cabbage leaf as music to read."

Choir suppers were well-disciplined affairs in the Vicarage; a list was made out of who was to take who in to supper , each church warden was required to take in the wife of the other church warden. After supper, all went down to the schoolroom for music, and here each member of the choir was allowed to bring two guests. "Old Squire Cutcliffe" used to provide a Christmas tree.

Sunday School

Sunday School took place at 10.15 and 2.15. In the morning the gospel and collect had to be learnt. Before 1914, the three Miss Cutcliffes ("Grace, Alice and Gertie") and Miss Partridge of Fern Cottage taught. After morning Sunday School they walked in twos in procession to church and sat at the back "under the tower." Before the sermon, however, they were allowed either to go out or to join their parents. There was a strict system of rewards; satisfactory attendance earned a white ticket and twelve white tickets made up a pink ticket and so many pink tickets earned a prize. In the afternoon Sunday School, Mr Benson himself used to appear and if you were called upon to repeat the collect learned in the morning and had forgotten it, you had to give your white ticket back. Then they again went in procession to church and Mr Benson quizzed them on the lesson.

Entertainment

There was always a sixpenny tea on Shrove Tuesday followed by a dance in the school. The farmhands were treated to tea by their employers.

Shops (pre 1914)

Cummings Bowden's mother made clothes and trimmed hats - you bought a hat and had the trimmings put on."

Blacksmiths were situated as follows:- Bill Dinner's at the back of Fern Cottage where the surgery now is, Baker's where Stoneman Bros. now are next to the old school, Bert Adams in the "triangle at Chapner Cross," a fourth blacksmith practised in South Street. E.W recalls that the many railings at Coombe House are stamped "Baker's, Witheridge." Veysey's were butchers in "Paradise." Churchill's were saddlers in the Square and so was Dick Brayley in Anstey's Court. "Billy Butterdabs" father (B.B. was William Greenslade of the Butter Factory in the 20's) had a horse and cart and was known as the treacle merchant.

Pubs

E.W recalls "Black Dog" still operating, but not the "Bell." E.W. mother's father kept the "Commercial" in West Street (next to the Brewery). He was also a mason. The horse drawn mail cart was based there. It took the mail to Morchard Road Station. Morchard Bishop was the postal district for Witheridge then. The Mail Cart was "a square red box and the driver sat on top to drive the horses."
Once, the bells of Worlington Church were stolen and thrown into the river. Two detectives came and stayed at the "Commercial" and used to go out in different disguises to do their detecting, often roughly dressed as navvies with red handkerchiefs round their necks.

Water Supply

Pumps were situated at Tracey Green, 12, Fore Street, Pulleyn's Row, Lashbrook, Gunhole, Vicarage Gate, Rosemont, Paradise, Tidball's, Police Station, School. There was also the village's own reservoir supply with taps and as the supply dried up, people had to come further and further down the village for their supply.

Fires (pre 1914)

For a fire in South Street, buckets of water were carried from the pump in the Police Station. For the fire (just pre 1914) in the Roger's builders yard (present day Stoneman's yard) Bill Bragg rode to Tiverton on his motorbike to get the fire brigade.

Flower Show

Always held on the first Thursday in August, with a beer tent, side-shows by Whiteleggs, free lunch by Whitfields for the committee. Entrants' gardens were always inspected before the Show to prevent "ferniggling" - people are said to have gone down to Eggesford Show to buy stuff to enter later at Witheridge. A Flower Show Dance took place in the tent, with a policeman at the gate. On one occasion, old Mr. Selley, the grandfather of Mrs Tout, Mrs Hayes and Mr S. Selley, became so annoyed with the

"Try Your Strength" machine that he took up the mallet and smashed it to pieces, but "he paid up like a lamb."

Sick Club (pre 1914 to start of National Health Service)

A Sick Club existed to provide payments for medical attention or medicines to subscribe when needed. E.W. recalls the subscription as sixpence a week. Once a year on 29th May, a Club Walk was held round the village, attended by the volunteer band of which E.W's father was bandmaster. The Club banners were also paraded. There were roundabouts, side-shows and a "switchback railway" in The Square and a marquee "down Drayford Road" where lunch was served after a church service.

Shops (after 1919)

The Williamses, soon after they started their chemists shop in 1929, were the first to close at lunchtime. Soon after, the others followed suit. George Selley never reopened his butcher's shop after closing it in protest at the calling up of Steven Selley, the last of his sons at home.

Transport

The two carriers merged in 1920 "to prevent the railway coming from Tiverton." When charabancs first came, all the passengers used to have to get out and push up Long Drag on leaving Tiverton.

Butter Factory (1920s - 1930s)

You only got local butter if you got in early before they mixed in a proportion of Danish butter. "It all had 'Witheridge Dairy Company' stamped on it."

War Memorial

There was dissension over the siting of the War Memorial after the 1914-1918 war. Some wanted it in the Square and some wanted it in the churchyard. There was also dissension over the unveiling ceremony. Francis Selley was chosen to unveil it, but throughout the church service in the Square, old Mrs Morrish stood on the steps of the memorial shouting that her son-in-law, Ned Ayre (who had won the M.M) should have unveiled it.

World War II

Salvage

Mrs Bert Cox, Mrs Hooper, Mrs L. Baker, Mrs Mann, Mrs Jim Leach and E.W. (as secretary of the W.R.V.S.) used to collect salvage. Rolf Tarr lent his linhay at Cross Park for sorting and storage of salvage, flattening cardboard and shredding string to make it go further. Extra clothing coupons were applied for to purchase overalls for this work, but they were refused, this caused indignation.

MRS. E. WILLIAMS (WEST STREET). NOTES OF A DISCUSSION ON 14/7/77 WITH MR AND MRS P. TOUT AND J. USMAR, FOLLOWING THAT ON 18/5/77.

1939-1945 War

Troops

The Manchesters came to the village soon after Dunkirk. The troops cookhouse was in the Angel Yard, the Sergeants Mess in the Mitre, the Officers Mess in the Hare and Hounds. Drill took place in The Square. The coming of the Manchesters made the village's usual water shortage worse; they used to import their own by tanker, and share it round. The tanker was known as Gunga Din. E.W. was secretary of the W.V.S. and they ran a canteen in the church room. There was no water laid on there and no kitchen as such. Water was carried in from the tap at the side of the Pound House. The two primuses needed oil and meths. There was no sink at the church room and the slops were thrown down a drain through a grating at the back of the room. Games, draughts, Picture Post and other papers were provided and the W.V.S. spent £8 for a wireless for the canteen. At 10.30 in the morning all (officers, N.C.O.s and men) came in for tea and whatever could be scrounged to eat. In the evening, only the men came. The W.V.S. used to sew on their stripes and badges and darn their socks. There was some criticism; some said "they only want to help in the canteen to be with the men."

Two local girls married Manchesters. As far a crime was concerned, E.W. recalls only one instance when a soldier broke into the bedroom of a local girl, who happened to be treasurer of a local club, to steal the funds from under the bed.

The Manchesters were followed by the R.A.S.C. and the R.A.M.C. who parked their ambulances in The Square camouflaged against the German bombers on their run to Cardiff or Swansea. Next came the Royal Artillery who also suffered from the water shortage.

A.R.P. Special Constables. The Blackout

Mr Perce Coles was the Special Constable in charge of blackout. He is described as "lurking about to catch people." E.W. was once caught showing light and was indignant.
For a long time, the church was not blacked out and evening service was held in the church room. E.W. recalls that the A.R.P. post was up at Merryside and that the members wore navy blue serge coats.

Bombs and Planes

E.W. recalls only 3 or 4 bombs in a field down towards Worlington. One German plane came down near Black Dog after a dogfight. Crowds had stood watching and drove out to see it. E.W. remembers no plane coming down at Bradford.

Americans

The Americans were in a camp at Cruwys Morchard for a time. No less than three times did one of their transporters with its tank, knock the corner off the shop and house at the end of the cob and thatch row in Fore Street (since cleared for road widening) opposite Mill Park. On one occasion, the bed hung out after the impact. The Americans patronised The Angel "beer in one hand and whiskey in the other" and the hedgebanks between Witheridge and Cruwys Morchard were said to be littered with their beer bottles. One evening, E.Ws husband went into The Angel and he was told he was late. he inferred that the Americans' custom was preferred to his so he walked out and didn't use The Angel again for some time. E.W. recalls no village girls marrying Americans.

Land Girls

At least three land girls married locally and settled here.

Evacuees

About June 1940 came the evacuees from Erith and Belvedere with their teachers. E.W. recalls that "it was poor stuff they had" and little they got from their parents. The village kitted them up and helped to supplement the 8/6d per week their hosts were paid. E.W. had two Belvedere boys for a year and then a rough lot from Bristol came. Overall, they didn't give much trouble. E.W. believes that three, Tommy Green (now of Butt's Close), Walter Green and Ivan Spedutti, were on farms and stayed on after leaving school.

Rationing

The country didn't feel the rationing much but the blackout and clothes rationing struck home.

Entertainments

E.W. particularly remembers the New Year's Whist Drive and Dance and Fancy Dress Parade always arranged by the Conservative Local Branch. The charge was 1/6d and twopence extra for entering the balloon dance. In 1940, for example, the Angel Room cost £1-15-0 and the band £3, as is shown in the Treasurer's account book of the "Womens Unionist Society." As is usual in these accounts that for 1940 shows 3/- for "Ball Room Powder", reflecting the condition of the Angel floor. Laundry and oil (paraffin) cost 1/6. In 1940, the summer outing (this time to Ilfracombe - fare 5/-, members 2/6) still took place, but the war is noted by a donation in February of £10 to Lady Amory for Red Cross Funds. In 1941, donations of £6 to "Auxiliary Hospitals" and £2-5-0 to War Weapons Week were recorded. In 1942, £5 to Red Cross in 1943, £3-0-6 1/2 to Mrs Churchill's Aid to Russia Fund and £5 to the Duke of Gloucester's Red Cross, in 1944, £8 to the Red Cross, in 1945, £18-6-6 to the Nursing Association, in 1946, £8 to Earl Haig's fund.

Witheridge Carnival

E.W. believes the first Carnival took place on 19 November, 1931. The last Carnival was in October 1953 and was rained off. The tableaux were drenched, the horses pulling the Carnival Queen's vehicle were frightened by the lightning and thunder. E.W. had to take up the change to the refreshments laid out in the garage and the change was in a tin, E.W. for fear of lightning, wrapped a cloth round it and ran. Some ten of the original collecting boxes made by E.W's father still remain.

Local Jokes

"Drayford Docks and Creacombe Quay"
"Going out Creacombe ringing?" (Creacombe Church has one bell)
"Born out Rackenford?" (said to people leaving door open and used as far as Tiverton and beyond.)

Politics

Isaac Kerslake's (a leading local liberal) van had L.T.A as registration letters. This was interpreted by Conservatives as "Liberals Tricked Again." Once Betty Way (later Mrs Alleyne) took Christopher Peto's picture (he was Conservative M.P.) down to Isaac's and held it up against the glass of the shop.

"Kissing Kate"

She was a well known village character in the Twenties. She was born Frost and became Mrs Partridge. Her sisters were Mrs Mansfield and Mrs Amos Maire. Her hair was white from childhood. It was her habit to kiss every woman and girl and to shake hands with men and boys. She is said to have preached at the top chapel. She was tall, like her sisters, and had "a glow of happiness" about her always. She was good to people.

W. Greenslade

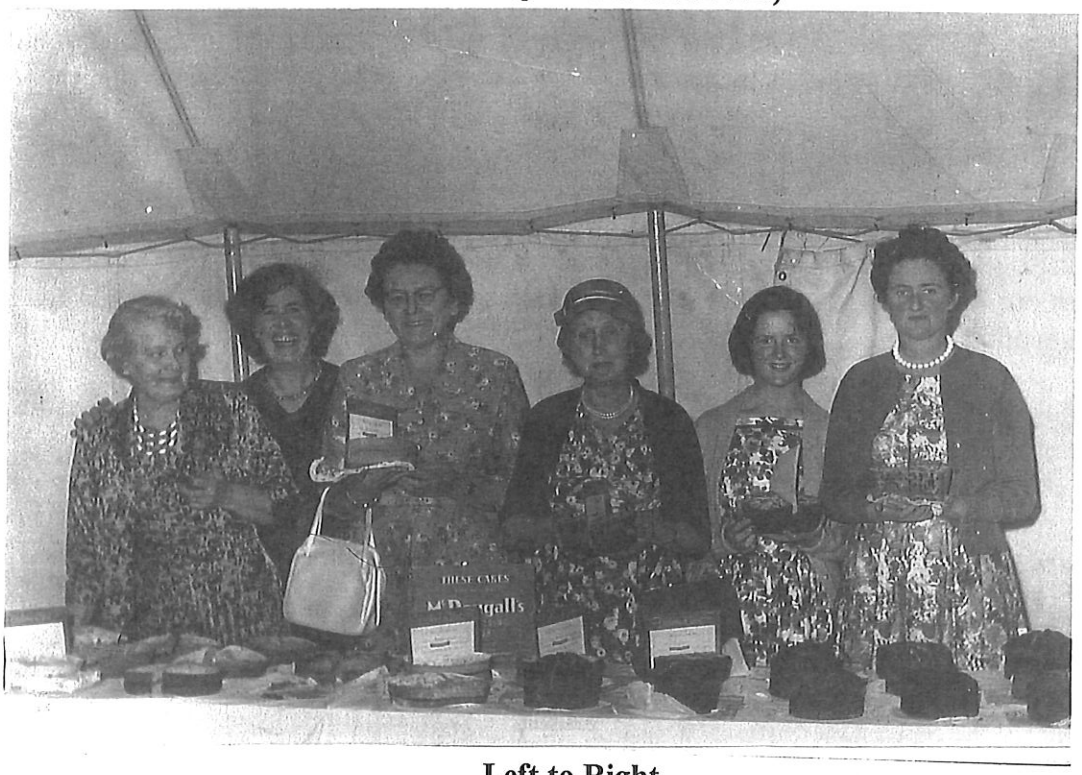
"Billy Butterdabs" (of Butter Factory)
"Bill used to bite a fig in half to make weight."
In the 1914-1918 war, E.W's brother Bert used to go along and tap on Billy's door and whisper "Bill, Bill, Kitchener wants one more man."

Walks

People used to walk on Sundays along to Bradford Pond and back by the road well into the 30's. Bradford Pond had a punt and many waterlilies. Other popular walks began at the Drang and went south to the Cannington fields where people either cut across to Merryside, go on through Woodford, or go down through Cannington.

MRS C. GREENSLADE ("C.G)

WITHERIDGE MEMORIES:
(TAPES RECORDED BY P. SELLEY MARCH/APRIL 1977 AND SUBSEQUENTLY CLEANED.)



Left to Right
Mrs Culhene, Edna Gold, Queenie Woollacott,
Constance Greenslade, Marilyn Bowden, Rita Selley

Witheridge Memories (tapes recorded by P. Selley March/April 1977)

Mrs C. Greenslade, Fern Cottage, West Street.
Mrs Greenslade was born at Cannington House in 1895. Her father, George Henry Selley had married Emily May Selley. Mrs Greenslades full brothers and sisters were Emily May, Steven, Sidney and Vera. Her half brothers and sisters were Bert, Francis, Fred and Stanley. She lived with her parents at Cannington House until 1920 when they moved across the road to Fern Cottage. Her father died in 1940 and her mother in 1942. She married Gordon Greenslade in 1951.

TAPE 1
Side A (World War 1)

April Fair

Discussion began with two postcards in Mrs Greenslade's possession, one showing the blacksmith's forge at the back of Fern Cottage where the surgery is today and the other showing the Fair, with horses and cattle in The Square and along the broad cobbled

pavement past the Mitre (now Aston House). Mrs Greenslade (referred to in the notes as C.G for brevity) is certain the photograph was taken before 1914, as, by the end of the war, the Fair had lost its importance and a "wonderful market over at Thelbridge started up, that sort of knocked Witheridge out somehow." C.G believes it was more convenient for Crediton and Sandford people. The photograph bears the name "J. Churchill" who was a saddler and lived at the Pound House, The Square. (It was from the balcony that the picture was taken.) The Spring Fair took place in April and always included a stallion parade. It was closely followed by the Crediton Fair, to which some dealers would take their purchases hoping to make a pound or two more. The Witheridge Spring Fair was special as farmers came in and paid their bills; many of these settled up annually as contra-account. The children in the picture indicate not that the Fair took place on a Saturday but that children were let off school for the Fair, as, although school holidays were shorter (a month in the summer, a week at Easter and a fortnight at Christmas), many odd holidays were given. The photograph shows a tent pitched in the middle of the Square and C.G recalls that this was one of the "Fairings Stalls" where a sweet merchant from Chumleigh sold his produce.
(White's Directory for 1878 dates the Fair as 'the last Wednesday but one in April.)

FORGE

The postcard of the blacksmith's forge was clearly made before C.G's father bought Fern Cottage and turned the shed into a stable. He got Billy Gold (wheelwright and carpenter) with premises on the north end of the Black Dog Inn) to come up and put a manager in. "Billy Gold was a newcomer - he married a Witheridge girl."

1914-1918

Enlistment

"As the time went on, more and more had to go . . . "Steven, he was taken with the clean cut lot, the eighteen in 1918. The day he went, my father, well, I put the shutters up; he said he shouldn't open again. The people were all up in arms, what are they going to do about meat, so father said 'I don't give a damn'. You see, he put down "farmer and butcher" being honest; if he'd put down just farmer, Steven wouldn't have gone. There were very few left in Witheridge." Two of C.G's brothers were in the Yeomanry and she recalls her brother (whose calling up papers she still has) Sidney's leaving on horseback for Thorverton, where the Yeomanry had to report with their horses. They all thought it would be over in three months.

Troops

C.G does not recall troops stationed here. She remembers that her brother Francis was at Gallipoli, then at Alexandria and then back to France and that he used to say that when they came back from the Dardanelles they couldn't stand up straight, as they were so weak from living on bully beef and biscuits.

Food

C.G recalls rationing of a kind, although it, not surprisingly, made little impact on her family. One day the Police Sergeant informed her father that he and his family mustn't eat cream. When her father expressed surprise, the sergeant said "that's the law." "Well" father said "is it? I don't care what the law is, I produce it and if I'm eating cream, I'm not eating anything else." He didn't care tuppence.

Labour

Labour was very scarce and by the end of the war at Cannington, they were left with a "young fourteen year old who wasn't very big. When there was any hay wanted in I know I had to go up and help him." He is recalled as being the brother of Mrs Bristow. ( ).

Entertainment

The answer to the question "what kind of things did you do to amuse yourselves?" was "work." However, C.G also made it clear that, certainly before the war, the Witheridge Band used to play round the village on Saturday nights. Wherever they stopped, people would "give them a quart of beer or cider and they'd go on somewhere else." The children used to say "Oh, the band's coming out tonight," and when they came, they'd run round behind. Most of the members of the band are recalled as being the Hill family of Tracey Green.

Concerts were put on in the Angel Room or the school room consisting of songs and sketches and were very popular.

Lighting

There was no electric then and the streets were lit by oil lamp. Mr Bennet had the task of going round with his ladder and putting them out and lighting them up.

Pubs

There were three pubs in operation. The Angel was "the tip top one," Black Dog was "beer and cider, where working men went" and Hare and Hounds was a "bit of both and a skittle alley.

Transport

"The first car I remember seeing was when some wounded from Knightshayes (convalescent home?) were invited down to Combe for tea and they came in a couple of cars and everyone said "ooh, look, there's a car" and everyone ran out to see the cars - you can't hardly believe it." The Carriers were Tidball's and Thomas's (later to become the Motor Company) and Witheridge Transport Company). "Tidball's used to go to Exeter on Tuesday and return on Friday (confirmed by White's Directory for 1878).

"My mother used to say the very old Mr Tidball (perhaps Mr John Tidball of 1878 in White's) couldn't read or write and used to take all the hampers and parcels and never made a mistake. Old granfer Tidball lived like Mr and Mrs Perry do." (i.e. at Trafalgar Square, or "High Cross" as it was called.) "We used to go to South Molton on a Saturday morning about 8 o'clock and get there at a quarter to eleven," picking up parcels and passengers en route. Inside were benches to sit on.

The roads down Combe Ball and Mill Hill were particularly bad.

'The Fire'

C.G vividly recalls a fire in the buildings on the present site of Messers Stoneman's yard ( ). "Twas in the springtime and they were killing lambs, so they were up about five o'clock, the slaughterman and one or two of my brothers. All of a sudden somebody came and I was sleeping in the front bedroom above the stairs (at Cannington) and somebody came shouting down and I wasn't a very good sleeper and they said "fire, fire" and I got out you see and began to look out and this boy was shouting "fire" and it was one of the schoolmaster's sons and the boys were here and they were rushing out, dropped their tools, forgot all about their killing and they were gone. Of course the whole place was ablaze; by the time they got the fire engine out from Tiverton - that was horse drawn -most of it was burnt down. What they concentrated on was where the second hand shop is now (next to the Lawn) putting water on it to stop it, that was all thatch. Everybody took buckets and that and I got dressed quickly. I thought I was going up and mother said 'where are you going?' and I said 'up to see the fire.' 'Oh, indeed you're not - you'll wait until I'm ready to go' and so I had to wait . . . . the water came from pumps, wells, anywhere . . . there was no fire brigade here of any description. . . I used to have a photo of Francis. . . he was very quick you know - going up the ladder with a bucket. Twas a builder's place, Rogers they were called. . . I can see it now plain as anything, those two women (Mrs Rogers and Mrs Davey) coming down carrying those two boys and taking them into her place for safety. The whole blooming place was gutted . . . When you've got thatch and the sparks start flying . . . ."

Water

C.G does not remember the pump in the Square. Many people had wells; The Mitre and the Police Station had "lovely water." C.G does not remember when the village was first provided with its own supply and reservoir.

Tape 1
Side B (World War I continued)

Police

There were always a Sergeant and a Constable and they patrolled on bicycles.

Bicycle

C.G had always wanted a bicycle and pestered her father for one. One day Mr Baker at the Angel told her that her father had ordered one and that it would cost five guineas. When it had come she was very proud of it and cleaned it every time it was used. She once rode to Exeter on it to go to a special concert, but "I didn't ride it very much coming home - thank goodness there were some boyfriends and I rode up in the trap and they rode it home."

Outings

There were no outings in the first war, but before the war, they used Tidball's brakes. Once a party of young people hired Tidball's brake, drove to Crediton and took the train to Exeter to see a play. They had to leave before the end of the play to catch the train back, and got back to Witheridge by midnight.

The Sunday School used to go to Exmouth or Instow; for Instow they would take the horse-brake to South Molton station.

Fetes and Festivals

There was no church fete, but a tea on Shrove Tuesday. There used to be "sixpenny hops" which included tea, a singsong and a dance. When C.G's father was churchwarden (1903-1915) he used to pay for the poorer families to come in. There was a Harvest Festival and the choir had a choir supper at Christmas. There was a Whist Club that played in the school room. They did not play in Lent, "Mr Benson wouldn't have it."

The Vicar

Mr Benson (Vicar 1893-1921) was "likeable" and "very straight." His wife is described as "extravagant" and as prone to run up bills. C.G recalls that her mother was once taken to task by Vicar for allowing his wife to run up bills while he was away. She replied that she could hardly prevent her. The Vicarage kept two indoor servants and a groom-gardener.

Places

Slew Park was "Gordon House" nest to The Firs. Ford's Folly was by the entrance to the workshop today of Mr. L. Bourne. Miss Ellen Churchill (sister to Mr Churchill who took the photograph of the April Fair) was in business as a dressmaker there. Robert Hooper, the piano tuner and basket maker, lived next to the Angel in what is now called 'Paradise.' He was blind.

Schools

There were once 140 children down at the Church (National) School. There was much rivalry between the children of the two schools. Some "went ragged to school;"

children walking in from, for example, Bradford, in the rain got soaked and had to stand by the stove. Some people however brought their children in with their milk to the butter factory (later to be Hamlin's Mill and now cleared to make the entrance to Chapple Lane.) Mr Benson gave religious instruction twice a week. Many children left school before they were fourteen, and many stayed away at harvest time. "Mr Carter up at the top school used to use the stick a lot, but Mr Andrews down here (National School), had a different manner.

Religion

"There was more rivalry in those days. The church people kept to themselves and the chapel people kept to themselves. All the church people came to my father (for meat), and the chapel people went to Maunder.

Tape II

Very few went shopping in Tiverton or South Molton. "We always drove to Lapford to go to Exeter or London."

Headings on World War II

1. Bombs, airraids, sirens, gas masks, blackout

C.G remembers no bombs or air-raids here, although the siren is remembered and the gasmasks. "When they bombed Exeter so badly you could see the flames in the sky from here." "There was no fire engine here then." C.G remembers sleeping in the back bedroom at Fern Cottage one night when a plane came down in Bradford Pond and blew up so hard that "the bed shook." C.G remembers that the blackout was very strict and the Police Sergeant used to go up to the top of the church tower to see if there were any lights showing. He came to them one night and complained, so they took the bulb out.

2. Troops

Men of the Manchesters were billeted in the chapel schoolroom and the officers were billeted about the village. One officer was billeted in Fern Cottage. One night he went out without his key and had to climb up and in his bedroom window. "Mother said 'what's the good of sending troops here, the isn't enough water for the rest of us.'" C.G says that water for the troops was bought in by lorry. "They'd commandeer anything, fields, what they wanted." "Once there was an alarm in the middle of the night and all the troops turned out and stayed there for hours waiting - but it was a false alarm." "The soldiers used to stand outside the chapel looking - people were sorry for them." C.G says that the W.I split in two - one half did coffee for the troops and the other half didn't." "The Americans at Deer Park Cross didn't come to Witheridge."

3. Evacuees

"When they came from Woolwich we all went up the Higher School to receive them; they were all frightened with things around their necks - 'there's two boys for you and one for you.' They are said to have settled in well. Some couldn't use a knife and fork "there was a big girl from Bristol who didn't stay long . . . ."

4. Italian Prisoners

There were some on the farms.

5. Land Girls

There were some on the farms.

6 Rationing

"Food got scarce - we used to barter a lot." "In Essex, Leonard used to carry about a piece of something or other broken in his car in case he was stopped." (petrol rationing.) "In Essex, the Policeman used to come for eggs and put them up in his hat" "I went up Essex and the bombs started falling so I came home - it was safer here than anywhere else."

7. V.E. and V.J. Days

No recollections

8. L.D.V. and Home Guard

"Colonel Phillips to Adworthy was in charge - he was getting on." C.G recalls that they exercised on Sunday mornings and that she acted as a telephone operator at Newhouse.

9. Scrap

C.G remembers that all the railings went for scrap except hers and those along the churchyard.

10. War Work

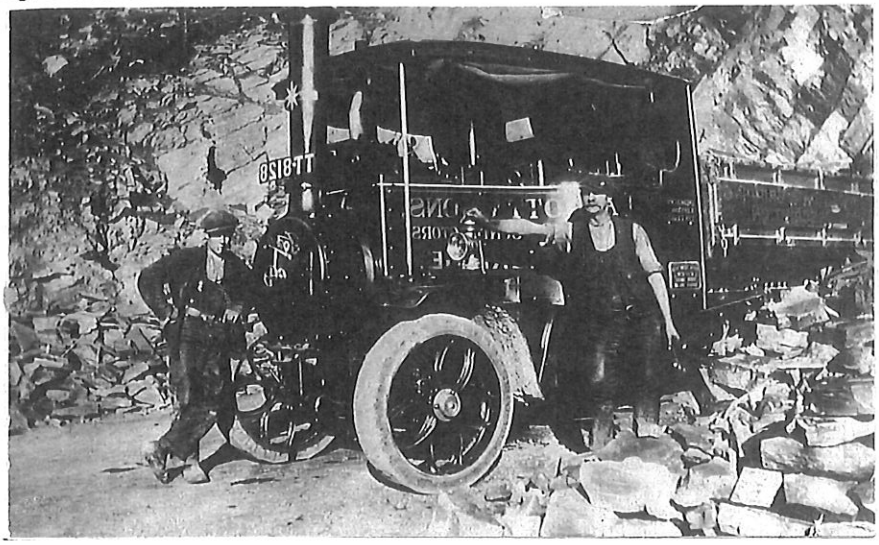
I was directed to do something of good. My sister-in-law in North Tawton had a young child and was expecting another so I went and looked after the child. I let my house. I was sent for to interview me to know what I was doing, so I went and said I was doing poultry and looking after the child: I told them nothing about the farm although they asked me - I was as good as they were."

WITHERIDGE MEMORIES: MR DAVEY
NOTES OF A CONVERSATION ON 06.06.77
BETWEEN MR J USMAR AND MR FRED DAVEY, 67 BUTTS CLOSE

Background

Mr. Davey was born in 1909. He joined the firm of Archibald Nott, quarry owners and contractors in 1928 as a drivers mate at 19.. He married two years later and they lived in East Emlett until 1932, at Marchweek until 1937, then at Bow Cottage, Gunhole and Butts Close from 1947. He retired early from Notts in July 1976 due to ill health.

Working Conditions



Mr Fred Davey is on the left of the picture.

As the lorries were based at Brayford Quarries, Mr Davey did not travel to work daily. He cycled off early on Monday mornings with a weeks feed and returned on Saturday afternoon. At Brayford, up to 34 men lived during the week in rough living vans on iron wheels, with flock mattresses on board beds. He recalls no pub at Brayford and the nearest one at Yarde Down. They made their own entertainment, playing cards and making music with voices, accordion and mouth organ but it was a hard week parting for a newly married couple.

Notts always laid some men off for the winter, due to lack of work, and re-engaged in April. Mr Davey was only laid off once: drivers were more secure in their employment than others, as Nott's did contract haulage for others when they could. It was hard work, but "if you were in work, you were lucky." Sometimes at Brayford, the weather was too bad for work, and then wages stopped. Even though the men were at Brayford, it was a case of no work, no pay. When this happened, some lost the little they had at cards.

Mr Nott was a hard man to work for, but knowledgeable in all the various jobs in his firm, having started himself from scratch. He was feared by some - "some ran away when they saw him coming."

Vehicles and Their Work

Notts used steam lorries until 1936 when they changed to diesels; part of the reason was the heavy tax on solid tyred vehicles. Before Mr Davey joined the firm, and before the lorries, Notts used traction engines (a Burrell and a Marshall) with trains of wagons and also had steam rollers (Aveling and Porter, Burrell, Tasker . . . . the Tasker is now in Tasker's museum). Mr Davey recalls Burrell steam lorries (with hydraulic tipping) that he drove. "The driver sat at one side and the steersman at the other." Your lorry was your own and no one ever drove anyone else's lorry. You did your own cleaning and polishing, but Notts employed a fitter for repairs (Mr Lawrence, 63 Butts Close, held this post for 20 years). The Fodens used to have one big gas light in the middle and an oil light by each wing; there were two small oil lamps with red glass at the rear. You used to wash out the boiler once a fortnight. From cold it took two hours to get steam up, but during the week, the fires were banked down at night and you could fire up in thirty minutes the next morning. Steam power was safe, and Mr Davey recalls no explosion. The danger came from the comparatively narrow solid tyres (some front tyres were changed about 1929 to semi-pneumatics) and the heavy weight. The Fodens were almost undriveable on ice. They weighted nine tons unladen, and fifteen or sixteen tons laden and sometimes proved too much for the weak edges and shoulders of some of the roads of the time Mr Davey recalls how once he was driving with Frank Gibbs near Driver's Cott on Exmoor when they got too near the edge of the road and the nearside wheels sunk in the soft surface and the lorry turned over on its side. Fire, of course, was the danger, but fortunately both crawled out safe. They then ran to a nearby cottage for buckets of water to put out the fire in the engine. Later, a traction engine came and pulled the lorry upright - a little straightening of the cab stays and the steering mechanism and the lorry was as sound as before, so strongly were they made.

Water had to be taken on about every twenty miles (Brayford-Challacombe-Brayford could be done on one load of water). Drivers shared their knowledge of watering places, but when setting off for a new destination, they relied on picking up water where they could. It was unlawful to take on water standing on a bridge. Once Mr Davey took on water between Instow and Bideford, but it was salt; salt water wouldn't steam properly and corroded the valves. They carried about 40ft of hose.

Most of the best steam coal they used came from the Forest of Dean; with any less it was hard to keep a good head of steam. You would "clinker out" twice a day. Much work was done for Somerset County Council and for Borough Councils such as Bideford, Ilfracombe. Making up the road from Winsford to Brendon Two Gates was a joint job with Scott's spread over five summers. After the Foden steam lorry Mr Davey drove the same Foden diesel lorry from 1936 to 1958, including haulage from Holmingham Quarry, during the 1939-1945 war, of stone for the construction of the airfields at Chivenor, Winkleigh and Dunkeswell. Notts also got contracts for army work on Salisbury Plain.

The Brayford Quarries produced mostly roadstone, but also appreciable quantities of building stone - Somerset County Council used a lot, many of the road walls in and around Dulverton for example.

Scotts of Bampton used Sentinels and a Yorkshire steam lorry.

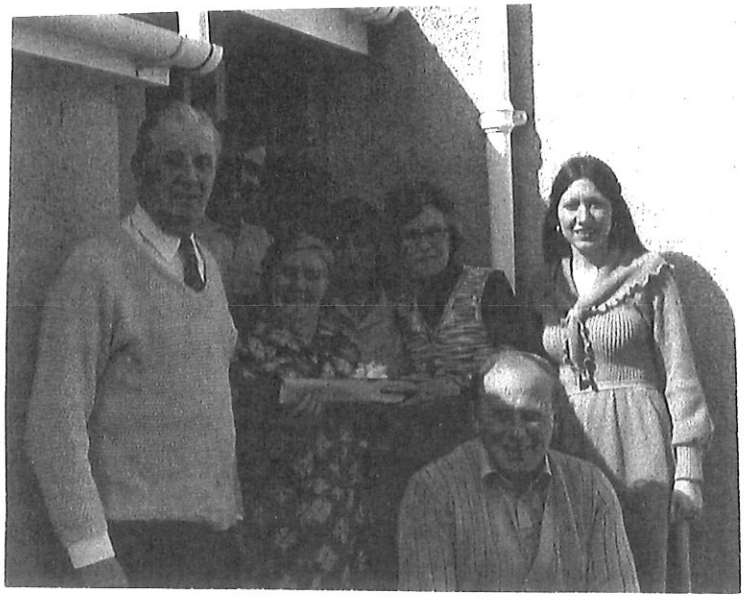
Aerial Ropeway from Coombe Quarry to Notts Depot. Newbridge Hill

The ropeway was working when Mr Davey joined the firm in 1928, and it probably began about 1924. It was installed, so Mr Davey believes, not only because lorries had problems with Hare's Hill and Coombe Ball (and were probably forbidden to use Drayford Bridge), but because a decision was taken to set up a tar plant, and the main road was clearly more convenient for communications. The Ropeway was about one mile in length, with trestles on concrete bases every hundred yards or so. The buckets were filled by a shute at Coombe where there were screens and crushers. The Ropeway ceased working in about 1934, when the weighbridge and portable engine went to Scott's Holmingham Quarry at Cove. While it worked, roadstone continued to be lorried away from Coombe; the depot only dealt with tarmac. It may have been because of the extra strain put on Newbridge Hill by the tarmac lorries, that the village side of the hill was concreted in the early 1930's. The pulley wheels at the tops of the trestles had to be greased, and one day when Mr Rice was travelling along in one of the buckets carrying out this greasing his mates for a laugh stopped the endless rope and left him there for a time.

NOTE: Although the quarries were at Brayford and Mr A. Nott lived in Thelbridge Parish, the firm was known as a Witheridge firm. Photographs of Foden steam lorries show TA7966 lettered "A Nott, Haulage Contractor, Witheridge" and TT8128 lettered "A. Nott, Haulage Contractor, Witheridge."

WITHERIDGE MEMORIES

(NOTES OF A CONVERSATION ON 26/6/77 BETWEEN MR W. PYNE OF LITTLEBURNE AND MR J. USMAR, DURING A VISIT TO NEW BRIDGE, WEST YEO BRIDGE, DRAYFORD BRIDGE AND COOMBE QUARRY)



Bill Pyne on the left with family.

New Bridge

Keystone of the arch facing upstream still retains the inscription G. A. BOYCE, ENGINEER, 1840.

Looking upstream, Mr Pyne ("W. P") stated that large elm close to Mill Bridge was believed to have been planted as a commemorative tree.

One of the few accidents W.P can recall concerning Nott's vehicles was when , at some time in the Thirties, one of Notts steam lorries driven by Bert Stenner came down the hill from the village and failed to negotiate the bend, going in over just short of the bridge.

Drayford Bridge

On the road side of the downstream parapet the inscribed stone reads

DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL	SOUTH MOLTON R.D. COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN	CHAIRMAN
EARL FORTESCUE	HARRY SMYTH ESQ.
1914	
CONTRACTOR	SURVEYOR
FOTHERGILL BROS LTD.	MESSRS. GARDNER & SONS
18, CASTLE STREET	CHITTLEHAMPTON
EXETER	DEVON

W.P at that time lived in The Poorhouse in West Worlington and went to school in East Worlington. He remembers the opening of the bridge as all the school children were given an orange in celebration. There was some opposition to the destruction of the old narrow packhorse bridge led by the Vicar, who believed the old one should have been

left and a new one built alongside. The Vicar refused to attend the opening, and it was claimed that for some time afterwards he closed his eyes as he rode by. W.P. recalls that the old bridge (in spite of being on the S. Molton-Exeter Turnpike of 1759) was too narrow for carts, which used the ford beside the bridge on the downstream side. The materials for the bridge were brought from Coombe Quarry by cart.

W.P recalls that a watch and clockmaker lived in a cottage on the Stockham side of the bridge and used to advertise his trade by means of a hexagonal board; his garden was in the sharp angle of the roads to Thelbridge and Witheridge.

W.P quoted the following:

"Down to Drayford among the trees,
Barleyed bread and vinnied cheese,
Rashers of bacon, tough as a thong,
That's how Drayford people lived along."

W.P could offer no origin or explanation of the time honoured local joke about "Drayford Docks"; he recalls reference being made to the "Drayford playboat going up to Creacombe."

Coombe Quarry

W.P started work with Nott's in 1921 at Coombe Quarry, which he believes began in 1919.

W.P believes that the reason for the installation of the aerial ropeway from Coombe Quarry to the Depot on the A373 west of New Bridge was a disagreement between Mr A. Nott and the County Surveyor over the use if the roads by Nott's heavy vehicles.

The ropeway was run by "a big Tangye engine" installed by Mr Frank Lawrence; an old man called George Ash lived in a caravan by the gate and lit up each working morning to raise steam. The wire ropes were continuous and the buckets were clipped to them. The buckets had small wheels for running on rails at the quarry end where they were filled up without stopping and the shute operator had to be very quick. Not only stone for the tar-plant went up, but also most of the roadstone in the various grades. Up to 40 men were employed in the quarry at one time. Stone went to the making of Winkleigh and Chivenor airfields in the 1939-1945 war.

In the 20's the foreman was a 6'3" man called Bill Welch with a stiff leg and a thirst - he was reputed to drink a bottle of scotch at The Angel between the hours of one and two p.m. Bill Welch didn't like Archie Nott's methods of payment - if a man's pile of cash was a penny short he'd take a penny off the pile due to the next man - and persuaded him to engage a clerk. This was to be Mr W. Vernon who lived in South Molton and rode a motorbike, earning the nickname "leatherneck": his office was in Black Dog in Witheridge Square. When "Kissing Kate" - also referred to as "Old Partridge" came down to the quarry to preach to the men Bill Welch refused to allow

her to preach during the hours of work. W.P says she got her name from her habit of kissing every woman she met and shaking hands with men.

Hours of work were 7 a.m. - 5 p.m., except that on Saturdays work stopped at 4 p.m. until as a result of union pressure elsewhere, this was changed to 1 p.m. on Saturdays. W.P remembers a rate of ninepence halfpenny an hour, and that if rain stopped the work then not only did the men not get paid but that they were not allowed to go home either. In bad weather, a weekly wage might only come to ten or eleven shillings. The living vans at Brayford were infested with rats and fleas and Bill Vernon was sent down one Sunday to fumigate them.

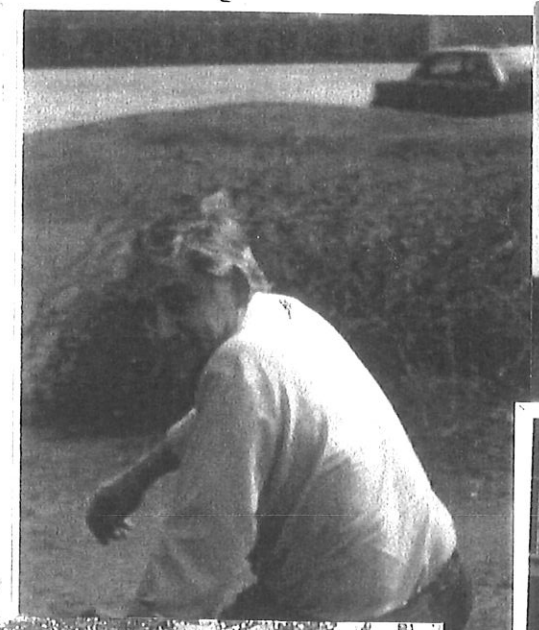
The stocks in the explosives magazine were checked monthly by the Police.

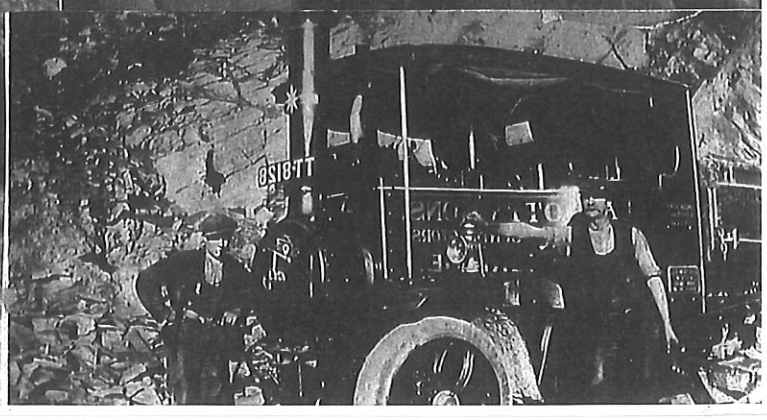
Stone goggles were issued, but nothing was done about the dust.

W.P states that at the time of the General Strike, some of the men from Witheridge who had gone to work in the Welsh coal mines came home for jobs, and never returned to the mines.

In the late 1920's it was all hand drilling - one man turning the drill and two men hitting - until Holman's of Camborne brought up a steam drill by a traction engine. This proved successful until the coming of the compressed air-drill with its compressor: Bill Baker the blacksmith used to sharpen the drills.

At the quarry face two men worked together at loading a skip (W.P. recalls the rate as being 8 tons per hour) and then pushing the skip on rails down to the crusher. "A day's work of this was hard, " and if you came to work at one minute past seven then no work counted for wages until seven thirty. Once or twice men tried to organise to obtain better conditions, but "it was useless" as Archie Nott would not give way and had the men struck, there were plenty of the unemployed who would have been willing to be taken on in their place.





WITHERIDGE MEMORIES

WITHERIDGE MEMORIES
(NOTES OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR J. USMAR AND MRS W. THOMAS ON MAY 31ST, 1977)

Family

Mrs Thomas was born about 1898 at Rose Ash. Her father, Mr Robins, was gardener at Rose Ash Court, but for health reasons twelve months later, he took the tenancy of Lower Adworthy in the parish of Witheridge, and the family moved there. Mrs Thomas recalls the russet apple trees in the orchard and the greengage plum by the wall. When she was four, the farmhouse was burnt down. She was playing in the garden one afternoon and looked up and saw sparks coming out through the thatch ridge. She rushed in and cried out "there's pixies on the roof" (her word as a child for sparks). Her mother who was ill was bought out to safety on a mattress. The horse drawn fire engine came from South Molton but the farmhouse burned down; it was the day before the club walk in 1902. The family was split up for a while, but soon the owners (the Vicary family of Dart Raffe) put the family into Higher Adworthy farmhouse which they joined to go with Lower Adworthy farm. The family left Lower Adworthy in 1906 or 1907 and farmed in Cruwys Morchard for 12 years before returning to the parish of Witheridge to farm at Wilson. The long farm lane to Wilson was in those days very rough, and the ford through the river could be hazardous. Once when Mrs Thomas was about 18 she was returning from market driving a horse and box trap and the river was so high that it washed over the horses back and rocked the trap. Once there was a cards evening at Wilson, and it rained so hard and the river rose so high that the guests had to stay the night. On another occasion in the early twenties, Mr Thomas's father was taken ill and Bill Thomas , who had called on a courting visit, had parked his Model T Ford on the other side of the river which was in spate, and volunteered to go for the doctor. The doctor refused to drive his pony and trap in the conditions and so Bill drove him back and through the flooded river. This was the first time a car ever got into Wilson; as he turned in the headlights flashed into the windows of the other house there and the occupants fled out into the yard believing their house was on fire.

Mr Mark Thomas (see White's Directory 1878) was Bill Thomas's father; his family came from Rose Ash. He died in 1902 when Bill Thomas was eleven. Of Bill's 3 brothers, Lambert "went butchering with Maunder" and Fred became a carpenter. In the Great War, Arthur went into the Navy, but returned part way through to drive the "Scout."

Bill Thomas's great uncle was the first to drive a horse wagon down the new turnpike road to Tiverton (approx. 1840)

When Mr and Mrs W. Thomas lived at south View, there was no garden, so they bought Cross Park Garden.

Trafalgar House was called after Trafalgar Square, which , in the early part of this century was more like a square than it is now. Next door was known as High Cross.

Employees of Witheridge Transport Company

In the 1920's Mr Albert Knight (father of Mr J. Knight) was engaged as mechanic and from time to time as a spare driver. In the early days, Mr Charlie Bryant was always in the garages as a schoolboy, and was taught to drive eventually.

School Days

When Mrs Thomas started school the family were at Higher Adworthy and she walked to school down the lane to Lower Adworthy, over Adworthy Brook by a footbridge and up the footpath through West Yeo fields to the main route, and thence over Newbridge and up the hill to school. If the Adworthy was up then she had to go round by Drayford. Once she got so wet from the rain that Miss Oliver, the teacher, took off her dress and wrapped her own coat round her for warmth. Once, going round by Drayford, a hen flew out of the hedge off a clutch of eggs, so she went and told Mrs Stoneman ("Loveday's grandmother") over at Stuckey.

When the big girls at the Lower School used to frighten them she and a friend used to cross the road and eat their dinner in the doorway of the Tollhouse which at the time was empty.

Thomas's and Tidballs

There was friendly rivalry and "each had to look after himself."

Vehicles

Before the Great War the horse drawn vehicles belonging to Thomas's business were a Victoria, a Brougham, a Brake (with seats along each side and across the front) and two Traps.

As well as the buses (mentioned in the notes of 12/5/77) there was a Reo and always two smaller cars - Fords Model T. In one of these Mrs Thomas was driven to her wedding in 1923.

When driving the Victoria or the Brougham bowler hats were worn. When buses came in the drivers wore peaked caps with detachable (and washable) white covers. Mr Thomas did not like these and preferred his cloth cap.

Routes and Outings

Routes in the 1920's for the Witheridge Transport Co. included those to Tiverton and S. Molton direct, to Exeter via Sandford, to Exeter via Morchard Bishop, Tiverton via Rackenford and South Molton via Rackenford.

One of the favourite outings was to the pantomime in Exeter, including shopping in the afternoon followed by tea and then the pantomime in the theatre. (Mrs Thomas's father remembered the fire that burned the old theatre down.)
No hiring was done on Sundays except perhaps a car for hospital visiting. Once Arthur Thomas made a mistake and took a booking for a Sunday Trip for the "Karrier" for a party of people from Stoodleigh. He was so worried that "he slunk all the way there by the back roads so as not to be seen."

At times the Witheridge Transport Co. were so busy that they hired extra charabancs for the day from Terraneau's. Some of the buses made a noise all their own - in particular the Ford Tonneau 'sang' in its gears and could be recognised at a distance.

Fires

In 1907 there was a big fire in Fore Street, the builders yard and several houses burned down and the rubble blocked the street so that horses and carts had to go round by North Street, Ebrington's Row and out by Manse.

**(NOTES OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
MR AND MRS P. TOUT, MR J. USMAR AND MRS W. THOMAS ON 12/5/77,
REFERRING TO POSTCARDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS IN MRS THOMAS'S POSSESSION).
MRS W. THOMAS (TRAFALGAR HOUSE, NORTH STREET)
WIDOW OF MR W. THOMAS (DIED 1953)**

Background

Mr W. Thomas took over his father's carrier's business and spent all his life in Trafalgar House. Thomas's was one of two rival carriers and transport businesses that occupied the property in North Street and Trafalgar Square that stretches from the entrance to the Parish Hall to the start of the broad pavement leading to The Square. The other was Tidball's. White's Directory 1878 lists three carriers - George Lee, Mark Thomas, John Tidball. Soon after the Great war the two businesses merged to become The Witheridge Transport Company Ltd. This took place at some date between 1919 and 1922 and all the members of the two families had shares. Mrs Thomas recalls that

"Charlie Maire's Foden" also formed part of the merger. "Westcountry Diary" in the Western Morning News of November 13th, 1964, states that the firm was acquired in the 1930's by Greenslades.

Postcards and Photographs

- 1906 - W. Thomas's ("W.T.") first two horse carriers van with canvas sides and top. Mrs Thomas ("M.T.") recalls that Jan Stewer's "Tales of a Carrier's Van" were based on the experiences of W.T.'s father. The photograph also shows W.T. and the father of Mr Winston Maunder (The Lawn, Witheridge.)
- Undated - photograph(2 copies) taken at Drayford showing a smart brougham-type vehicle with hood irons and dished wheels pulled by a pair of greys, followed by a kind of flatdecked horse brake also pulled by two horses.
- 1914 - card of the two greys (mentioned above) outside Thomas's carriage yard (the yard between the old fire station and the Parish Hall entrance, is now in the occupation of Mr Cummings Bowden.) M.T. recalls that the Thomas horses were stabled at the back of what is now the Chemist's Shop occupied by Mrs E. Williams in West Street, and that the greys were always used for weddings. Driving was cold work and W.T often remarked on it. On one occasion, the carriage was hired to take a group to Ilfracombe in thick snow for a party. The carriage was hired by the fairly well-to-do; the Cutcliffes however had their own, and on one occasion they drove up to church from Coombe with only one horse between the shafts and he dropped dead as they reached the Square.
- Undated - two cards of the "Scout" the bus that M.T states was either the first or second motor bus purchased and put into service. Both cards show the bus with the same outing party, and were probably taken outside Barnstaple railway station. On the long side boards along the edges of the roof are write "Parties conveyed to all parts" and "Posting in all directions." The Western Morning News reproduced one of these pictures in its edition of October 30th, 1964, identifying many of the passengers. It was this picture that led to the article in the Western Morning News of November 13th, 1964 referred to earlier. The article states that M.T. had kept the bill for the bus dated October 1st, 1915 and that she believed the outing depicted took place in the following year. Mrs M. Selley reported that the outing was to Ilfracombe, and Mr F. Cotley (both passengers) that it was a parish outing and that the bus replaced a covered wagon drawn by two horses.
- Undated - A further card of the "Scout" shows several passengers and large wicker hampers on the roof. M.T. recalls the ladder needed to mount up the back.
- Undated - card of a small, low four wheeled cart drawn by a pony, with a man selling (perhaps sweets/ "fairings") to children and small baskets in the cart marked 1d and 2d.
- Undated - card of a bus described by M.T. as a "Dennis, slightly longer than the "Scout", also with solid tyres, probably of a similar vintage.
- Undated - several cards and photos of the solid-tyred open carabanc-type "Karrier". The folding hood was rarely used but when it was, the rows of passengers had to pass it forward from the back over their heads like a caterpillar. The passengers heads and shoulders appear above the body side which must have been (from the height of the man standing beside it in one picture) some seven feet from the

ground: the ladder carried slung beneath the rear of the vehicle was obviously needed.

- Undated - card of the fronts of three buses, perhaps the Scout. Dennis and Karrier, with Walter Tidball, Lambert Thomas, Fred Tidball and Arthur Thomas all in cloth caps which were replaced later in the twenties by peaked caps with white tops.
- Receipted A/C dated July 1922 - The Witheridge Transport Co. Ltd. This A/C is for an outing of "Two charabancs conveying party to Dawlish and back" for £18, and made out to the Reverend Beezor. Rev. Beezor was Rector of Rackenford. This receipt is signed "Fred Tidball." The bill-head is a view looking partly down on four buses, which include the Karrier, the Dennis and the Scout. The other vehicle may have been Mr. Maire's Foden. The setting is a car-park by the beach.
- Undated - card showing front view of a Tidball bus and a Thomas bus (T4494, probably the Scout) in Trafalgar Square in front of the Baker's Shop. There are back wicker hampers on the ground and on the railinged roof.
- Undated - a card of the 30's showing cars lined up in Queen Street opposite the Mitre.
- 1953 - photo of "South View on Coronation Day." South View lay on the north side of West Street where garages now are.
- 1936 - photo of the Mitre.

Incidents

W.T. started driving the carrier's horse van at the age of eleven. On one occasion he drove in winter with his young brother Ern to Tiverton, but when he had completed his errands, snow was falling heavily and he was advised in Tiverton to apply soft soap to the horses shoes and hooves so the snow would not clog them. Never the less, they got stuck coming up Morchard Woods and got the help of an additional pair of horses to pull them to the top. They got home safe with Ern asleep under the canvas at the back. On another occasion, W.T (aged 11) drove to Nomansland on the way to Tiverton with his mother who called on a house there and came out with a stout lady passenger. This lady either couldn't see young W.T or thought him beneath her notice, and called out "where's the boss then?" W.T. replied "jump up Missus, I'm the boss." "You'll do boy" said the lady.

M.T. states that W.T. never killed anything in the course of his driving career, but on one occasion the bus was so jolted on a rough road that a baby on its mothers lap was thrown clean through the window. The baby came to no harm but the driver stopped the bus so sharply that he was thrown onto the steering wheel and had to be taken to hospital.

W.T used to drive to Lapford Station with butter and eggs and take them by train to Exeter.

M.T. and W.T. woke up in one morning to hear voices in the street; "who's that chattering?" "Tis the outing and we've overslept." W.T just out of bed, calls out "nearly ready", but still had to feed and harness up the horses.

In the twenties there were rival firms in Molton and Tiverton (where a firm called Croscols had just started), but "they didn't come to Witheridge; they didn't dare."

In the early buses carbide lights were provided, These "were all right so long as the water didn't get in." If it did, the lights used to go out and "someone stood on the running board and struck matches if they wanted to see where they were."

In chapel when "Oh what transport of delight" was played W.T. used to nudge M.T. in the ribs.

Other Information From M.T.

Bus bodies were originally built by a firm in Salisbury, and later in Tiverton. At one time there were "a Reo, a small Dennis, a big Leyland, a big Dennis, and two Ford cars." "Old Greenslade who ran the butter Factory was known as "Bill Butterdabs" and was very short. "If you saw a car coming with nobody driving, it was Bill Butterdabs." After the take over by Greenslades, most went to work there except W.T. who gave up "the big ones" (he had been gassed in the war) and one other who went off and started a firm in Chagford and then in Torquay. There was much heartsearching by the two families before agreeing to Greenslade's terms.

Mrs Bourne and Mrs Bristow

(NOTES OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN MRS G. BRISTOW (WEST STREET, WITHERIDGE) MISS BOWDEN (ROSEDENE, TRACEY GREEN, WITHERIDGE) AND MR AND MRS P. TOUT AND MR J. USMAR ON 26/8/77)

Family Background

Mrs Bristow's grandmother (Anne Way) on her mother's side went to work at the age of 8 as a scullery maid at the Mitre, Witheridge, for "the Benson's, parents of Rev. J. P. Benson." Mrs Bristow (G.B.) says the Mitre was so-called because it was built in the shape of a bishop's mitre.

G.B.s mother was a dressmaker and seamstress and learnt her trade at the age of 9 at Mrs Mansfield's (wife of H.J. Mansfield, Grocer & Draper - see directories for 1893 etc.) She "went away for three years to improve as a tailoress" and continued her trade after her marriage to William Ford. She used to take her Singer sewing machine out on foot to places like Bradford and Shillaton Cottage (near Westway) to do work, and G.B's remembers as a child helping her to carry the machine and how heavy it was. G.B's mother made the page boy outfits and the wedding dress for the daughter of Dr. Brown (of the Firs, Witheridge - see directory for 1914) - and when the dress was laid out on the big kitchen table the children daren't move or speak, but got on with their chalk and slates or their rag-mat making. If they were a nuisance it was "boots off, wash and up over" to bed.

In the cottage (27 West Street, formerly known as Venn Bridge Hill) there were three bedrooms, two landings, a kitchen and a parlour and Mr and Mrs W. Ford raised 16 children there; some slept on the landings. So crowded were they that G.B's brother Fred was sent to school at the age of 2 in a plaid dress (to make room). G.B. recalls 7 of her brothers and sisters at school at the same time. Discipline at home was strict; Will Ford sat at table with a cane by him at meal times, and "if you didn't sit up straight you caught it" or "you might get the knife across your fingers." G.B. recalls even at the age of 21 she was refused permission by her father to go to a dance because "your place is home."

Will Ford and Ern Hutchings used to go out rabbitting on Saturdays and, again G.B and her mother always had to wait up. On one occasion it had got dark when they heard gunshots in the Square. They hurried out and found two men trying to shoot the church clock.

In the cottage the night was the time for clothes drying from the days wash, but all had to be cleared by 5.00am so the day's work could start, the breakfast, the packed food for the boys, the bottles of tea stuffed into old socks warmed in the oven. Then the new day's washing in the tub and on the stove; off came the wash at 12 so that Will's dinner could be cooked, then more washing until the boys came home at 5.

G.B recalls that on the day of her marriage to Jack Bristow, she did her morning work at home, then went to Crediton with him to the Registry Office for the ceremony, came home and went on helping to look after her thirteen younger brothers and sisters. It was only later that she and Jack could set up house at Gunhole, and even then she continued to do the washing for the thirteen and for Jack's parents.

Children's Work

G.B's brother Jim went at 13 to work for Mr G. Selley, butcher of South Street. Mrs Selley bought him "a nice little shirt and a new pair of boots" which he had to leave behind when he left work each evening to go home in case the other children had them. Jim had exemption from school at 13 to go work at Cannington, because of shortage of labour during the 1914-18 war. G.B. remembers Jim delivering meat with Mr G. Selley's daughter Constance to Beech House, Morchard Bishop.

G.B. used to have to pick up sticks each night, which would be put into the oven to dry and be ready for lighting the morning's fire.

Both M.B. and G.B recall picking up acorns, the former for their own pig, the latter for sale often at Bything (Betham) for their pigs. G.B. would sometimes bring home a penny halfpenny. M.B. was not allowed to go further than "Coombe Tree."

M.B once picked enough blackberries to earn the price of a new umbrella. G.B. recalls how her sister (now Mrs Bourne) and Maria Clarke went blackberrying in West Yeo ground beside the main road; they had filled their milk cans when suddenly they were chased by a pig; they dropped their cans and ran, but when they looked back they saw that the lid had come off one of the cans and the pig had put its snout in and had got the can jammed on its snout. The girls were afraid the pig would die and ran to the road to stop a passer by who came and got the can off the pig.

During the 1914-18 war the school children used to go down to Coombe to join pieces together to make quilts for soldiers in one of the barns.
At the age of 15 in the Great War G.B recalls being paid tuppence an hour for weeding corn by Mr. G. Selley.

School

G.B. remembers Mr Andrews, National School Master, punishing M.B. by bumping her head on the desk and making her nose bleed. On another occasion M.B was dared to do an April Fool so she told Nettie Gunn she was wanted by Mr Andrews in the school garden.

G.B. recalls at a scripture exam an inspector asked the class what animal was referred to by the phrase "out of the strong came forth sweetness"; she put up her hand "Yes sir, the lion sir, I saw it on the treacle tin."

Fires

E.B. remembers being taken up to see the Rogers fire (see conversation with Mrs Greenslade.)

Band

The Witheridge Band always played around the village on Saturday evenings in their uniforms. G.B and Mr B. reckoned the band finished about 1906.

Club Walk

Always on Oak Apple Day, May 29th; the girls wore oak apples, those that didn't wear them got pinched by the boys. The Square was full of stalls, roundabouts and swingboats.

April Fair

Cattle in the Square and stalls - people from Morchard used to make and sell fairings and gingerbread, etc.

Names

Pullen's Row was originally Summerland Row, West Street was Venn Bridge Hill.

London Work

Dr Llewellyn (see Directory for 1870) took a liking to G.B's mother when she was a girl of 11 and took her to London to improve her sewing (see first note of this discussion.) Neither M.B. or G.B. recalls any men or boys from Witheridge going to work in the South Wales coalmines after the Great War.

Fight

G.B recalls how Elias Bryant and Will Ford gave each other black eyes at a flower show.

Electricity

A Mr Burke lived in the 1930's in Cypress House and installed a generator there. The first house in Witheridge to be wired for electricity was Cannington. There was some suspicion about electricity among some; G.B worked for Mr. Burke and he gave her an electric fire, but G.B's husband said "you'll not use that, you'll be killed."

When Ebrington's Row was cleared in 1969 to make way for the entrance to Appletree Close, not all the houses had electricity. Pullen's Row was not connected until the 1960's and Ford's Folly not until 1972.

WITHERIDGE MEMORIES

MR A. BRYANT (EAST CLOSE) NOTES OF A DISCUSSION ON 26/7/77 WITH MR AND MRS P. TOUT AND MR J. USMAR.

Mr Bryant (A.B) was born in Ebrington's Row in Witheridge in 1903. He started work at the age of 13 1/2 with Tidball's the carriers. The routine was to drive into Exeter on Thursday (A.B with the trap, Tidball with the carrier's van) with passengers and goods. Village produce (including eggs and butter) was delivered round Exeter and supplies (including horseshoes for blacksmith Baker) were collected for Witheridge and even South Molton. They stayed at the Crown & Sceptre by the Iron Bridge. On Friday, they returned; the steep pull up in Sandford often proved difficult and A.B. would get to the top, unhitch his horse and take it back down to make an extra horse on the carrier's van itself.

At Tridley Foot too there was often a problem - "doan't get'ee fingers behind the block, you" old Tidball used to say to him: the farmer there at times had to bring out his horses to help them up; in winter on occasions it was frozen over and they had to put in the frost nails. On the Saturday, the goods for South Molton were delivered.

Before they used the through route to Exeter, they used to drive to Lapford Station and take their goods to Exeter by train, leaving the horses to be fed and watered by the porter.

In what is now Mr W. Perry's yard at Trafalgar Square, Tidball's stabled 7 or 8 horses; behind the yard was a horse wheel that drove a chaff cutter. A.B. recalls cutting chaff at 10.30 in the evening after a long day on the road. The three shillings a week he got up to the age of 15 or 16 went to his mother. A.B. himself lived in with the Tidballs. His mother said the three shillings went on boots; A.B says there was a lot of walking done, not only up the hills but often he walked just to keep warm.

He used to drive the Landau for Tidballs and he also used to drive Parson Benson, who had a governess card and a "4-wheel coach" but hired horse and driver. Sometimes A.B. "used to let him drive himself and get under the rug". Pullens and Cutcliffes had their own carriages but often hired horses and drivers. (Pullens lived at Rosemont Village, Cutcliffes at Coombe.)

He learned to drive a motor vehicle on the Leyland "Scout" (Witheridge Transport Co.) in the early 1920's. He still has his original P.S.V. Licence badge HH3431. He often

drove a solid tyre lorry bus whose sides were so flimsy that one day he "came back with a letter box" - in passing a pony and trap the pony had shied and the step of the trap had poked a neat hole in the side like a letter box. A.B. also drove the Transport Co.'s first cattle lorry. The charabanc was converted by jacking it up, placing four barrels under the body, unbolting it and driving off. In the "Scout" the passenger seats were only hooked on and were easy to lift out, so that the vehicle could be used as a furniture van. Once he and Tidball drove two buses to Exeter with passengers in, unhooked the seats, drove back to Witheridge, carried out a furniture removal to Newton St. Cyres, went to Exeter, replaced the seats, and brought passengers back to Witheridge.

Photographs and Postcards, etc.

- Postcard titled "Motor Buses starting from Witheridge."
- The picture was taken in Trafalgar Square. On the right is the Leyland "Scout" (the word "Scout" appears on the radiator surround) registration number T4494. In front is a large wicker basket containing the Vicar's laundry. Behind the basket are A.B's brothers, Fred and Charlie. A.B. is standing beside the other bus, described by him as a Fiat (the badge on the hexagonal radiator surround however does not read Fiat) with a faded registration number that is perhaps T4009. To the left of the Fiat are Mr and Mrs Tucker from Dart Raffe standing in front of their trap, which they have driven in with butter to catch the bus to Exeter. Behind them is the grocers shop of G.H. Pooke (recorded in Kelleys Directory of 1919).
- Postcard showing side view of a solid tyred Dennis charabanc - the body was detachable - filled with an outing. The many children and the Vicar suggest a Sunday School outing. The Vicar is the Rev. F.A.S. Castlehow who became the Vicar in 1925. Jim Stanley usually drove this vehicle.
- Photograph of the "Depot" near Newbridge under construction. (The Depot was the main road end of the aerial ropeway from Coombe quarry.) The photograph shows the tall main building completed and the lorry overhead - loading building partly finished.
- Newspaper cutting of 1928 (exact date not known) headed "Witheridge Water Scarcity." One man and seven women are standing by a collection of pails and pans.
- A.B. recalls it was taken near Ebrington's Row and shows Mr and Mrs Cruwys, Mrs Norris, Mrs Stenner, Annie Phillips and her mother. The caption is as follows:

  At Witheridge water is so spare
  One must rise early for their share,
  See our Rebeccas at the well
  Waiting for James to break the spell.
- Postcard of "Jack Rice and his pony and trap in Anstey's Court."

People, etc.

Charlie Maire and Walter Tidball had the first steam wagon in Witheridge. Charlie kept a traction engine in a shed where the bungalow "Engine Park" now is, where the Rackenford road forks off from North Street. (Harold Winter at Rundon drove the traction engine). Part of its use was to haul coal from Tiverton.

Joe Churchill (Saddler, the Square) was the subject of many tales: once he was tending the church clock and A.B. went in and terrified him by taking the long cobweb stick and causing it to clang. Joe liked his cider, and on his post round he used to take a swig of cider out of the bottle that Rolf Tarr kept in the water trough just inside the gate into Tooks Field (by Engine Park). When Rolf Tarr found out he put oil in it, and the next time Joe took a swig, he was sick as a dog.

Bert Cox and the Maires put money up to help the two carriers Thomas's and Tidball's start the Witheridge Transport Co.

Bert Knight and Charles Bennett converted the first cattle lorry.

Drayford Mill stopped the day Dick Stoneman died.

Bob Lee had a wheelwright's shed in Ebrington's Row.

William Kingdom was known as Bill Sideways. "At least that's what the women called him."

Jack Winter, Bert Stenner, Bert Chapple and Dick Tanner drove for Notts.
A.B.'s mother remembered Gunhole burning down - "the boy went in and it caught fire and he daren't come out because he feared his father and he burned to death."

Fred Bryant once had a book written of Witheridge.

"Flew" used to live in the Toll House and afterwards Mr Hutchings used it for lime. The toilets for the National School were across the road by the Toll House; the slops were thrown into the gutter, which is still there.

When Rogers' builders yard caught fire A.B.'s father got him out of bed to go and see. Fore Street was blocked for some time after. (Rogers, Francis Ernest is mentioned in Kelly's Directory of 1906 as builder, builder's merchant and wheelwright. In Kelly's Directory of 1910 as a builder and in the Devon Trades Directory of 1912-13 as a builder and contractor of Fore Street. His name does not appear in the Directories for 1902 and 1914.)

A.B has been up the brick tunnel from the reservoir (at the entrance to Lakelands) to the fine trees in Chapner Field. (See Parish Council Minutes 1895-1900.) There was no tunnel going under the village.

Baker was a smart landlord (of the Angel). He was a short, thickset man but if there was trouble, he'd be out over the counter and have the man out the door.

A.B. said his father used to tell how, the Black Dog, if three men were drinking each round was a jug with two quarts of cider each. "Ephraim Clark kept the Black Dog."

Before the 1914 war, the Witheridge-Thelbridge road was so bad "you could lie in the ruts and nobody would see you." After the war, it was made up by Notts with stone from Coombe Quarry and apart from tar, it hasn't been touched since.

The small narrow garden south of Chapner Cross may well have belonged to the Cannington Toll House (This would have placed the Toll House in exactly the same relation to a road fork as the Witheridge Town Toll House below the churchyard.)

At Coombe Quarry, George Ash lit the fire in the stationary engine and Bill Dart (the son of the Cutcliffe bailiff) led the horse that pulled the skips from the quarry face to the crusher before the winch was installed.

NOTES OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN MR FRANK CHAPPLE (BELMONT HOSPITAL, TIVERTON) AND MR P. TOUT AND MR J. USMAR.

General

Mr Chapple (F.C.) was born at Prospect in 1887. He left school at 13 to work for Mr Tucker at Chapner where he lived and received one shilling and threepence per week. At 15 he was driving horses for Mr Arscott at Hill Barton (Thelbridge Barton). After a spell for Mr Frankpitt at Chapel Farm, Pennymoor, he worked for Bill Chapple, his cousin, at Bything (Betham) for 11 years, living at East Yeo. He also did war service and married in 1918. His last 40 years work was for Mr Ayre at Cann's Mill, then at Billhole and then Thelbridge itself.

He recalls as a young man aged 17 or 18 driving bullocks and sheep by road from Pennymoor to Exeter via Cadeleigh, Bickleigh Bridge, Rewe and Stoke Canon - "you wouldn't see a car all day." He had help with driving the bullocks but the sheep he would drive alone with a dog. He would put the sheep in the water meadows short of Cowley Bridge and sleep the Thursday night at the Cowley Bridge Inn before going onto Exeter market on the Friday. His journey on foot from Pennymoor to Cowley Bridge would take 5 to 6 hours. Mr Frankpitt would ride his hunter in.

He recalls driving a horse and wagon to Anstey Station to collect manure and building materials for building work at Cruwyshaye (Rackenford Manor). He recollects no holidays in those days, just the occasional outing, perhaps by horse van or brake to Crediton and then by train to Exmouth.

When working as a boy with horses there were six full days of work and in addition, on Sundays the horses had to be looked after. He reckons he'd walk twenty miles in a day on horse work and when asked about entertainments and dances said there was "enough dance by day." In his 20's wages were five shillings a week and used to buy 2 or 3 ounces of baccy a week at threepence an ounce.

People and Places

Witheridge Market was not so good as Thelbridge. At Witheridge April Fair the stallions were led around. At Crediton Fair once he had to keep a hundred bullocks penned in the street.

Percy Coles was a bicycle trader - he'd cycle round selling sweets or fish.

Charles Gunn of the "Hare and Hounds" (mentioned in Kelly's Directory of 1902 as the landlord) used to drive the mailcart; each evening at 6.45 he drove the mailcart to Morchard Road, where the letters and parcels went on by train; he stabled the horse and stayed with his son at the pub there and returned early next morning with the mail. (Kelly's Directory of 1902 states "letters received from Morchard Bishop R.S.O. North Devon at 6.47 p.m. dispatched at 6.45 p.m. week days only").

Bill Clark "used to ride his bike to Exeter, have a fight and ride back again."

F.C has been many times into the Black Dog (closed by 1919) but recalls no details.

Two men - Henry Lewis was one - came out of the Angel to go to Drayford on foot. They said "goodnight, shan't see you again" to each other; nor did they, so deep were the ruts. (Tale emphasising road condition up to the 1920's.)

People always said "Drayford Docks" and "Creacombe Quay." They never said anything about Thelbridge.

MRS D. PAYNE
NOTES OF CONVERSATION - 1977

Drayford

When Mr and Mrs Payne moved to Drayford in 1939 from Alswear, all the Alswear people said "Oh! Drayford amongst the curlews." No-one in Drayford ever referred to the "Drayford Docks" and they thought nothing of Witheridge, describing it as "that old place." Mr and Mrs Payne lived in Drayford from 1939 to 1947, when they moved to Butts Close, Witheridge, where she found that Witheridge people not only used the expression "Drayford Docks" and "Creacombe Quay" but also "Tis as twas, like Creacombe Bell."

Drovers

Drovers' hats were special hats of felt with a high crown. A Ridd at Alswear was a drover in the 20's.

Baker's Woodricks

Mr Francis (Frankie) Kingdom started work at 13 driving a horse and trap delivering bread for Whitfield's bakery around Worlington. It was "a lovely little horse to go" but one day just over the bridge to W. Worlington the horse "dropped right down dead," and then they started a motor van. F.K went to work for Herbert Churchill (the other Witheridge baker). Whitfield's used to buy faggotwood from farmers and at one time maintained a woodrick (rick of faggotwood) in the lower corner of the field known as Wood Park on W.. Yeo beside the main road. F.K states that woodricks were set up at points convenient to a road on the farms where the wood had been cut and made into faggots. Faggots were of any kind of wood, but in thin-ness the sticks are variously described as "browse" or "spray" or "branches": it had to be quick burning. Churchill's Bakery (now Reed's) is said to have changed to coke burning in the early 1950's.

MRS E. LOCK (CONVERSATION WITH MRS LOCK AND MRS PAYNE – 14/8/77 - CENTRED ON MRS LOCK'S SKETCHES AND WRITINGS)

1. A further couplet concerning Creacombe and Creacombe bell:-

   "One for a wedding
   All for a funeral."

2. The Drayford poem about vinnied cheese (see Mr W. Pyne) was used for other places; Mrs Lock quoted it using the name "Challacombe" (a place near Chumleigh.)

3. Both Mrs Lock and Mrs Payne used the word "orrance" or "orrants" ("errands") to mean going for the groceries.

4. Old Mrs Webber (widow of Mr R. Webber, now living next to "Copplestone") used to say, even in recent years, "I don't go up to the town much, I'd have to dress up."

5. At Thornham (Romansleigh) Mrs Lock recalls the Portuguese working at draying timber during the first world war.

6. As to rough rutted roads Mrs Lock recalls the tales of how Will Rattenbury's father and hers would say good morning to each other over the top of the ridge between the ruts ("routs").

In the fist World War, Mrs Payne remembers all the women used to go and collect the parings from the timber clearing for firing.

NOTES OF A CONVERSATION ON 2ND MARCH, 1978, AT THE SQUARE, WITHERIDGE, BETWEEN MR AND MRS P. TOUT, MR J, USMAR AND MR AND MRS JACK KNIGHT OF BUTTS CLOSE, WITHERIDGE

Background

Mr and Mrs Knight were both born in Tiverton, Mr Knight (J.K.) in 1909 and Mrs Knight (F.K.) in 1920. Mr Knight's family moved to Witheridge in 1919. They lived in Ebrington's Row, in a two up and two down; there were seven in the family then and two had to sleep on the landing. When the next baby was due, Jack Knight was sent off to his aunt at Holcombe Rogus to make room.

In 1921, the family moved down to Cannington and in 1926, they moved to Belmont where the business was carried on by father (Mr A. Knight) and son (Mr J. Knight) until. In 1941, Mr and Mrs J. Knight married and lived in Lawn Cottage until in 1946, they moved to one of the new council houses, in Butts Close.

J.K.'s first job was watchmaking and bicycle repairs in 1924 with Jim Stanley who lived at Stretchdown in the house now occupied by Mr Parker with his grandfather, who was a foot pedlar and went around with a basket on his head.

Mr Albert Knight

Born in 1884, A.K. first worked for Stenners; in 1902 he installed workshop machinery for Stenner's in Lea and Perrins' works in Leicester. About 1912, still for Stenner's, he fitted the first oil engine in Witheridge parish in the barn at West Yeo, to run the barn machinery. A.K.'s interest in electricity stemmed from his work with Stenner's who, at that period, were fitting electricity into Starkey, Knight and Fords brewery in Tiverton and into Lloyd Maunder's at Tiverton Junction. After Stenner's, A.K. went to work for Lane's where he made bicycle wheels, (one wheel in 20 minutes) and helped make the first bus body (on a Leyland chassis) in Tiverton. J.K recalls this being successfully tested on Long Drag Hill about 1915, before A.K. joined the Navy in 1916. A.K. had a flair for tuning and Leyland's adopted some of his ideas.

After the war, A.K. was dissatisfied with his rate of pay and decided to move. He had known Walter Tidball, as he had lived near The Swan, at Westexe North, his bus stopping place in Tiverton, and when he heard of the formation of the Witheridge Transport Company (a merger of the two carriers, Thomas's and Tidball's) in 1919, he applied for and got the post of engineer in that year (September) with that new company. He worked for the company at £3 per week until 1934 when the company

was taken over by Greenslade's. He had refused the offer of the owner of Stourton to put £1000 into him as a motor engineer, preferring to remain loyal to the company.

In 1934, A.K. went to work for the Exe Valley Electricity Company and also started his own electrical and radio business at Belmont, having had an interest in crystal sets in the Twenties. A.K. taught many people to drive in the 20's and 30's.

Witheridge Transport Company

A.K. and Arthur Bryant built the first bus body for the company. In the 20's A.K. often got up at 6 to drive and did repairs and maintenance at night if necessary.

F.K. remembers going on outings from Tiverton in the Company's buses which were hired over a wide area. Accidents were few; once Bill Thomas was going to Exeter in an old Ford with a passenger, when, near the turn to Silverton, a rear wheel came off and passed them at speed. In the Twenties, Arthur Bryant used to deliver eggs, rabbits and butter (from the Witheridge Butter Factory) to Sainsbury's in Exeter.

Electricity

The first electricity to be installed in the village of Witheridge was in Cypress House by the Exe Valley Electricity Company in 1935. The power plant charged batteries, kept upstairs,. When one burst, it leaked down through the floor and the lights went dim and flickered.

Spence of Honiton did most of the wiring. Customers of the electricity plant in Witheridge got 100 watts for a shilling a week (and houses were limited to 100 watts each, so the light was not bright.)

The electricity mains came to Witheridge in 1940 and the Exe Valley Electricity Company installed the surplus plant from Witheridge into Winkleigh and A.K. used to travel to Winkleigh to maintain it (and got his petrol at 1/- a gallon.)

Wireless

A.K. and J.K. used to go to Bampton to service wirelesses

Post

In the Twenties, letters left Witheridge by horse van at half past six in the evening for Morchard Bishop and Morchard Road Station, and reached London the following morning. Mr Priddace was a postman and walked to Nomansland twice a day, in the morning to deliver and in the afternoon to collect.

Dr Price

Dr Price (appears for example in Kelly's Directories for 1922, 1930 and 1939) lived in "The Firs." A.K. serviced Dr Price's car every Sunday morning for which Dr Price paid him "half a sovereign."

If the Dr was called out at night, he used to send William Brent (who worked as a groom and lived at Anstey's Court) down to Cannington to get A.K. to come up and drive him. He only allowed William Brent to drive Mrs Price. J.K. and others recall Dr Price as not charging half his patients in Witheridge, as never losing a pneumonia case and as visiting seven or eight times a day, if needed. He also employed Charles Leach (who lived at Slew Park, now Gordon House) as a gardener; he was locally known as "Doctor" Charlie Leach to distinguish him from another Charlie Leach. Another employee of Dr Price was a Miss Pickard who married a Jack Leach who came from Worlington. Jack Leach always chewed a pipe and slurred his words through his pipe. The following conversation with the Vicar is recalled:

Jack Leach:	*Well, I'm beggared*
Rev. Castlehow:	*What was that?*
Leach:	*Beg pardon, Sir*
Castlehow:	*What did you say?*
Leach:	*That's all right sir.*

Schools

J.K. recalls that a horse drawn wagon brought schoolchildren in from Venhay was, including the Grendons and was driven by "Down." "Down" was a higgler (or "heggler" or "eggler") and delivered eggs, butter and rabbits during the day, before taking home the kids in the evening. The Cole children from Menchine (Nomansland, Thelbridge parish) drove in a trap, but the rest of the Nomansland kids walked, including the Lakes from Edgworthy.

In the early Twenties there were some eighty kids at "the top school" and 120 at the lower school and fights between the two took place "everyday."

Charles Carter was headmaster at the top school in the very early Twenties and J.K recalls him as being fond of drink and with a foul temper. He at times beat kids so hard, their parents instantly transferred them to the lower school.

He was succeeded by Levi Ollerenshaw (who lived at Belmont) who was less violent; he began by announcing "I may be cabbage looking, but I'm not green" and was strict on clean boots - "he knew new dirt from old."

J.K. attended the top school and recalls an occasion that he and half a dozen others had gone for a smoke in the laurels in the chapel yard; they smoked so hard that the smoke came out of the laurel bushes and was spotted by Rev. Dudley (Congregational Minister, The Manse) but they were too quick for him.

Some kids were sent to school with a penny to feed on for the day; a penny bought two current buns or four plain chudleighs (buns about two inches across.)

Top School garden in the Twenties was at Chapner Cross in the angle of the field between the Nomansland and Stretchdown Roads. Mrs Dudley used to arrange dancing lessons and dances in the Top School.

1939-1945 War

F.K was in the Fire Guard; they used to practice "down in Winston Maunder's field" under the command of Bill Vernon. There was a tin shed there and they used to pile in green grass and set fire to it and then crawl around, one behind the other in the smoke, to practice.

J.K. was first into the Royal Observer Corps in Witheridge; he joined with Reg Rodd; their headquarters were Reg Rodd's chicken house , next to Merryside ("after it had been deloused") before a proper shed had been built. It was manned 24 hours a day; fulltimers worked (4 hours on, 8 off, 4 on, 12 off) 80 hours a week, and got paid £2.16.0. Names that J.K. recalls as being members included Fred and Sid Radford, Sid Dart, Frank Kingdom, Bill "Postman" Kingdom, Bill "Sideways" Kingdom, Bill Gold, Cyril Partridge.

J.K. recalls the time when "Six Whiteleys came over at 50ft, on their was to bomb the Eider Dam."

J.K. and F.K. had a garden down Coombe Road and one day F.K. left her 3 speed Hercules bicycle (costing £5.15.6) by some steps and it was run over by a quarry lorry of Nott's from Coombe Quarry. It took a long time to find out who had done it (George Shaw was the driver); she had to send the broken wheel away to the insurance company for them to see before they would pay up on her claim.

Oddments

1. Working for A.K. at one time was a Captain Criddle; one day A.K. went to look in his 10 gallon cider cask and it had all gone. . . . down Captain Criddle!
2. North Street used to be a "foot of mud in winter and a foot of dust in summer."
3. "Creacombe Treacle Mines" was an expression heard (as well as the previously recorded sayings about Drayford and Creacombe.)
4. "You vote for Maister an' ee'll give 'ee a rabbit" was a phrase used at local election times.
5. "Smoke a pipe to get the fleas out of the cat's ear" was a phrase used in A.K.'s household
6. J.K. states "Belmont" was an old brewery.

Robert Bucknell was a dog fancier at Lakelands and later (by 1923) at Penford where one night "he got the D.T's and let his double barrel off through the ceiling."

NOTES OF A CONVERSATION ON 1ST MAY 1978 WITH MRS GARD (EAST CLOSE), MRS MOLLY HARDING, A DAUGHTER OF MRS GARD, MR W. RATTENBURY (EAST CLOSE) MRS D. PAYNE (57, BUTTS CLOSE) AND MR JOHN USMAR (ENGINE PARK.)

Background

Mrs Gard was born n 1893 and lived for some years at Chulmleigh Week. In 1917 her husband, before leaving for the Services, decided that the place was too isolated from people and the shops and so they rented the middle of one of a row of cottages (owned by Mr Smyth of Town) just south of Drayford Bridge. (The Cottages of cob and stone with tin roofs, were demolished in the 1960's. On the site in 1978. A new house is currently being built.) The cottage at the road end of the row still had, at that time, the Clockmakers board on the house, with the name "Bradford" on it. (By 1808, William Bradford had moved to Tiverton to continue his clockmaking business which had been carried on at Drayford certainly since the 1760s.) Just above the row of cottages was a "penthouse," a blacksmiths shop (not recorded in the Directories of the period). It was a tradition that the innermost cottage had been a pub called "The Rising Sun." (No reference in the Directories.)

Topography

The road to South Molton was known as Rock Road on account of the quarry and Mrs Gard is certain that "old Mr Venner" always said the turnpike gate and toll house was situated on the site of Thornham Chapel. (Mrs Gard's husband was a County Council roadman and also swept chimneys.)

Water was often a problem; the well at Hillside often used to dry up in summer and people used to go up Rock Road to Rock Well for clean spring water. "Three acres and a cow" was promised after the 1914-18 War; Stuckey's and Godswells were two of these. There used to be "allotments up Rock Road." The roads were so bad after the 1914-18 War that pit props were cut to put in the ruts.

Further up the road to South Molton was a pub at Duckspuddle on Meshaw Moor where, it was said, "The ducks used to paddle in the beer." Just north of Drayford Bridge by the ground known as Drayford Green, four chestnut trees were planted by Mr Harry Lewis "in memory of the war 1914-18 - one tree for each year of the war." All grew well but three unexpectedly died (one remains today in 1978) and it was suggested that someone had poisoned them. Drayford Green used to be covered in "wild rhubarb." (New chestnut trees, given by Mr F. Woollacott of West Yeo, have been planted in Drayford Green by the Parish Council in 1978.) The footpaths in "Stockham Wood" were much used and "Mr Lake used to ride the lower path once a year to keep it open."

Children

Drayford Mill was still working in the 20's - 30's and the eleven Gard children used to enjoy playing hide and seek in and around the Mill, unknown to their parents. Other games included tag, hoops, marbles, skipping, kicking tins, and King Smuggler. The children made sure that the pears on the big pear tree, opposite Venner's, never had time to get ripe. Molly recalls that they used to use the footpath below Town to get to Worlington School except "when Mr Smyth's black pony was out in the field."
On one occasion Mr Harry Smyth caught some of them going to school with their pockets full of apples and made them empty them out. They used to pull moss out of the hedgebanks and play with it; Mr Smyth warned them and then "came one day on his pony and caught them and said George (George Gard) was ringleader and George took heels and went in across the river" which was up to his waist. Mrs Gard was waiting for him to come from school and she heard him come in "splish splosh." She recalls that children were lively but never nasty and destructive.

One of the favourite games was to "swing up and down on a beech tree limb" and one day a farmer came and the children who were holding the limb down, let go and it swung up and nearly took Molly with it, up out of sight, and the farmer never saw her. They came back later and helped her down.

Mrs Gard recalls that outings were a great excitement; on one occasion Molly and her sister were so determined not to be late for the very early start for a Sunday School outing that they got dressed up in their best the night before and slept in their clothes.

The children didn't use hot water to wash in; they used to take soap and towel and wash in the river. Mrs Gard recalls one occasion when George was about eight, that he and his brother hung their clothes on "a lot of old withy bushes by Mrs Butt's" and went peddling about naked in the river which was running dirty and slimy at the time. Mrs Venner came and complained to Mrs Gard who "went down with a little slip stick" and drove them home naked, carrying their clothes.

The children used to play with an old man-trap from the old blacksmith's shop and one day one of the brother tilled the trap in the wood and caught his brother - the spring had gone and there was no danger of an injury.

The children went to collect acorns by the bucketful when the family had a pig; this pig had to be taken to "the orchard" in the morning and Charles (one of the brothers) used to ride the pig back home from the orchard in the evening. Sometimes, the children used to go stone picking for Smyth's.

Tales and Comments

1. At the time of the Lynmouth floods, "the bottom of Drayford Bridge was washed out" and Molly (they lived at Way's Cottage) had "to catch up the children by the river" and in the house she was up to her waist in water and had to be carried upstairs.

2. Remarks made about Witheridge included "the last place anyone would want to go would be Witheridge" and "I don't like going up there with all they old sheeps heads hanging out the windows, like butcher's shops."

3. When the ropeway was deliberately stopped one dinner time, the passenger was Archie Nott himself.

4. No buses called at Drayford in the 20s; all had to come up to Witheridge to get the van or the bus.

5. Mr Jack Chudley farmed at Stuckey; he used to "go funny" and go on strike against himself. He was a fine farmer but "the least thing set him off", once one of his pair of horses went lame, but as the other one kicked, no one would lend him one and "he went off."

6. Thelbridge was always called "Delbridge" and Morchard was always called "Morchet"

7. *Over to Mareleigh amongst the trees* *Mariansleigh*
   Barley, bread and vinnied cheese
   Sour milk and bony pie
   If you don't believe me
   Go over and try

8. Mrs Gard recalls that Mr Gard wouldn't take salmon but "the boys were keen." One night someone tapped at the window and when it was opened a salmon was pushed through. To get a salmon a rabbit wire on a stick was used or a gaff. Mr Lewis caught eels by the bucketful when the water was dirty and high. All recalled what good eating they were.

9. China ornaments were called "Joanies" and the use of the name continues

10. Mrs Gard recalls skinning "hundreds of moles and pegging the skins out on the floor. Mr Gard used to "till the traps" and the children had to inspect them on the way to school.

NOTES OF A CONVERSATION ON 15TH AND 23RD MAY, 1978 BETWEEN MRS O. VERNON (THE CHIMES, NORTH STREET) AND MR J. USMAR (ENGINE PARK)

William and Olive Vernon 1960

Background and Family

Mrs Vernon ("O.V.") (of a family of five daughters and three sons) was born in 1903 in the cottage next to the blacksmiths in Church street where her father, Mr W. Baker, worked. (The cottage is now occupied by Mr and Mrs Luxton next to Stonemans.) Mr W. Baker fetched his wife and two young sons from Lapford Station in the snow in March 1900 in a long cart for the furniture and as they drove through the countryside Mrs Baker, who came from London, said "Doesn't anyone live here?" Mr Baker was blacksmith and also Agent for Ruston Hornsby engines, Huxtable ploughs and for Chicks, the bicycle dealers in Queen Street, Exeter. On his cards were the words "W. Baker, Church Street, Witheridge."

Mrs Baker disliked the cottage and when, in 1907, the tenancy of the Angel was to let, she said to her husband, "We'll go for it." Mr Ford of Starkey, Knight and Ford sent for Mr and Mrs Baker, interviewed them and gave them the lease. They stayed, keeping the blacksmiths until 1937 when a daughter of Mr and Mrs Baker, Mrs Ruby Buchanan and her husband took over. The lease remained in the same family for 60 years. O.V was married to Mr W. Vernon ("W.V.") in 1928 and they moved into Bank House in the Square, where Mr Vernon carried on the agency for Lloyds Bank.

O.V. has a photograph of Mr and Mr Baker and herself aged 1 year with two brothers and her sister Hattie. The photograph was taken in the field known as Cross Park by a Mr F. Taylor of 39, Cyril Street, Taunton. Mr Taylor used to tour round with a horse drawn caravan. To have their pictures taken, people entered the caravan and posed before a backcloth - always of stately architecture - among potted plants to have their picture taken.

W.V. was 22 when in 1922 he became Secretary/Office Manager to Mr Archibald Notts Quarry and Haulage business. Until W.V.s arrival Mr Notts accounts were kept on scraps of paper and even cigarette packets. W.V. used to bring over to O.V. the timesheets and the total sum in cash, and O.V. had to put all the wage envelopes ready for Mr Nott to take down on Saturday mid-morning for the payout. O.V. also recalls the men coming home in the lorries from Brayford covered in fleas after living in the vans out at the Quarries for a week. O.V. recalls many Witheridge men worked at Brayford but that nearly all those who worked at Coombe Quarry came form Drayford. She recalls that "old George Reed" was in one of Nott's caravans on Winsford Hill doing a road job there living on "a bit of bread and rusty bacon fat."

Life as Children

As children brought up in the Angel, they used to have to cut up sugar with the sugar cutters for "the grog" for which "stirrers" were provided; these had barley sugar twist stems and a glass knob on top. They also had to trim 14 lamps, clean the reflectors and lamp globes and fill them with oil; - all this took place on a bench in the kitchen, covered in newspaper. They also had to clean off the grease on the candlesticks with soda and water. O.V. says they were "never allowed out to play" and recalls one of her sisters saying "Mother never educated us, she only learnt us the scrubbing brush." She also recalls that she and other children used to take an old sack bag down to the marshes at New Bridge for acorns which they then took up to old Amos Maire at Ditchetts, where he kept a diary and a pig.
Before they moved to the Angel O.V. remembers that her father had the first Edison phonograph in the village, with its big horn and wax cylinders. It was kept in a padded box. "People used to come round and ask to hear it." The first sound was always (this is an Edison Bell record.)

In the Angel they used to have Sunday tea in the sitting room and one of the girls played the piano and Mr Baker sang.

Once, on a choir outing to Ilfracombe some of the kids rode on top among the luggage.

Life at The Angel

When Mrs Baker first went to the Angel she used to make 30 Christmas puddings at a time "in the furnace where the clothes were boiled." For ploughing match dinners "Mr Selley used to bring 40lb rounds of beef" and "the village people used to come round for the dripping".

O.V remembers Sir Ian Amory warming himself at the kitchen fire "with his head nearly touching the mantelpiece" as he used to call in after hunting for bread and jam and then go up to change "leaving mud all up the stairs and on the white valance round the bed." Once, the hounds were put in the coach house "and killed all the fowls gone to roost." Sir Ian's chauffeur, Stanley Howe, used to wait all day and then drive away in a "big green Daimler" and "the kids all jumping on the running board." Mr Baker used to follow the hunt on foot and when Sir Ian had his hunting accident out at Venhay, laid his coat on the gate which was used as a stretcher for him.

"The Welford family - a travelling theatrical company - used to stay at the Angel and put on a show each night." Sometimes it was a play, sometimes a series of turns such as "tunes on glasses" or "tunes on canes hanging down from a frame."

Many used to start the day by calling at the Angel for a drink at breakfast time and some heavy drinking was done; sometimes the children came home from school and found the beds not made, or the dinner cleared because of the many drunks at the bar.

Mr Baker loved his own children and did his best to get fathers to go home to their families once he thought they had had enough and before they got drunk. "Father used to jump the counter for people" also on occasions. Some of the women round The Drang used to drink heavily at times - "they used to break out and drink, and the pins would come out of their hair, and it would draggle down." At times some of them would cross The Square from The Drang in their flannelette nightdresses to buy drink to take home to drink in bed.

Before 1914, Starkey, Knight and Fords' brewers drays used to deliver pulled by Shire horses. Hogsheads of cider used to come in from Bradford Barton.

Transport

There were many bicycles about before 1914 and they were rough and strong. Mr W. Baker and Dr Brown were the first car owners in Witheridge after the 1914-18 War. The first car seen in Witheridge was in 1916 or 1917 when a party of wounded soldiers from Knightshayes were brought out to Coombe House to tea. O.V. was one of those who went down and remembers the men sitting on the lawn in their hospital blue, red ties and soft peaked caps having tea.

O.V. remembers driving by pony and trap to Lapford where the pony and trap were left at the Maltscoop, and catching the train to Exeter for a day's shopping. One of these trips always took place in the autumn so that the children could be rigged out for winter.

O.V. remembers the first buses running to Exeter where they pulled up at the Crown and Sceptre in North street. There was great rivalry between Thomas's and Tidball's ; if you went on one then the other would say "How come you're not coming on mine then?" Before the buses, the carrier's vans had benches down each side and rounded "covered wagon" hoods for shelter.

O.V. remembers riding in Davey's school cart on a visit out to North Coombe; it was painted yellow and used to smell of stale milk and kids' lunches, and kids' oiled boots, and corduroy suits and Norfolk jackets and celluloid collars (which could be washed clean.)

O.V. remembers going in Tidball's horse brake in 1916 to King's Nympton to be confirmed.

Before 1914 the Cutcliffes had a carriage and pair and a groom in uniform who used to drive Mrs Cutcliffe to church on Sunday mornings across the Square to the church gates where Sam Hill was waiting to open the carriage door for which he got a tip. The same happened when she came out after the service.

In the early 1900s when Tidball's drove a carriage and pair for a wedding, the horses' ears had little caps with silver grey tassels.

W.V. when first married had a motor bike and sidecar ("a silver bullet.") and O.V. remembers the leather jacket and helmets. They had their first car in 1935 - a Morris tourer with dickey seat.

People - Mainly in the Directory for 1914

Frank Maunder, butcher, had the chapel custom and George Selley had the church custom. George Selley used to go into the Angel in mid-morning for "a half of beer and a yarn with Mrs Baker." Frank Maunder used to bang his butcher's knife on the block and say "I dunno what to cut 'ee."

H.T. Trawin kept a drug store where Mr and Mrs Tout's shop is now and was also a wool dealer. In the window were huge glass containers of coloured water. His daughters, Ellie and Connie, ran the stores. The wool used to be all stacked up in the back yard sheds.

William Tucker's (shoe maker of West Street) son, Jack, was apprenticed to George Pullen's in drapery and went to London where he worked for Venables, a big East End store.

Mrs Bessie Tucker (Rosemont) taught O.V. music and was an excellent teacher

Henry Way's builders yard was in Fore Street where Stoneman's now is. Jim Way (also a builder) lived at 18, The Square; he had to do the rubbish cart on Saturdays and take the rubbish down to the Mill to be dumped.

W. Greenslade (Manager of Witheridge & District Dairy Company) was known as "Billy Butterdabs" and always wore "clogs and a big waterproof' as the butter factory was "always swimming in water." The kids used to go up there and dip their fingers in the butter.

Whitfield's, the bakers, were at the premises at Trafalgar Square now occupied by Reed's the baker. Whitfield always did the Flower Show tea.

Churchill's, the bakers, were at the premises in South Street, now occupied by Isaac's.

Archie Nott was responsible for his big steam engine turning over on Coombe Ball - Bill Stenner was the driver.

Bob Palfreyman (father of Mrs E. Williams) was lamplighter and went round with his ladder to light up, leaning it against the two cross pieces at the top. He went round again about 10 p.m. to blow them out.

William Bennett, shoemaker, lived in the next cottage to Mill Park and was postman as well.

William Bradford, chimney sweep, used to drink cider in the bar.

Dick Middleton was a rabbit trapper; when he was in the army in the 1914-18 war, his wife addressed a letter to him as "Dick Middleton, Rabbit Catcher, Somewhere in France."

Dick Breyley, saddler of Fore Street, never gave anything to collections and always said "tidn't very nice of 'ee." Most of the giving was done by "the gentry."

Mrs Elsworthy of Lashbrook gave the lectern in church

Miss E. Benson of the Lawn, would haul the kids back into church if they tried to slip out from their place under the tower - they called her "Old Jezebel."

Mr Charlton used to drive in from Colleton Hall in a cart pulled by two donkeys which the kids used to try to frighten.

Mr Folland of Burn House was "always fishing, did no work, and shot himself in his kitchen at 8 o'clock one morning and they heard it from the Angel."

From the Directory of 1902

It was George Henry Pullen, Senior, of Rosemont Villa, who built Pullens Row. Pullens ground their own coffee and blended their own tea, young people went there to learn their trade. They employed three adults and also Sam Hill to drive the box trap for deliveries.

O.V. recalls going up to Roger's fire (See memories of Mrs Greenslade) and that the horse drawn fire engine came out from Tiverton.

Robert Bucknell was a dog breeder and trainer at Penford before moving to Lakelands and bred cocker spaniels. "You couldn't pass down New Bridge Hill for the stink of dead sheep." The kennels were all along the road and the whole place was infested with rats. One night Jim Way met "such an army of rats in the road that he jumped into the hedge to avoid them." Bucknell was known as "Pa Bucknell, " rode a pony and "smoked a little stubby pipe." The kids used to try and frighten the pony and he'd cry "Ye buggers."

Miss Ellen Churchill of Fords Folly was a "wonderful dressmaker" and took three girls at a time to teach them.

Fox, Fowler and Co. (Barclay's, M.J. Mansfield was Manager) was known to the farmers as "Voxy Fowler."

Robert Hooper, the piano tuner of Church Street, was church organist for many years. He was blind and was taught by the Vicar the Rev. J.P. Benson.

Mrs Ford (mother of Mrs Bristow, see Memories of Mrs Bristow) used to come to the Angel every day for a week at a time and was marvellous at sewing; she used to be given three meals a day. Mrs Baker used to give Mrs Ford old clothes to make things for the Ford children.

Fred Tidball and Charlie Maire were in partnership in the traction engine which stood in the open where the bungalow "Engine Park" now stands in Rackenford Road. Mr Winter was the driver.

Joe Churchill

Joe was the son of Herbert Churchill the baker of Trafalgar Square and nephew of Miss Ellen Churchill and grandson of "Old Joe" Churchill. Joe is seen in the Directory of 1930 as "saddler" and lived and worked in the Pound House in the Square. He also cut hair and did a post round. O.V. recalls him as a "lovely character and so good tempered and he was fond of his drink." She also recalls how he used to lather a customer's face, shave one side and then nip across to the Angel for a few drinks before returning to shave the other side. Once in the 1920s Joe took a red "Vote Labour" meeting poster from the Angel, where someone had stuck it, and stuck it in Vernon's window. In the night, O.V. and W.V. took it down and wrote "Chair to be taken by his Worship the Mayor, Joe Churchill," on it and stuck it on Joe's door. O.V. and W.V. watched the next morning as Joe opened his door, looked out, reached back in down behind a bench for his bottle and had a good swig, put the bottle back, shut the door and went off, never seeing the notice until he came home, when he refused to take it down saying "the bugger can stay there." Eventually O.V. and W.V. scraped it off.

Once in the 1920's "they" went over to Meshaw to sing at a concert in the schoolroom, in a butchers van, with a crate of beer. Joe was to sing a solo but as he had trouble learning his words, he asked W.V. to type the words out. So W.V. and O.V. set to and wrote down nonsense words that they had made up and didn't hand him the paper with the words until the last minute. Some of the words were:-

"Oh I do like a dumpling in me stoodle-oodle-oo
Some people make an awful fuss about their food
And over it they brood
Some prefer to squeeze
And some get up in trees, And others like a steak and kidney pie.
But I do like a dumpling in me stoodle-oodle-oo."

Joe sang it all the way through, left the stage and finished the beer. The audience was puzzled "what a silly kind of song" they said. Joe got his own back as there was no beer left for the others.

Joe used to take home a bottle of cider every night. One night he got some fish and chips and took a bottle over to the Angel for vinegar. It was filled up for him and as he same away the police stopped him as they thought he had been drinking for hours and didn't believe it was vinegar, so Joe unstopped the bottle and held the cork under their noses.

O.V. has a photograph of Joe in the 1930s standing by his Hillman car in his plus fours - known to many as his "apple picking burches" - which were very baggy indeed.

Once in the 1939-45 war, the Home Guard arranged a practice spy hunt and Joe was up in "Cox's Attic" in Mill Cottages watching out and saw a stranger walking around the police station and thought he was a "Fifth Column" and threw Mr Cox's seed potatoes at him from the attic window shouting "there y'are, ye're dead, yer bugger."

Politics

Before 1914, the Baker children used to sing outside Liberal windows:-

"Vote, vote, vote for Colonel Perowne
Kick old Lambert out the door
If I had a lump of lead
I would chuck it at his head
And he wouldn't be Liberal anymore."

Once Eric Hutchings and Jim Culhene got a ladder and stole Jim Way's flag and gave it to an Insurance Inspector to post back from Bristol. "Jim Way was very I am" and used to say "Mr Baker, I can do what I like in Witheridge."

Trade

O.V.'s mother used to recall the tiny china shop behind what used to be No 12, Fore Street, where were sold the pink china cups, saucers and teapots with, in gold letters, the words "Present from Witheridge" - they were made in Germany.

A salesman used to come round selling American longcase clocks from a cart.

Carts used to come round selling mazzards - "The huge great mazzard cherries from Swimbridge, sweet and black."

Fresh Clovelly herrings came round in long carts and O.V. remembers the bright scales of the fish, all over the cart.

Once there was a crowd in the Angel drinking on Monday and they got the fish-carter half drunk and got to tossing for the fish and the bar was covered in fish scales.

A "foreign meat man" used to come with a box cart and rested his horse in the yard. Mrs Baker never bought any and he was always known as "the foreign meat man."

An old man from Venhay used to bring in eggs in big market baskets of chaff to Mrs Baker.

A "Bazaar" used to come to the Angel and set out their wares - china, gifts, etc., in the coach house for a week.

At the market there were pens all the way up past the Mitre and in the middle of the Square was the fairing stall, with gingerbread, sugared almonds, cinnamon fairings.

The Club Walk

Always took place on Oak Apple Day, May 29th. Mrs Baker always put a big branch of oak on each side of the Angel door and the girls wore a spray of oakapple and if they didn't, the boys pinched them. For the occasion, a band came from South Molton at 8 a.m. and prepared in the Square with an old chap called "Jack, the Biscuit Burner" from the South Molton Workhouse, who was "a bit simple."

The Square was "full of shows", coconut shies, bags of confetti for throwing, roundabouts, swing boats, "Try Your Strength." There was a big tent in "The Globe" (Bell Close). All came for miles to the Witheridge Club Walk. "The Walk" itself was just the procession to the church. Bill Greenslade was Club Secretary. All the sideshows paid a toll to church funds.

1914-1918

The Angel was closed for 2 or 3 days at a time when the beer ran out. There was recruiting in the Square. Those who volunteered were brought a drink in the Angel and sang and went off in Tidball's long brake to Lapford Station. Some were not to return. Later a Mr Cruwys came buying heavy horses for the artillery and the farmers brought them to the Square for his inspection. He bought some and engaged men to take them to Lapford Station. O.V.'s brothers, Leslie and William, took three each, riding the middle one.

1939-1945

From 1939, Mrs Buchanan ran The Angel, helped by Mrs Baker (while Mr Buchanan served in the R.A.F.) and Joe Churchill put up the barrels. The Manchesters were billeted around the village; the men's cookhouse was at the back of the Angel and they ate upstairs in the big room. The Officer's mess was in the kitchen. The men drilled in the Square. There were concerts and dances.

Once a fire practice was held in an old hut full of smouldering, damp grass for smoke practice and old "Cock Price", short for Cockney, got choked and had to be carried out, laid down and "pumped" for artificial respiration. At each "pump" he farted. "Oh" he said, "its those bloody taters the Missus gave me for supper."

W.V. was in charge of evacuees and "arranged them all, and paid their allowances." O.V. and W.V. had "a girl from London, covered in impetigo and took her to Tiverton and rigged her out at their own expense."

A German plane came down near Gidley Cross; one pilot walked to a nearby farm where they gave him breakfast; the other was dead and lay in the field."

Other Subjects

1. The pub called The Black Dog was always below the Angel in style and it smelt.

2. The village used to be "Fowls everywhere." The Angel fowls used to come up the street to Granny Crook's cottage (now garages opposite the Mitre) and scratch in her wooden boxes of flowers by her door and she used to throw her stick at them. from the back of 11, the Square, fowls used to be let out of their roost in the morning and go across to the churchyard for the day.

3. An engineer called Montague Pearson came from Redruth, Cornwall, (date in the 20s unknown) and stayed for 12 months at the Angel while he overseed the erection of the overhead ropeway from Coombe Quarry to the Depot. Mr Baker made all the ironwork for him and, in the evenings, he and Mr Pearson got together over the plans. He had a sitting room to himself and he gave Mrs Baker a silver vase when he left, in appreciation.

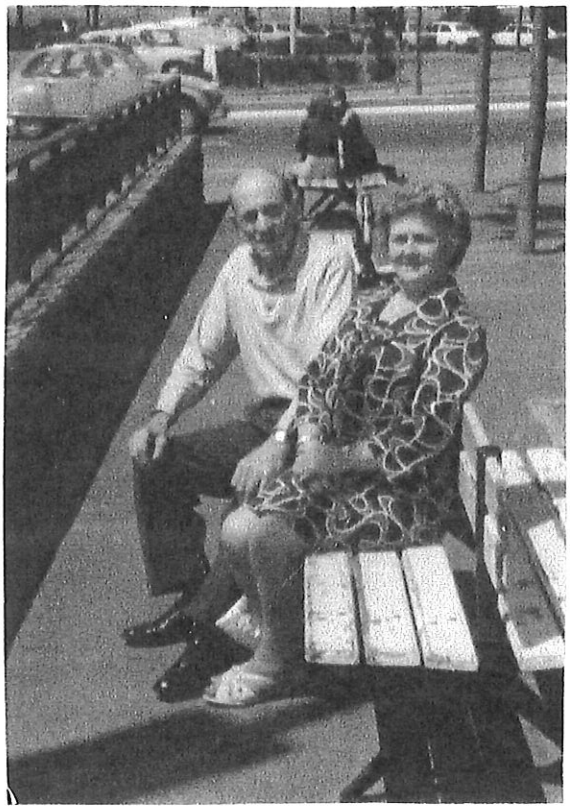
4. Bob Southcott was Bandmaster in Witheridge before 1914; he played the euphonium. On summer Saturday evenings they stood in a ring in The Square playing, and Mr Baker used to run out with a jug of beer and glasses, which he put on the ground by the players. They numbered about 15. They paraded up around "Whitfield's Corner" (Trafalgar Square) and back again. The band did not play after 1914.

5. In the early 1900s The Witheridge Volunteers used to drill in the church room.

6. "Old Mrs Ford's mother" used to pay one penny a week to go to the school that used to be held in what was later to become the church room.

W.V. was, for a time, treasurer of The Witheridge and Thelbridge Nursing Association. A Miss Bell, of 6, Woodbine Terrace, Exeter, was Superintendent of district Nurses and she came out and stayed at the Angel while she toured round on her bicycle, inspecting the nurses at Rackenford, Meshaw and Rose Ash. Nurse Gillard (See 1914 Directory) was the first nurse taken on. She was smart and lodged with Mitchell, the Clerk to the Parish Council, at 10, The Square. She was conscientious and worked hard, going round on her bicycle. If there was an emergency, someone would ride in or come in a pony and trap and take her out.

NOTES OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR AND MRS CHURCHILL (19, WARWICK AVENUE, EXETER) AND MR J. USMAR (ENGINE PARK, WITHERIDGE) ON JUNE 5TH, 1978.



Rene and Bill Churchill

Background

Mr Churchill ("W.C.") was born in 1895 at the baker's in West Street. His father, Mr. H Churchill, was born at Rose Ash in 1859. W.C. states there is a tale suggesting that a Duke of Marlborough went to live in Rose Ash at sometime during the reign of Queen Victoria. Mr H. Churchill first worked in saddlery with his father, but married a Miss Whitfield and bought the baker's in West Street, Witheridge. His father (W?C's grandfather) was a photographer as well as a saddler and some remaining photographs have "Churchill - Witheridge" stamped on them.
W.C left school at 14 and went into the baking business.

Boer War

W.C. remembers the end of the Boer War and how two or three from the village were fetched from Lapford Station and given a reception at the Hare and Hounds.

Club Walk

Up to 1200 people set down to dinner in a marquee; the "walk" or procession always went round the village.

Markets and Shows

Sometimes a circus came to the Square with wild animals. In April there always a three day market, with a parade of Shire horses and prizes.

Bakeries

W.C. bought Whitfield's bakery (in Trafalgar Square, or "Whitfield's Corner) in 1945, and took over the woodricks around the parish as it was still woodburning then. Mr J. Churchill had converted the West Street bakery from wood to coal before 1914.

Transport

Carriers used to go to Exeter, stay the night at the "Elephant and Castle" and return the next day.
The first bus in Witheridge is recalled by W.C. and the ladder by which the roof was reached.
Charlie Maires traction engine used to go to Tiverton to bring back foodstuffs stopping more than once on the way for water.

Fires

W.C.'s father used to tell of the day the line of thatched cottages and the thatched "Bell Inn" along the north side of the Square burnt down, somewhere around the year 1880; there was a concert on in the Drill Hall (now the Church Room) and W.C.'s father "went round with the bell rousing the village." W.C. remembers the last big village fire in 1946, when a line of thatched cottages between Rosemont and Pullen's Row caught fire and the sparks caught the thatch of the cottages along the road to Venn Bridge. All were burnt out.

Railway

The railway from Lapford was planned to go on to East Anstey but was blocked by one landowner.

Tollhouse

In the early 1900s, the ruins of the "Cannington" tollhouse were still to be seen at Chapner Cross, by the small garden that still remains.
When W.C.'s father first went to school, he attended the school in the Drill Hall (now the Church Room) run by Mr Melhuish, at a charge of one shilling per pupil per week.

Pullen's Row

This was built by George Henry Pullen, Senior, "one at a time."

Lord of the Manor

W.C's father looked after the affairs of the Lord of the Manor, collected the tolls for the use of the stalls in the Square on Market and Show days. The stalls themselves were kept in a shed behind the Police House, in the Square. W.C. states that anyone who opened up a gate in the parish had to pay a toll to the Lord of the Manor. Other tolls were payable - for instance, the owners of Ditchetts (Trafalgar Square) had to pay two shillings and sixpence for their front door step onto the street.

Joe Churchill

J.C used "to turn his hand to anything, even mending glasses." Once he made a "moving toy", using a sewing machine and an old phonograph, and making figures. "You dropped a penny in it and it started going." He was fond of a drink and when his wife, Millie, sent him for a jug of milk, she used to say "Be sure it's milk, Joe." She always said she couldn't cook like Joe.

Once she had been revisiting London, from where she originally came, and he couldn't get any greens to cook, so he boiled her up some stinging nettles and she said "This is delicious Joe," not realising what it was.
"Old" Farmer Tarr to summer used to say "Joe'd be shaving me, and he'd suddenly say "Millie'll be home from school I must put the kettle on." In the 1939-45 war, J.C. did munitions work in Street. At one time J.C. did the job of lamplighter and also used to wind the church clock.

Pubs and Cider Houses

W.C. remembers Black Dog as a pub and its landlord, Ephraim Clark. "It was low inside and dark as a dungeon." Apart from the five pubs, there were at one time, several other places "registered as cider houses" including Belmont.

Mrs W. Churchill's family name was Reed and she was born in the Hare and Hounds (Proprietor W. Reed). She remembers that in the old days, each pub brewed its own beer. Many travelling salesmen, Avon Tyres, Anglo American Oil Co. used to stay there; they provided more business than local drinkers. William Reed was Proprietor from about 1906-1936. Mrs Reed was very proud of the limeash floor in the Hare and Hounds, and scald milk was used to wash it every day to make it shine.

Drayford's Clockmaker

The cottage at Drayford still had Blackford's Clockmaker sign well into the 20th century. Another cottage nearby had a "Rising Sun" sign which was the emblem of an insurance company whose agent lived there.

NOTES OF SECOND CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR AND MRS TARR OF "MUXERIES" AND MR AND MRS P. TOUT AND J. USMAR ON SEPTEMBER 5TH, 1978.

Mr and Mrs R Tarr

Postcards and Photographs

1. Methodist Chapel, taken from the west in 1920, showing a tall window on either side of the door
2. Card of Thomas' Brougham and Horse brake. "Old Mr Burridge" drove the horsebrake to Lapford with fowls and eggs and produce from the Butter Factory
3. The photograph of the steam engine on its side at the top of Coombe Ball. The man in the straw hat is R.T's father and the dog is their own sheepdog. The Doctor had made R.T.'s father grow a beard "as he had the quinsies."
4. The photographs of cottages opposite Cannington is wrongly captioned "Queen Street"; the street was known as South Street.

Outings in the 1920s

There used to be Point to Points, and skittles matches. If people "weren't very well when they left, they were a good deal worse when they got back" as there was little springing. Hats used to get shaken or blown off. Once "Old Frank Maunder's straw hat went over the side and was never seen again."

Transport in the 1930s

On one occasion, a party (including R.T., Steven Selley, Archie Nott and Bill Churchill) left Tiverton Junction at a quarter to two in the morning and were in Liverpool by a quarter to seven and had breakfast by the river and were at Aintree by nine o'clock. Another member of the party was Steven Burrows (R.T.'s step brother) who didn't like the Mersey ferry and kept saying "bloody thing will sink, bloody thing will sink." R.T. had a motorbike for years; once he had a sidevalve 500 and rode it to a standstill. Riding a motorbike "spoilt me for driving a car." R.T. rarely drove a car as he didn't like being shut in. R.T. recalls riding through the snow to a concert at North Molton with E.T. on the pillion and says "if you can ride a horse hunting, you can ride a motorbike."

Young Farmers Clubs and Classes

In the 1920's there were "Technical Classes" on farming methods each winter. They were for all ages and took place in the Angel Room. "In summertime, there were practical classes in the open air" attended by 20 or 30 farmers and farmer's sons.

There was also a stock judging class just before the Devon County Show. E.T. used to ride a pony to Great Whitstone (near Gidley Cross) to "Miss Bray's butter classes." She also used to go to six week cookery classes in the Church Room taken by Miss Drake who used to stay with Mrs Ward. E.T. recalls "Father always made me go to classes, and he made me learn hand milking which I didn't want to."

The Y.F.C. started in Witheridge about 1932 and was mainly "for education and not entertainment then."

Markets

Lambs sometimes were bought privately on farms and taken down to Lapford on a flat bottomed farm wagon with side rails. "Both wheels used to have drag shoes, but they still used to slide." At Lapford, "Ernie Gunn from Morchard and Sid Snell used to kill under the two dead arches of Lapford Bridge and the train drivers used to come for the plucks. Ernie Gunn's brother used to kill up at Copplestone" The carcasses went straight into ventilated wagons and were at Smithfield at 4 a.m. the next morning.

Dances At Thelbridge in the 1930's

When people came into dances at Thelbridge Cross they'd leave the ponies and traps under the barn and go upstairs to the dances. "Good sprees there were there." This was before the village hall was built.

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The house at Dart Raffe burnt down in 1935. Earlier, about 1920, "a thunderbolt fell on the shippons and burnt them down - Ruby Baker's father saw it fall."

East Yeo burnt down about 1936. Mr Barrow came up and knocked on Mr Selley's door - "Mr Selley, Mr Selley, our house is on fire." His wife and two children escaped but nothing of the farm could be saved.

Tumulus on Dart Raffe Moor

There is a spring by one of these that rises from the stones and runs clear; there is a "stone ring" about three feet in diameter "like a well." It is a place which never gets rushy.

Tractors

The first tractor in the neighbourhood was perhaps the one bought by Oliver at Hele about 1925.

Charlie Singleton had an early one and cut corn with a binder on contract. He lived at Rackenford and his mother kept the Froude Arms at Knowstone.

He had an Austin tractor with a portable saw bench. Later he had a single cylinder Marshall. "He swore terrible - nobody could swear about nothing like him." Once he went out to Middlewick "to cut grass for Maunder" with a new mower and got nearly round the first time when he mowed into a set of chain harrows left in the grass. Swearing, he "drove straight out of the field and didn't come back."

Timber

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2. Barney Jenkins (the founder of the present firm of contractors at Bickleigh) used to buy timber and send a gang round stripping the oak bark off for tanning. The trees would then be taken away with timber wagons. It was three horses to each wagon, but six would be needed up a steep hill. To get the trunks up, they used planks and rolled them up with chains. "Couldn't they shout, them! Couldn't they swear! but they loved their horses."

Places

Rose Moor
R.T. used "to have to see to Dr Price's ponies that ran on Rose Moor in the summer

Mills
When Drayford Mill finished, one way for corn to be taken to Witheridge Mill was up the hill, past West Yeo, along "New Cut," across the main road (A373), along what is now signposted as a public footpath, down past Dart Raffe to the Mill.

Summer
There used to be a right-of-way from Drayford Mill up through Brown's Wood to Summer.

People

1. "Nobbie Clark" used to say "Grandfather was never married, father never married, why should I?"
2. Old Mrs Ford and Bill Davey always had their own seat in the Angel and people used to get up for them. "They used to put the poker in the fire and mull their ale."
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Church Papers In a folder there are:-

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NOTES OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MRS F. TOUT (THE SQUARE), MR J. USMAR (ENGINE PARK) AND MR ROLF TARR (R.T.) AND MRS EVELYN TARR (E.T) ON JULY 25TH, 1978 AT THE SQUARE, WITHERIDGE. (MR AND MRS TARR LIVE AT MUXERIES)

Background

E.T's family were at Hele Barton and Billhole, before moving to Dart Raffe in 1909, where E.T was born in 1918.

R.T.'s family were at Woodburn (East Anstey) before moving to Summer in 1918. R.T. was born in 1908.

School and Children

E.T. went to "the Lower School" and used to have his dinner in Trawin's the woolstapler's (now occupied by Mr and Mrs Tout.) Wool was also in Trawin's Linhay (now in ruins in NewBridge Mill Road); carts used to deliver wool to the linhay from the back, from the quarry track.

The two schools were great rivals and the point in Trafalgar Square now marked by the "Halt" sign was the boundary between them, as far as the rivalry was concerned. The schools played eachother at football once a year in a field beyond the Manse.

A school van driven by a horse driven by "Down from Newland," went out as far as The Old toll Gate on the Rackenford road, and brought children in, including from Creacombe.

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NOTES OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR AND MRS BEER (FORE STREET, WITHERIDGE) AND MR AND MRS TOUT (THE SQUARE, WITHERIDGE) AND MR J. USMAR (ENGINE PARK, WITHERIDGE) ON DECEMBER 6TH, 1978.

Archie and Nora Beer

Background

Mr A. Beer ("A.B.") was born in 1915 at Prospect in Thelbridge Parish. His parents came from Luckett Mill in Knowstone Parish. His father worked at Woodford for Mr S. Haye's father. A.B. attended school at Stockleigh Pomeroy. She was born in 1925 in Stockleigh Pomeroy and lived there until 1942.

Steam

In the field west of the triangular field in the angle of Westway Cross, there used to be a well which was used for taking on water by steam engines and steam lorries due, perhaps, to the chronic shortage in the Witheridge water supply. Across the road from the well used to be some burnt out houses and the field there is known as "burnt out houses."

One of the engines which used the well was Nott's steam engine, used to drive his thresher and driven by Freddie Mayne, whose engine was named "Spitfire." Freddie Mayne, as was the custom, used to stop the night where he was threshing. he used to "get a bit cidery" and start singing although, he couldn't sing at all. His favourite was "a beautiful golden picture in a beautiful golden frame." Once, he was threshing at Middlewick and George Mayne's jacket went down into the thresher and the thresher went "woomf" and "Toz's" (Mr Gibson, Middlewick) grandfather, Hughie, said "Was you wearing it George?" A.B. has seen "Spitfire" stand on its hind legs" as it was light

in front. Once where West Middlewick now is, "Spitfire" was roping the thresher out into the road in the mud and got stuck, blocking the main road traffic. A.B. recalls a woman driver saying "I can't wait" and Freddie Mayne said he'd keep her twenty minutes and then she could go for the police.

The engine that drove The Coombe Quarry machinery was called "Shamrock."

Archie Nott's new engine, "Sylvia", was the one tipped over at the top of Coombe Ball, through not chocking up to rope up trailer.

Horses

The two fields at Prospect were in "The 20s" owned by the Witheridge Transport Company and had been used previously by the carriers for corn, roots and hay for their horses.

Sometimes, a team had to be sent from Witheridge to help pull the carrier's van up Triddly Foot (between Black Dog and Kennerleigh). A.B. started work in 1929 at Westway, living in. He started competitive ploughing at the age of 17 and never missed a ploughing match until he left Westway in 1966. He didn't start at 14 on horses - ploughing - as no 14 year old could manage a pair of plough horses. At 6.30 a.m. the horses had to be fed, watered, cleaned out and groomed before breakfast. By 8 o'clock they'd be "tackled up and ready to go." At about 12.30, the horses were taken out of the plough and brought in to feed and A.B. had dinner before going out again at 2 p.m. If, at the end of the day, the horses legs were muddy, then they'd be taken down to the river "at Westway Mill to wash their legs off."

Westway had one of the last working round-houses in the district. Each horse was tied by a chain and, as there could be up to five horses working at a time, one behind the other, "a young one had no chance but to go." They drove the barn machinery. "You could look out the barn's door and say "get on." Walking around in this way they wore a trough in the floor that had to be filled in from time to time. One horse was needed for crushing apples, two for winnowing, three for grinding and four or five for threshing. which only separated the corn from and chaff from the straw and the winnower had to be used next.

At Westway, there was always work for four horses. They used to breed horses - both heavy horses and hunters. Stallions used to come round. For Witheridge they used to stand at the Hare and Hounds. Shire stallions were usually quiet and ridden by a groom. A.B. remembers Menmeden Safety as being a famous Shire stallion ridden by a tiny groom. Most stallions came from "Webbers to Hilltop" (near Cadeleigh.) "Rangatira" was "the most famous stallion that travelled." he was smaller than a shire and was "a devil." As Shires were a bit heavy, some farmers preferred "a less clumsy horse for working."

There were always three and sometimes four horses in the binder. At Westway, the fourth horse was added in "to pull the binder up the hill" and then taken out again each

time. If the hill was very steep then the binder came up out of work, as otherwise "the corn would pile up over."

A.B.s father recalled that the Revel at Knowstone was at harvest time and remembered cutting corn with a mower and by hand. On one occasion they were told to cut a field before going to the revel and there were so many cutting by hand in this field that they went down once only and finished. "One chap was corn-tier champion and could tie a sheaf, pitch it up in the air and tie another before the first came down."

Tractors

The first tractor that A.B. remembers was owned by Mr Matthews at Mill Barton and, as he recalls, that Bert Matthews was said to have fallen out with his father and taken a part of this tractor away with him.

Old Mr Shapland at Lewdon probably had the first tractor round here in the early Twenties.

World War Two

Threshing
In the Second World War, threshing teams were allocated areas. Charlie Singleton wasn't pleased with his allocated area, as he wouldn't be doing so well threshing corn from poor ground round Knowstone and Rackenford, so he went back to his own area and threshed. The War Ag. pulled him up and told him off. His reply to them was "I used to think you chaps was a fine lot of fellows but now I know you're a silly lot of buggers."

Land Army
N.B. went in 1942 as a landgirl to Mr Kell's at Denson. "You went where you were sent" and, although she wanted to join the W.A.A.F., her father wouldn't let her. Then she worked at Courtenay Thorne's at Broadbridge, milking the cow by machine - Alfa Laval. Then she went to Cox's at Risdon, milking the cows by hand.

Searchlights
There was one search light out at Venhay, another sited halfway between Westway Cross and Millbran Cross, with a hut that the team of eight or nine lived in and where they cooked for themselves. They were "handy chaps to have about, especially at harvest time. They were here most of the war and became like local people."

The Americans
They had a military camp at the top of Morchard Wood. When they left in 1944 it became a prisoner of war camp. "They spent money like water. There were fights over girls and a lot of local hostility."

LDV and Homeguard

When the LDV started, all they had was shotguns, pitchforks and armbands. A Major, living at Westway, acted as Quartermaster Sergeant of the Home Guard whose headquarters was at the Chemist's shop.

One Sunday, the Home Guard went on an exercise with live ammunition instead of blank. "We'd drawn ammunition for an exercise between two Home Guards over Pedlay and Stockham.. We couldn't understand why the others kept running away until we saw the bushes and twigs being mown down and a bicycle saddle pillar got shot through."

Once, on the range at Puddington, someone dropped a live grenade with the pin out and the Sergeant Major picked it up and threw it away.

The Home Guard were turned out to guard a plane down at Middlewick. A Spitfire came down at Black Dog after a dog fight. The Czech pilot landed safely. "The German pilot circled round and never fired at him." The searchlight crew were forbidden to fire at the German with their machine gun.

The nearest bombs were recalled as being Crediton and Shobrooke. When Exeter was bombed, the glow in the sky could be clearly seen.

A.B. was in the Nomansland platoon that had their hut at Menchine. Once Ivan Nott and Ted Gillbard were on guard and a chap came along on a bike. "Halt, who goes there?" and they marched him in at bayonet point so that he could produce his identity card and nearly frightened him to death.

Oddments

A.B. remembers "the tragedy at Witheridge Mill" when Bert Adams' first wife drowned herself and her two children in the Mill Leat. Charlie Maire and George Partridge brought them up.

Bert Adams opened up a blacksmith's shop in opposition to Baker's. He lived at Anstey's Court and blacksmith's shop was on the three cornered piece at Chapner's Cross.

Anstey's Court was "one main court and one little court off to the right." The occupants of Anstey's Court had the first chance of the first council houses built in Witheridge after the 1939-45 war.

Dr Price used to drive his car to Westway while his groom took his pony up there, then Dr Price mounted and rode down through the river to Upcott. He always "rode downhill and galloped uphill."

Miss Meacham's father was a roadman, a lengthman - his was from Nomansland to Newbridge. "He'd be talking a quarter mile before you got to him and he was still talking a quarter mile after you'd gone."

The roads after the 1914-18 war were bad due to the timber haulage during the war.

NOTES OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR AND MRS BURGESS (119, ALPHINGTON ROAD, EXETER) AND MR J. USMAR (ENGINE PARK, WITHERIDGE) IN JULY 1980

Background

Mrs Burgess was born in 1890. Her father was Herbert James Mansfield who, a few years earlier, had bought the shop in West Street opposite the bakery (the shop in 1980 is Edwards) from the Misses Comins (Harriet and May, grocers and drapers - see Morris's Directory for 1870.) Her mother was Miss Frost who was born at Coombe (the same Directory shows "Charles Frost, farmer, Coombe). Her mother had two sisters, Harriet (who married Mr Amos Maire) and Kate (who married Mr Charles Partridge), who, before their marriages, took on the Mitre as a dairy with their brother Charles (whose name appears in Kelley's Directory for 1893) who had a club foot. The Mitre, at the time, belonged to Rev. J.P. Benson.

H.J. Mansfield's uncle was the "John Mansfield - National Schoolmaster, assistant overseer, clerk to the magistrates and vestry clerk" of Morris 1870 Directory. H.J. Mansfield was, in addition, to being a grocer and draper, agent/manager for Fox, Fowler and Co. before their bank was taken over by Lloyds.

Mrs Burgess went to the Lower School at the age of 5 and left at 12 to go to Exeter Middle School. At the Lower School she remembers being set, with others in the class, the task of writing a letter to say that the Rev Benson was arriving by train and was to be met. The letter also had to describe him so that he would be recognised. She cannot remember what she wrote but it made the Rev. Benson laugh. She recalls being well taught by the schoolmaster, Mr Andrews, and that the cane was used only "a bit." She also remembers the fleas on one particular family that used to sit next to her. She used to go home to dinner, but those from a distance bought "three halfpenny busters" from

Whitfields. The schoolmaster at Higher School was Mr Carter who lived in the house in Fore Street that now forms part of Witheridge Garage. It had one of the first electric doorbells worked by a bell push and Mrs Burgess remembers a young lad at Mr Carters door as she was passing unable to understand the bell push and saying to her "help us with the bell, us can't catch hold to 'un."

Mrs Burgess estimates that the first car seen in Witheridge must have been in about 1902. Her father used to run out to see a car pass. Talking of cars reminded Mr and Mrs Burgess of their wedding day of which they have cuttings from the Western Times in a scrapbook including a poem composed by "Vigilo" for the occasion, beginning with the lines:-

"The groom came in a motor
The bride in travelling dress . . . . "

Mr Burgess came in a car from Exeter with his best man - his brother - but at Tridley Foot, the car broke down half way up the steep part and "steam came out of it." The two of them walked on through Thelbridge Cross to Witheridge and arrived in time in spite of the roughness of the roads and not knowing how far it was. The car was repaired and got to Witheridge in time to take the bride and groom to Tiverton Junction to catch the train to Bath for their honeymoon.

They went to live at 119 Alphington Road, Exeter, where, after over 60 years, they still live there in 1980. Mrs Burgess's interest in bees began one day when she and her husband were taking the children on a trip to Ide and they came across a swarm of bees. They went and got Mr Burgess's brother Percy who took the swarm and bought it home. Mrs Burgess was so interested that she stayed home to watch the bees and Mr Burgess went on to Ide with the children. By 1922, she was Bee-Keeping officer of the Eastern Division of the Devon Beekeepers Association and, later, she held the same post for the whole of Devon under the County Council until 1950. During the Second World War, she received a special petrol ration to continue her work. For her own bee-keeping, she rented ground at Stoke Canon, Thorverton, Copplestone, Broadclyst, Peamore. The rent was paid in honey at the end of the season. She used to visit the hives every ten days in summer. She also kept bees at 119, Alphington Road and a "Beeway", the acre of ground near Westway Cross, Thelbridge which she bought from the owner of Westway for £100 during the second world war.

Mrs Burgess mentioned her brother, Comins Mansfield, M.B.E., the author of books of chess problems.

She remembers a little boy coming from Selley's, the butchers next door with "Mr Mansfield's brains" and "Mr Mansfield's blood."

She joined the staff of the Lower School at the age of 19 and taught the infants (up to age 7) of whom there were about 40. Attendance was good and she recalls no problems.

She remembers the disused turnpike cottage opposite the school but can't remember no trace of a turnpike cottage by Chapner Cross.

She remembers that Mansfield's great rivals were Pullens.

She remembers that once her father had an advertisement in the shop front which read "Don't go to bed without a cup of tea" and one passing youngster said "Oh but us got to go to bed."

Once her father heard some boys who were playing with her brother Comins say to him "What'll 'ee give us if us don't knock 'ee?" and Comins paid up.

Her father was much in demand for speeches and also did Devonshire readings.

In St Thomas, if you leave a door open you get asked "Born at Topsham?"

Mr and Mrs Joe Gard lived at Trixes Cottages, Drayford.

They had eleven children.

These two sets of memories are from two of their sons, George and Albert.

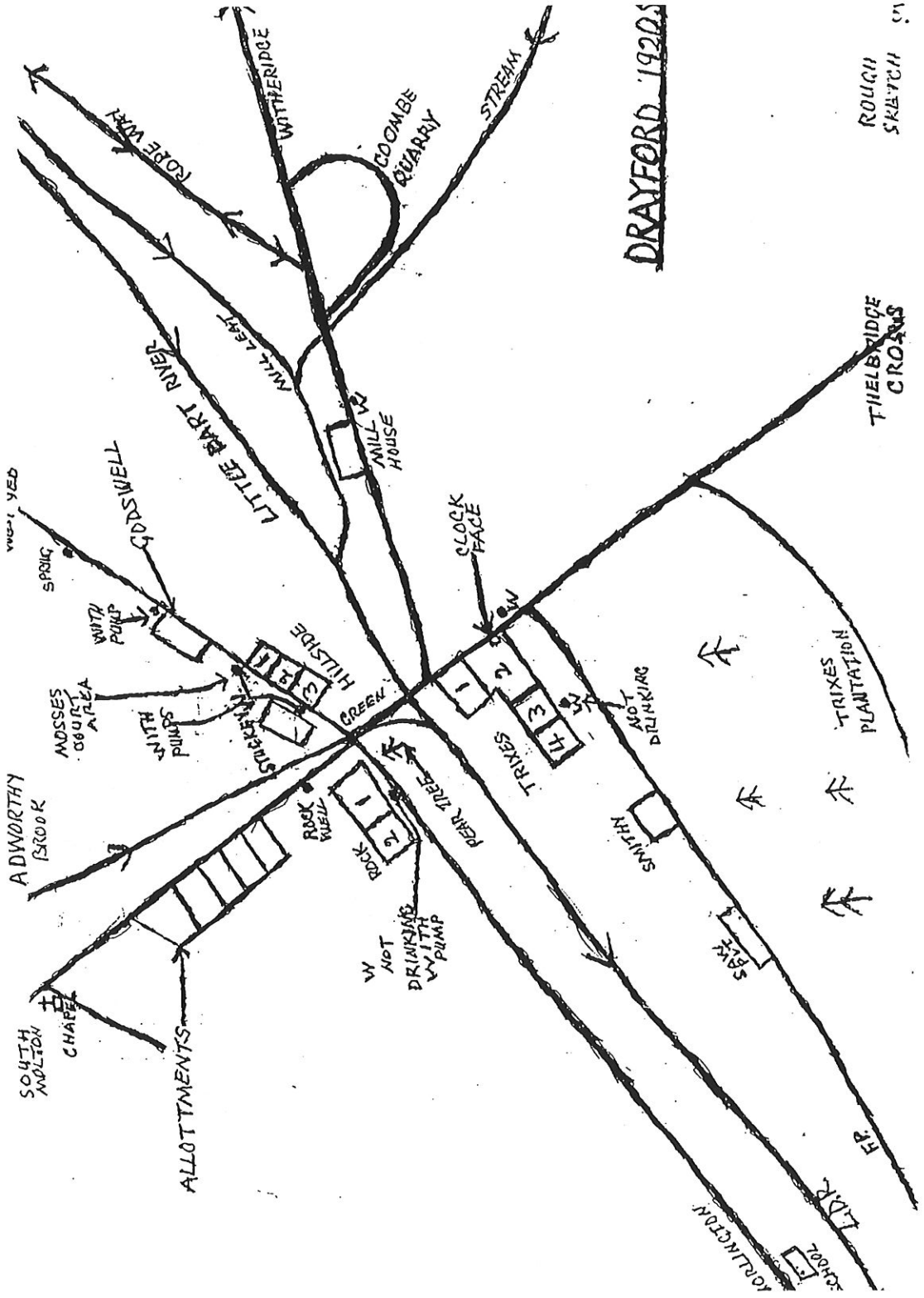
Mr and Mrs Gard's Golden Wedding

Back row standing from left – Jose, Albert, Ross, Roy, Eric, Fay

Sitting from left – Charlie, Stella, Greta, Joe, Mary, George, Mollie, Bob

George Gard

DRAYFORD IS A HAMLET ON THE BANKS OF THE LITTLE DART RIVER AND ADWORTHY BROOK.
THERE WERE TWELVE HOUSES INCLUDING DRAYFORD MILL.



DRAYFORD MILL HAD A SLATE ROOF, THE OTHER ELEVEN HAD THATCHED ROOFS. ALL HAD OUTSIDE TOILETS ELEVEN WITH BUCKETS, ONE AN EARTH CLOSET. ELEVEN HAD OPEN FIRE PLACES ONE AN IRON COOKING RANGE. ALL OF THE HOUSES HAD OVENS BUILT IN THE SIDE OF THE FIRE PLACE FOR COOKING PURPOSES.

THERE WAS NO MAINS WATER SUPPLY, OR ELECTRICTY.

THERE WERE WOOD OR IRON BARS A LITTLE WAY UP THE CHIMNEYS TO HANG CHIMNEY CROOKS ON. THE CROOKS WERE TO SUSPEND IRON KETTLES BOILING CROCKS AND IRON BOILERS TO BE USED FOR DIFFERENT OCCASIONS. FIRES WERE OF WOOD LOGS, AND FAGGOT OF WOOD. NOT EVERY ONE HAD A RICK OF WOOD. HENS AND A PIG.

LIGHTING WAS AN OIL LAMP OR CANDLE AND CANDLESTICKS, OUT OF DOORS A HURRICANE LANTERN.

WASHING OF CLOTHES WAS DONE WITH THE AID OF AN IRON BOILER HANGING OVER THE FIRE, AND A ZINC BATH TO TRANSFER THE WASHING AFTER BOILING IN SODA WATER, AND THEN TO RINSE IT THOUGH SOME BLUE WATER TO BRING OUT THE WHITENESS. BLUEING THE WATER WAS DONE WITH A CUBE OF BLUE HELD IN A PIECE OF CLOTH

PEOPLE AND THEIR WORK

ROCK (1) MR C. VENNER AND FAMILY. MR VENNER WAS A MASTER THATCHER, HE WAS ALSO SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT, HIS DAUGHTERS RAN A SMALL SHOP.

ROCK (2) MR J. TANNER AND WIFE. MR TANNER WAS SECOND HORSEMAN EMPLOYED BY MR H. SMYTH OF TOWN FARM WORLINGTON MR TANNER WAS CAPTAIN OF THE BELL RINGERS, AND HIS WIFE CLEANED THE EAST WORLINGTON PARISH CHURCH.

STUCKEY WAS A DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL SMALLHOLDING TENANT MR J. CHUDLEY AND FAMILY, MR CHUDLEY WAS ALSO A CONTRACTOR TO THE SOUTH MOLTON RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL HAULING STONE FROM LOCAL QUARRIES TO ROADSIDE DEPOTS.

GODSWELL

A DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL SMALLHOLDING, TENANT MR F. STONEMAN AND FAMILY. MR STONEMAN WAS A CONTRACTOR TO S.M.R.D.C HAULING STONE FROM THE LOCAL QUARRIES TO THE ROADSIDE, ALSO QUARRYING THE STONE AND CLEANING THE WATERTABLES.

THE FAMILY WERE RABBIT TRAPPERS AND SHEEP SHEARERS. IN THE SPRING OF YEAR THEY WOULD BUY A PIECE OF OAK COPPICE IN PEDLEY WOOD, RIP THE BARK FROM THE FELLED SAPLINGS AND WHEN THE BARK WAS DRY ENOUGH IT WOULD BE LOADED ONTO WAGGONS THEN DELIVERED A TEN MILE JOURNEY TO PEARCE'S TANNERY EAST STREET SOUTH MOLTON.

HILLSIDE

(1) MR H. LEWIS AND WIFE AND SON CHARLIE. MR LEWIS WAS FARRIER HE MADE HIS OWN OINTMENT WHICH HE CALLED VERDIGRIST TO APPLY TO THE ANIMALS AFTER HE HAD OPERATE ON THEM. WHEN AFTER A DRY SPELL THE RIVER BEGAN TO RISE MR LEWIS WOULD GO CLATTING. HE HAD A BUNCH OF LIVE WORMS ATTACHED TO THE END OF A LONG POLE, HE WOULD PUT THE WORMS IN THE RISEING WATER TO CATCH ELLS. WHEN HE FELT A TUG ON THE POLE HE WOULD LIFT IT FROM THE WATER HOPEFULLY THERE WOULD BE AN ELL CLINGING TO THE WORMS, JUST A SHAKE THE ELL WOULD DROP TO THE GROUND, HE THEN PICKED IT UP AND PUT IT IN A BUCKET WITH A LID THEN HE CARRIED ON AS BEFORE. HIS SON WAS EMPLOYED AT EAST WORLINGTON RECTORY.

(2) MR J. LEACH AND HIS SON JACK. MR J. LEACH WAS A WIDOWER MR LEACH WAS A QUARRY CONTRACTOR TO S.M.R.D.C, HIS SON JACK WAS EMPLOYED BY MR E. HUTCHINGS BUILDER OF WITERIDGE

(3) TENANTS MRS G. BUTT AND HER DAUGHTER ROSIE. MRS BUTT WAS A WIDOW, ROSIE WAS A DRESSMAKER. SHE WAS ALSO THE CHURCH ORGANIST AT EAST WORLINGTON PARISH CHURCH.
ROSIE MARRIED A MR J. SANDERS HE CAME FROM CHAWLEIGH HE WAS ALSO A QUARRY CONTRACTOR TO S.M.R.D.C, A RABBIT TRAPPER, AND SHEEP SHEARER.

DRAYFORD MILL WAS A SMALLHOLDING THE TENANT MR STONEMAN WIFE AND SON DICK. MR STONEMAN WAS A MILLER. DICK WAS BADLEY WOUNDED IN FRANCE 1914-1918. HAD THE FORE PART OF IS LEG SHOT AWAY, I THINK IT WAS HIS LEFT LEG, NOT SURE.

TRIXES COTTAGES

(1) TENANT MR F. WAY AND FAMILY. MR WAY WAS AN AGRICULTURAL WORKER EMPLOYED AT TOWN FARM WORLINGTON HE SERVED IN 1914-1918, WAS INVALIDED OUT OF THE ARMY.

(2) TENANT MR W. WAY AND FAMILY. MR WAY WAS THE HEAD HORSEMAN EMPLOYED AT TOWN FARM EAST WORLINGTON, IVY THEIR DAUGHTER WAS A DRESSMAKER, SHE WAS AN APPRENTICE OF MISS CHURCHILL DRESSMAKER WITHERIDGE.

(3) THE MISSES JANE BRADFORD NOTT AND HER SISTER ELIZABETH BRADFORD NOTT. JANE WAS HOUSEKEEPER TO A MR A. COBLEY FARMER SHEEPSTYRE FARM CHULMLEIGH. ELIZABETH WAS EMPLOYED AS A GENERAL WORKER ON THE SAME FARM.

(4) TENANT MR J. GARD AND FAMILY. MR GARD WAS A QUARRY AND ROADS CONTRACTOR TO S.M.R.D.C. HE WAS ALSO A CHIMNEY SWEEP MR GARD SAW SERVICE IN THE BOER WAR, AND IN 1914-1918.

CHILDREN

MOST OF THE CHILDREN ATTENDED SUNDAY SCHOOL AT THORNHAM METHODIST CHAPEL, A CHAR-A-BANC TOOK THEM FOR AN OUTING BY THE SEA. ALL CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE WERE TAUGHT AT EAST WORLINGTON SCHOOL, ALL THE DRAYFORD SCHOOL CHILDREN WENT HOME FOR A MIDDAY MEAL, (NO SCHOOL MEALS IN THOSE DAYS) OR SCHOOL BUSES. HEADMASTER MR EDMONDS, INFANTS MRS BULLED MR EDMONDS WAS ORGANIST AT THORNHAM CHAPEL, AND SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT. SUNDAY WAS A DAY OF REST.
THERE WERE NO REFUSE COLLECTIONS IN PLACES SUCH AS DRAYFORD GROCERIES WERE DELIVERED FROM WITHERIDGE, A BUTCHER EVERY SATURDAY AND BREAD SIX DAYS A WEEK.
(MONDAY AND THURSDAY) MR CHURCHILL BOTH FROM WITHERIDGE
(TUESDAY AND FRIDAY) MR WHITFIELD.
(WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY) MR WAY FROM MORCHARD BISHOP
ONCE A YEAR SOME PEOPLE WOULD WALK OR RIDE CYCLES TO MILLBARN, A FARM TOWARDS PUDDINGTON WHERE A RELIGIOUS SERVICE WAS HELD, ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER DALCH. AT THE END OF THE SERVICE SOME PEOPLE CAME FORWARD TO BE BAPTISE FULLY SUBMERGED IN THE RIVER.

DRAYFORD BRIDGE

WAS A POLICE MEETING POINT, A POLICE SERGEANT OR A POLICE CONSTABLE FROM WITHERIDGE, A POLICE CONSTABLE FROM BLACKDOG, AND A POLICE CONSTABLE FROM MESHAW WOULD COMPARE NOTES.

DRAYFORD BRIDGE WAS RE BUILT AND COMPLETED IN 1914 THERS A NAMPLATE IN THE DOWN STREAM BRIDGE WALL TO THIS EFFECT BEFORE THE NEW BRIDGE WAS BUILT THE ASWORTHY BROOK WAS FORDABLE, IT USED TO FLOW INTO THE LITTLE DART RIVER ABOVE THE OLD BRIDGE, WHEN THE NEW BRIDGE WAS BUILT THE ADWORTHY BROOK WAS BRIDGED AND DIVERTED TO FLOW IN TO THE LITTLE DART BELOW THE NEW BRIDGE.

COOMBE QUARRY

IN THE 1920S MR A. NOTT OF EASTWAY PUT IN A STONE CRUSHING PLANT. THE MATERIALS WERE HAULED WHERE REQUIRED WITH TRACTION ENGINES AND TEN TON TRUCKS. THE TRUCKS HAD FOUR IRON WHEELS DOING A LOT OF DAMAGE TO THE ROADS WHICH WERE AT THAT TIME WATERBOUND SURFACED.
LATER THE TRANSPORT WAS CHANGED TO STEAM WAGGONS WITH RUBBER TYRES. LATER A OVERHEAD ROPEWAY WAS PUT UP TO CONVEY THE MATERIALS TO A SITE ADJOINING THE A373 TWO OR THREE HUNDRED YARDS WEST OF NEWBRIDGE.
THE STREAM ADJOINING COOMBE QUARRY WAS FORDED IN THE EARLY 1920S IT WAS PIPED ACROSS THE ROAD.

TRIXES PLATATION WAS FELLED IN 1914-1916, THE TIMBER USED FOR PIT PROPS THE LEVELER PART OF THIS PLANTATION WAS GRUBBED UP IN 1927 AND PUT TO AGRICULTURAL USE.

NEWSPAPERS WERE DELIVERED BY A MAN FROM MORCHARD BISHOP RIDEING A TRICYCLE. THE WESTERN TIMES ALSO THE DEVON AND EXETER GAZETTE EVERY FRIDAY, HE ALSO DELIVERED A SUNDAY NEWSPAPER.
MR KEMP A CHIMNEY SWEEP CAME FROM CADLEIGH NEAR TIVERTON AND USED TO LODGE AT WITHERIDGE WHILST IN THE AREA.
MR G. BATSTONE AND HIS WIFE BETTSIE FROM MOLLAND CROSS CHULMLEIGH, CAME AROUND WITH THEIR PONY AND TRAP SELLING A VARIOUS ASSORTMENT OF GOODS. THEY USED TO COLLECT RABBIT SKINS
THERE WERE A FEW ROADSTERS PASSING THROUGH FROM TIME TO TIME, WALKING FROM CREDITON WORKHOUSE TO SOUTH MOLTON WORKHOUSE.
MR JOE TAYLOR A GYPSY FROM HORSEFORD LODGE CALLED WITH CLOTHES PEGS ETC.
THE DOCTORS SURGERY WAS AT THE FIRS WITHERIDGE.
MOTHERS
HAD THEIR BABIES AT HOME THE DISTRICT NURSE FROM WITHERIDGE WOULD BE IN ATTENDANCE.
MAIL WAS DELIVERED AT ABOUT 6-30 AM, THAT THE POSTMAN HAD COLLECTED AFTER MEETING THE MAIL VAN FROM MORCHARD BISHOP, AT A WOODEN HUT ON THE ROADSIDE VERGE AT THELBRIDGE KNOWN AS THE POSTMANS HUT. THE SAME POSTMAN WITH BICYCLE CAME WITH THE OUT GOING MAIL FROM EAST WORLINGTON POST OFFICE TO MEET THE MAIL VAN AT THE SAME HUT.
AS THE POSTMAN APPROACHED DRAYFORD FROM WORLINGTON HE WOULD BLOW A WHISTLE A FEW TIMES TO LET THE PEOPLE KNOW HE HAD ARRIVED AND TAKE ANY OUT GOING MAIL THEY HAD.
POSTAL ADDRESS AT THAT TIME 1920? WAS DRAYFORD MORCHARD BISHOP
A TELPHONE LINE CAME FROM WITHERIDGE VIA THELBRIDGE CROSS DOWN TO DRAYFORD THEN TO THE POST OFFICE AT BOUNDYS CROSS EAST WORLINGTON RUN BY MISS MAUDE BOUNDY. THERE WAS DIFFICULTY OBTAINING PERMISSION FOR THE POLES. THE TWO THIN LINES OF COPPER ATTACHED TO STONE WARE CUPS ON THE POLE THE LINES WERE PUT UP IN 1919. MR EDMONDS SCHOOLMASTER EAST WORLINGTON MADE THE FIRST CALL.
THE SMITHY WAS CLOSED DOWN THE BELLOWS WERE STILL ON SITE AND IN GOOD WORKING ORDER. THE WATER TROUGH WAS THERE TOO, I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TROUGH BUT NOT THE BELLOWS.
SAW PIT THAT WAS IN THE AREA SHOWN IT BEING THERE IN 1916, IT WAS ABOUT TWENTY FEET IN LENGTH, FIVE OR SIX WIDE PARTLY FILLED IN, NOW FILLED COMPLETLY
ROCK WELL
IS SET DEEP IN THE HILLSIDE. IT IS ABOUT THREE FEET DEEP LOVELY CLEAR COLD WATER.
IT NEVER RAN DRY AS MOST OF THE OTHER WELLS DID.
NEWTS WERE IN RESIDENCE.

CLOCK FACE

THIS WAS THE TRADE MARK OF A MR WILLIAM BRADFORD MAKER OF BRASS DIALLED OAK LONGCASE CLOCKS 1760/70. BAPTISM IN THE WITHERIDGE PARISH REGISTERS 1776 INCLUDE TO BRADFORD, WILLIAM, SON OF WILLIAM CLOCKMAKER.

A PHOTO IS AVAILABLE OF THE CLOCK FACE SHOWING THE HOUSE TO WHICH IT IS ATTACHED.

I HAVE A LONGCASE CLOCK MADE BY WILLIAM BRADFORD OF DRAYFORD, IT IS DISMANTLED THE CASE BEING IN NEED OF SOME REPAIR, OTHERWISE IT IS IN WORKING ORDER.

THE ROAD THROUGH DRAYFORD

IT WAS SAID THAT UP TO ABOUT THE MIDDLE 1800S THE ROAD WAS USED TO TRAVEL FROM SOUTH MOLTON TO EXETER. AT THE JUNCTION OF THIS ROAD WITH SOUTH STREET SOUTH MOLTON THERE WAS A TOLL-HOUSE, (DEMOLISHED 1968/70)

TRAVELERS WOULD HAVE LEFT SOUTH MOLTON BY WAY OF THE OLD ALSWEAR ROAD, ON TO ALSWEAR TO KITTICOTT HILL TO BURROW CROSS, (EXETER WAS STILL USED ON THE SIGNPOST IN THE 1920S), ON TO THORNDON CROSS, HERE WAS ANOTHER TOLL-HOUSE IN A BAD STATE OF REPAIR

THE TOLL-HOUSE WAS ON THE SITE WHERE THE CHAPEL CLOAKROOM AND PUMPHOUSE ARE BUILT, ON THROUGH DRAYFORD TO THELBRIDGE CROSS. A MILESTONE IS SET IN THE SOUTH SIDE HEDGE BANK OF THE ROAD WITH THE MILES TO OR FROM EXETER, 18? 60—100 YARDS BEFORE THELBRIDGE BARTON FARM ENTRANCE TO BLACKDOG, THERE IS A TOLL-HOUSE 300—400 YARDS BEFORE REACHING KENNERLEIGH.

THE END OF MY JOURNEY

ITS SAID THE PROPERTY AT DRAYFORD AT ONE TIME WAS PART OF THE EARL OF PORTSMOUTH ESTATE.

IT WAS ALSO BELIEVED THERE WERE HOUSES IN ROCK MEADOW WHERE THE PEAR GROWS, ITS SHAPE SUGGEST THAT IT WAS TRAINED ON A WALL. ALSO IT WAS THOUGHT HOUSES WERE IN THE MOSSES COURT AREA.

DEVON SKITTLES WERE PLAYED NEAR THE BRIDGE (SUMER TIME ONLY) PACK CONSIST OF 9 SKITTLES 3 ROWS OF 3 TO FORM A SQUARE AND A COUPLE OF HARD BALLS.

CHILDREN PLAYED HOP SCOTCH, KICK STONE, ROUNDERS, DOCK OFF, HIDE AND SEEK, GIRLS HAD WOODEN HOOPS, BOYS IRON HOOPS.

ARTEFACTS

TO NAME A FEW. CHIMNEY CROOKS, FIRE DOGS, BELLOWS, HANDYMAID, FIRE PAN, TONGS, POKER, BOILER, IRON KETTLE, CHOPPING KNIFE, FORK DIGGER, DEVON SHOVEL, PUSH SPADE, CYCLE GAS LAMP, OIL LAMP, TRAP LAMP, TWO GALLON PETROL CANS, LEMMONADE BOTTLES WITH GLASS MARBLES, AMERICAN 30 HOUR CLOCK WE USE TO BUY LEMMONADE POWDER TO MAKE OUR OWN DRINKS. LEAD WATER PUMP.

WHAT I HAVE PENNED FOR THE MOST PART IS FROM MEMORY SOME I LEARNT BY TALKING AND LISTENING TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS OF DRAYFORD IN THE 1918/20S.

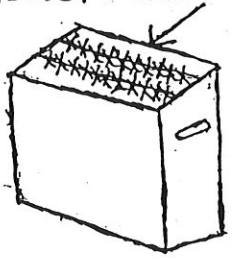
I CANNOT REMEMBER THE INGREDIENTS MR LEWIS USED TO MAKE THE VERDIGRIS.

MILK WAS NOT DELIVERED WE WOULD COLLECT IN A MILKCAN FROM ONE OF THE SMALLHOLDINGS, REAL DEVON SCALDED CREAM WAS SKIMMED OFF THE MILK PUT IN A GLASS DISH AND WEIGHED BUTTER WAS MADE BY HAND GREAT PRIDE WAS TAKEN IN MAKING AND SHAPING THE BUTTER.

A WEEK BEFORE EASTER THE BAKERS TOOK ORDERS FOR HOT CROSS BUNS, THEN DELIVERED THEM ON GOOD FRIDAY MORNING HOT, ON CHRISTMAS EVE FAMILIES GOT TOGETHER TO BURN THE ASHEN FAGGOT IN THE OPEN FIRE-PLACE, THE LENGTH OF FAGGOTS WOULD DEPEND ON THE FIRE-PLACE IT WAS BOUND WITH A NUMBER OF WOOD BINDS, AS A BIND BURNT IN HALF A TOAST WAS DRUNK, DURING THE 1914/18 WAR SOME WOMEN WOULD HELP ON THE FARM WEEDING THE CORNFIELDS, HOEING THE ROOT CROPS, PLANTING FLAT POLES, COW CABBAGE, LIFTING THE POTATOES; HELP WITH THE HAY AND CORN HARVEST, SETTING THE CORN UP IN STOOKS ETC. IN 1914 MR LEWIS JOB TOOK HIM TO DIFFERENT FARMS, HE WAS ABLE, TO COLLECT SOME HORSE CHESTNUTS (CONKERS) WHICH HE PLANTED IN HIS GARDEN ONLY FOUR GREW (COINCIDENCE), WHEN BIG ENOUGH HE REPLANTED THEM IN THE GREEN NEAR THE BRIDGE, THE TREES GREW WELL, SOME BOYS CLIMBED UP INTO THEM SOMETIMES DOING DAMAGE TO THE TREES, MR LEWIS WARNED THE BOYS THAT TOMMY WOULD BE PUT TO WORK IF HE CAUGHT THEM (TOMMY WAS HIS WALKING STICK) A HAZEL WITH A FORK AT TOP TO REST HIS THUMB IN, ONE SUCH OCCASION AROSE MR LEWIS CAME AROUND THE CORNER SAW MY BROTHER UP A TREE AN MADE A BEE LINE FOR HIM, BOB HAPPENED SEE HIM COMING, QUICKLY CAME DOWN AND UP THE BANK THROUGH THE RAILS ON TO THE ROAD, WHERE UPON MR LEWIS BEING ANGRY SAID IF HE CAUGHT HIM HE WOULD SKIN HIM ALIVE AND HANG HIS ENTRAILS UP TO THE TREE, ADDING THAT IF THE TREES WERE NOT THERE HE COULD NOT CLIMB THEM, BOBS REPLY WAS, "I KNOW THAT YOU B FOOL," AND QUICKLY SET OFF FOR HOME.

MR J. TANNER HAD A GARDEN ADJOINING THE ROAD WITH TWO SIZABLE APPLE TREES. THE YOUNG BOYS WOULD THROW STONES AT THE FRUIT. ONE EVENING THE CHILDREN WERE PLAYING KICK-STONE, THE CATCHER HAD TO BE BLINDFOLDED AND FACE A CERTAIN WAY AND COUNT UP TO 100, WHILEST THE OTHER CHILDREN WOULD HIDE.

THE CATCHER WAS BUSY COUNTING MR TANNER SAW HIM AND SILENTLY GOT TO HIM GRABBED HIM BY THE EAR AND SAID "IM THE CATCHER NOW," MARCHED HIM BY THE EAR TO THE GARDEN MADE HIM PICK UP THE STONES PUT THEM IN HIS POCKETS, THEN MARCHED HIM AGAIN BY THE EAR TO DISPOSE OF THE STONES IN THE RIVER THERE WASN'T ANY MORE STONE THROWING AFTER THAT.
TRIXES COTTAGE NO 2 THE FRONT DOOR WAS FACEING THE ROAD SOME ROADSTERS WOULD KNOCK ON THE DOOR AN ASK FOR SOMETHING TO EAT. MRS WAY NEVER REFUSED THEM, ON ONE OCCASION A ROADSTER ASKED FOR SOMETHING TO EAT AND WAS GIVEN A CHEESE SANDWICH THE MAN SAID HE DID NOT LIKE CHEESE, MRS WAY SAID IM SORRY THATS ALL I HAVE. THE MAN KEPT PROTESTING. ALAS MRS WAY WAS VERY ANGRY SHE ALWAYS KEPT A BILLHOOK BY THE BACK DOOR, SHE GRABBED THE HOOK RAISED HER ARM IN THE AIR AND TOLD THE MAN TO GO OR ELSE I'LL CHOP YOUR B— HEAD OFF THE MAN FLED, MRS WAY WENT OUT INTO THE ROAD TO SEE HIM OFF AS HE WAS GOING HE SHOUTED YOU ARE A MONKEY FACE.
THE CHILDREN WERE ALWAYS EXCITED WHEN THEY HEARD THAT MR NOTTS STEAM ENGINE WITH THRASHER WAS COMING TO ONE OF THE SMALLHOLDINGS, AND TO WATCH THE MONSTER BEING MANOEUVERED IN TO POSITION, THE ENGINE WAS DRIVEN BY MR F MAYNE OF CHITTLEHAMPTON KNOWN TO BE ONE OF THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS, NEAR THE END THERE WERE A FEW RATS SCAMPERING AWAY TO SAFETY, SOME DID NOT MAKE IT.
MOLES WERE TRAPPED FOR SOME POCKET MONEY SKINNED AND PEGGED OUT ON BOARDS TO DRY, THEN SENT TO HORACE FRIEND OF WISBECH FOR GRADING. THE SKINS WOULD MAKE 3d EACK OR MORE.
OCEAN TAYLOR FROM HORSEFORD LODGE CALLED WITH HER BASKE OF WARES.
MR WESTCOTT FROM WITHERIDGE WITH PONY AND TRAP WOULD COLLECT ANY POULTRY THAT HAD BEEN PREPARED FOR THE TABLE ALSO ANY EGGS OR RABBITS FOR SALE.
MOST OF THE RABBITS THE TRAPPERS CAUGHT WOULD BE GUTTED A SLIT CUT IN THE GRISTLY PART OF THE HIND LEGS, ONE LEG PUSHED THROUGH THE SLIT, TWO RABBITS WOULD THEN BE JOINED TOGETHER AND HUNG IN A WICKER BASKET THUS.



THE BASKET WAS THEN LABELED AND SENT AS IT WAS WITH THE RABBITS SHOWING TO SUCH MARKETS AS COVENT GARDEN.
CARISTMAS POULTRY WERE KILLED AND PLUCKED AND TAKEN TO THE DEALERS BY PONY AND TRAP OR HORSE AND CART.
GOOSE WINGS WERE DISCONNECTED AT THE FIRST JOINT AND USED AS DUSTERS. THE FEATHERS WERE USED IN CLOTH MATERIAL CALLED BEDTICK, TO MAKE PILLOWS AND MATTRESES. BUT NO TAIL OR WING FEATHERS.
(THERE ARE A FEW BLOBS, THE HAND THAT GUIDED THE PEN IS NOT AS STEADY AS IT ONCE WAS.)

WHEN I WAS A BOY

By Albert Gard

On June 20th 1920 news went around the village of Drayford, near Witheridge, Tiverton, North Devon, that Joe and Mary Gard had yet another boy. Already they had five children before I was born, roughly about two years between each child. There were three boys and two girls. (Another two boys and three girls to follow). I am told I was a sickly child and often not expected to live. I am now 72 years of age and very strong and active.

My father was a quarryman employing several men at times to help him. He also repaired the roads for several miles and kept the water-tables flowing – all on contract to the South Molton Rural District Council. He worked three quarries. He also took on work for local farmers, and was a chimney-sweep – a very important job where practically all the farms and cottages were thatched with wheat reed. Most of the same houses were of cob walls, i.e. clay dug locally with straw trodden into it. Most of the dwellings had been some hundreds of years earlier.

Drayford was a very pretty little place nestled between the hills in a valley through which the Little Dart River flowed, and where the Adworthy Brook joined it the river and brook were alive with trout, eels, and in the spawning season salmon. There was a bridge joining the village from one side, and the 'little arches' joining the other. Both streams were a place of delight to the children and friend to all for washing water, and the gardens and farms in summer. We boys would snare the trout in summer, and the men would snare salmon (a very profitable pastime) in the winter. There were ten houses in close proximity, and the Mill a short distance away. It was a working village. Mr Tanner, Mr William Way and his son Fred Way worked on farms. Mr Chudley and Mr Fred Stoneman were smallholders, and also took on various other work for a livelihood. Mr Lewis was a castrator of farm animals. Mr John Leach a quarryman as was my father. Mr Sanders a trapper, sheep shearer and other odd jobs, Mr Venner a thatcher, and Mr Dick Stoneman the miller and postman. Every house enjoyed a vegetable garden, carefully planted and with a lot of competition as to who produced the best crop; also, except the Mill, every house had apple trees and orchard with both cooking and eating apples. We boys knew all the early eating apple trees!

There were lots of children about, and we enjoyed playing a Drayford game called "kickstone", in which a "catcher" would be selected, an old tin placed inside a square marked by our hobnailed boots; whilst he counted to a hundred in fives we all ran and hid away. There were scores of places to hide. When seen, the name of the child would be called by the catcher and the location he or her had been seen, and one, two, three, called with his foot on the tin. If the catcher had strayed from the tin to get a vantage point to see someone else, a child hidden could sneak out and kick the tin well away from the square, and all those already caught could run off and hide again whilst the catcher replaced the tin. We played football along with the young men of the village in "Smyth's Mead" until Mr Smyth was seen riding his horse towards us at a gallop, at which time we ran to safe havens known to us, with much excitement. When we were assured the farmer had gone on about his business we returned to play the game.

Looking back, I think he enjoyed chasing with a lot of loud shouting and cracking the whip, as much as we did running away. He would often try to surprise us.

Everyone worked hard, and in each household the children were given little tasks to do daily, and as we grew older the responsibilities grew. We knew everyone's business, helped each other, and had our differences. The postman from Worlington Post Office cycled to a small wooden hut on the grass verge just beyond Thelbridge Cross, about two miles away, to meet the mail van from Crediton each weekday morning at 6am. The he delivered mail to each house in the village at just before 7am - 1½d for a letter, 1d for a postcard. The same postman would take mail to the same hut to meet the mail van at 7pm each weekday evening. Upon approaching Drayford, still cycling, he would pull a whistle from the mailbag to blow a few notes to say he was at the Square to collect letters which must be already stamped. He was like a clock at 6.15pm, and if we missed him he would never stop walking up Ave Hill, no matter how breathless you may be, to take you letter. He would take it walking with much grumbling.

Tradesmen came through the village. A baker every day, even so lots of women still baked their own bread, and I remember clearly to this day the pungent smell of bread and yeastcake. The butcher came three times each week. Every household would "fat" two pigs per year to kill and put in the "salter", keeping two pigs at a time because each one tried to eat more than the other and would grow quickly. Fat bacon was in favour and pigs would be huge when ready for slaughter, often 340 pounds or more in weight. The butcher would buy the other pig which paid the cost of rearing the two. The shop bacon of today cannot compare in flavour to that of those days. We ate bread and bacon fat with a little salt and pepper for a meal, or it could be beef dripping. We all kept hens and ducks. We sold eggs to the dealer and dressed chicken and ducks. Rabbits were in good supply, and with a piece of fat bacon in a crock hung on a crook up the chimney over an open fire with potatoes and onion was delicious. Home-made was the norm. Hams preserved and hung up the chimney, home-made hogs-pudding, apple tart, apple dumpling, apple pastry, apple-in-and-out (which was steamed pudding with slices of apple in it), meat pasties, potato pastry, potato cake, gooseberry tart, blackberry tart, rhubarb tart, blackcurrant tart, suet pudding and a little jam either cold or hot, pea soup flavoured with a little meat, and a lot of tasty cheese which I remember in huge lumps and smelling delicious. The villagers all declared their food was "plain but healthy". Most households cooked at night when the men folk returned from work and children were expected to be in their own homes for this, and the family would sit around the table in order of age, the baby being near both parents: a wonderful time of the day. Sunday too was special because it was always baked dinner. This was cooked in an oven in the wall, heated by a faggott of wood to a certain heat which women judged by their nose! The oven was a very spacious place used twice each week., The baked dish was large, with a joint of meat, lots of bread crumbs, onion slices, parsley or sage at the bottom, lots of potatoes and the joint on top, then topped up with boiling water which was a very tasty gravy indeed. After this was ready the oven would be filled with large cakes, pies, pasties, etc, enough to last out the remainder of the week. Greens or swedes would be cooked over the open fire. To pass through Drayford when the meal was being served was a tantalising experience. No one could whistle at that time!

The women worked hard keeping their families fit. Long lines of washing hanging out to dry on Monday, feeding the poultry and animals too. The house would be scrubbed through on Saturday, the table scrubbed almost white, socks to darn each week, patches to clothing, fires to make and ashes to clear daily. Each house had stacks of faggots prepared in summer, with long trees called "poles" to be cut for the fireplace (with crosscut saws) placed on a wood-horse, father one end of the saw and a boy at the other end. There was always time for children to play because there was a rhythm about life. Winter evenings, table games; summer , outdoor games.

Most of the villagers owed allegiance to the Church of England a quarter of a mile away, or the Methodist Chapel three quarters of a mile away. Mother sent us to the Chapel for Sunday School and services. I can never remember the time when I did not look forward to going to the Chapel. We all had Sunday clothes and had to be carefully inspected before leaving home for Chapel. Father gave each of us a halfpenny for the "collection". We loved singing the "Sankey" hymns, and both young and older folk could be heard singing these outdoors loudly (like the birds) or whistling them as they worked. The Stoneman boys were particularly good at whistling. We took our schooling at Worlington Council School, about 60 children of all ages with two elderly teachers. Reading, writing and arithmetic was the main part of our education. The teachers were dedicated and both were Christians by commitment. We were taught at home to say our prayers at bedtime each night, at school Scripture was taught with real meaning at the first session after assembly. I loved it. The memory portions we had to learn I have experienced to be key guides to living. The Ten Commandments were amongst them, and I am convinced there would not be half the indiscipline and vandalism today if every child had to learn these gems from the Bible. We left school at fourteen years of age, and for our family we went to work on a farm, living there, and the girls went as servants to gentleman's houses where they lived. We were poor but happy.

When I was the oldest child at home, those older had left home to earn their living, something happened that has influenced my whole life. There was an Evangelistic Mission at the Chapel, it was winter, I was 12 years of age and went out of curiosity. A visiting Deaconess from Northumberland was the preacher, and she talked about Jesus in such a way I wanted to live with him for ever. She urged folk to invite Jesus into their hearts to take charge of their lives. I simply closed by eyes and said "Lord Jesus come into my heart". He did! All over the years He has been my Saviour, on the farm, in the factory, six years of war in the Royal Tank Regiment, and as Minister, Missionary and Counsellor He has been my friend. One day soon I shall meet Him face to face – it will be wonderful to be forever with the Lord.

Albert Gard
27/3/1992

Witheridge and Electricity

Recollections of Bill Williams

Mains electricity reached Witheridge in the summer of 1939, but the village had its own supply from 1931.

Whitehall Securities was the parent company in London of a number of smaller companies in the country, whose aim was to provide "power stations" for towns and large villages. The branch in Devon had offices in Exeter, and an offshoot called the Exe Valley Electricity Company, who provided "power stations" in South Molton, Dulverton, Winkleigh and Witheridge.

Premises chosen was a two storey shed at the back of Cypress House in West Street. The engines were diesel by Blackstone and by Petter, and in 1935, to meet increased demand, a big four-cylinder Petter was added. These engines charge batteries which were kept upstairs. They never ran at night, merely intermittently during the daytime, although in cold winter weather they might have to run all day. Sometimes the battery plates would warp, there would be a crack as a glass container broke and sulphuric acid poured down below.

All the wiring for the first batch of clients was done by Spence of Honiton, but later work was carried our by The Exe Valley Company. All the wiring round the village was above ground, and reached as far as Merryside, Gunhole and the Lower School. At Merryside the Company installed an electric pump to fill the big water storage tank there with water from the reservoir by the entrance to Lakelands. When the water fell to a certain level the pump cut in and topped it up. South Molton R.D.C. paid. Mr W.G. Bourke, A.M.I.E.E., was the manager and chief engineer of the Witheridge Power Station.

Some people had a meter, but others had a "limiter" which would cause power to flicker if too much was being used. Those with "limiters" paid a shilling a week, enough for two 60 watt bulbs. I recall calling to read the meter of an elderly couple who averaged 8 units per quarter (at a penny three farthing a unit), but on this occasion had used 10 units and the old man was furious.

One of my jobs was to carry out a thermal efficiency test once a month, comparing oil consumption against power produced. Due to a calculating error Witheridge produced a figure of 33%, better than the 23% of Battersea Power Station.

I started in August 1933, and remember Leslie Knight, J. Pollard, J. Seatherton (who later managed South Molton's plant) and at times Bill Knight. Once when Bill Hutchings was felling a tree, he told the Company to switch off the power in case the tree fell on the wires. I had to tell him that the law required public notice to be given before the power could be cut off, and that it couldn't be done at once. Half an hour later the tree fell on the wires and all the power went off. Bill Hutchings had to compensate the Company.

In summer 1939 mains supply arrived from South Molton, and joined in to a transformer sited a few yards down the road to Witheridge Mill.

Cedric Tudball was born in Witheridge in 1931. His Mother was the District Nurse for many years. His Father was an upholsterer. Cedric left Witheridge in the 1950s, but never forgot the village where he was born.

The Mill Leat

As a lad, I followed the leat
Easing lazy towards the mill
Hold-fast booted I'd tack long the mud puddled track
I can savour the silence – still

The "yo-yo" echoes from Yeo Woods
Dull deep thuds from the shafted axe
Cry-cry-cry in the sky, from the buzzard on high
The pigeons, coo, coo, coo – and relax

Sharp click of hobnail "gainst the stone
Soon lost in the wood's mossy heart
Lest it shatter the dream, of that slumbering stream
Orphan child – of the Little Dart

Bled from Dam, by Maire the miller
To idle lie, so still, so glazed
Languid, easy at peace, ere cog clogged with grease
Was by his same captor raised

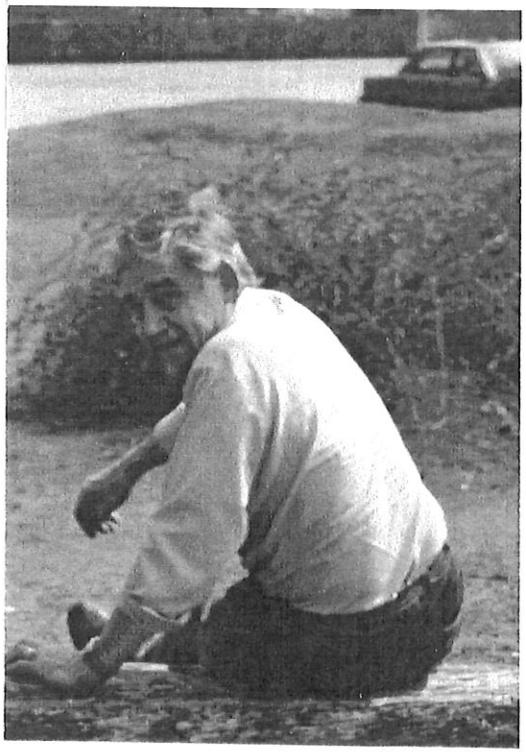
Notch over notch; full certain, sure,
The black sluice did upward steal
Then gently, not shaken,
this child did awaken
Dribbling silver over the wheel

Notch on notch, the gate did rise
The leat was alive with freshets
Unshackled and freed,
onward he did speed
To splash in the great wheel's buckets

Gently he'd left his captive banks
Counted one weed, then another.

Through the race a rumble –
frantic he did tumble
To mingle and merge . . . .
with mother

by Cedric Tudball



After Fifty Years – May I Say "Sorry"

During the summer of 1943, The Rev Castlehow (Jas) left two scouts in control of their camp Mamhead, while he took the remainder to Dawlish Warren for a swim.

Unfortunately however a dog entered the stores tent and ate about one quarter of a large fruited slab cake that had been donated to the troop by the village baker. When disturbed the dog ran off leaving the crumbled remains.

The two lads having to hide the evidence and explain the missing cake, came up with the following solution; they crumbled the remainder of the cake and tumbled the fruit and crumbs into a large jelly – they made a trifle; and in so doing explained the empty cake box and ensured that the Vicar didn't know that some of the cake was missing, further to this he knew nothing of the dog, or it's saliva!

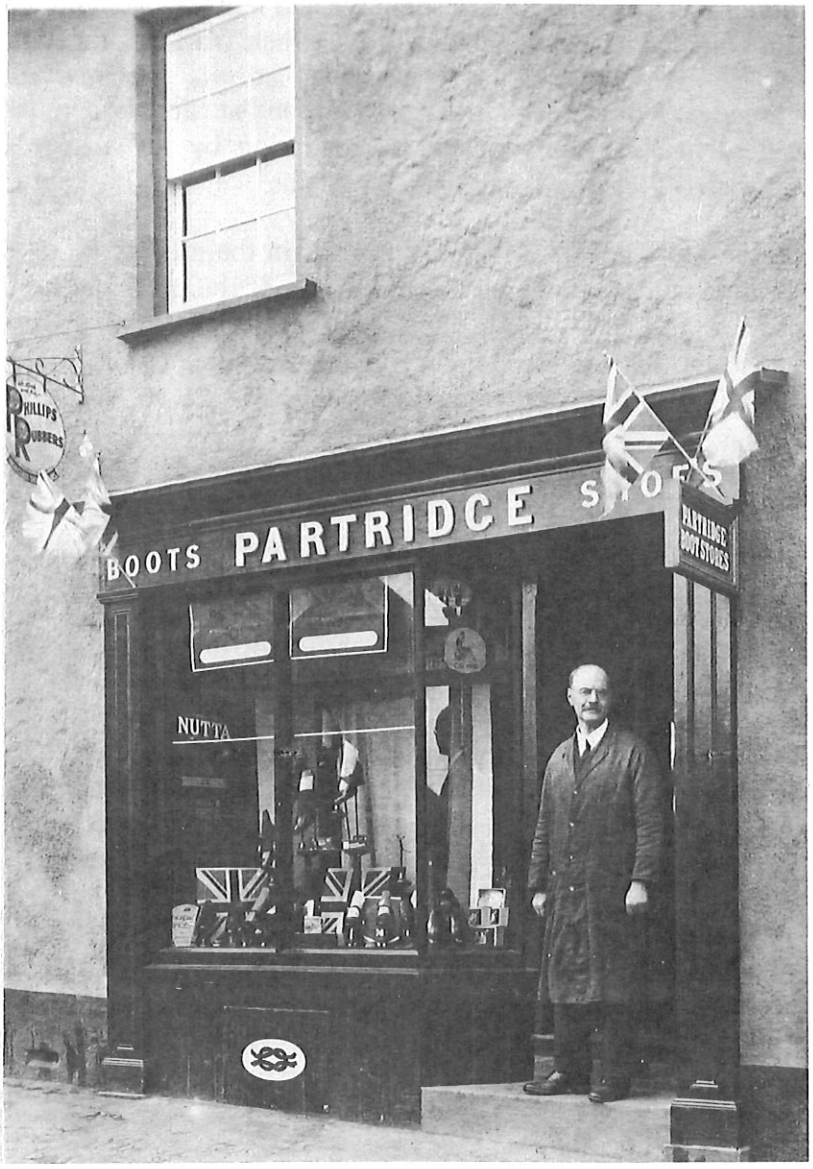
The troop enjoyed the trifle, and on being told the recipe, the Vicar said "Oh Lord (and I quote) one doesn't use really rich fruitcake for trifle", whereupon Gordon Pyne and Cedric Tudball looked furtively at one another and giggled!!

I cannot say "Sorry" to Jasper, but to those who ate and enjoyed our "Dog Cake Trifle" I would apologise and at the same time wish that Gordon and myself could roll back the clock and make another one.

I have eaten and forgotten many trifles in my lifetime, but that one made in an enamel bowl I will remember, and "to tell'ee the truth m'dears 'twas a good bit of tackle" – "You ask Gordy – he'll tell'ee!"

William Partridge

(1852 – 1935) and his family



William Partridge was born at Higher Coombe Farm, Cadeleigh in 1852. His sister Ellen was married to George Cruwys who farmed at West Pilliven, Witheridge. They were childless and following a financial disaster at Higher Coombe Farm, young William, was sent to live with George and Ellen Cruwys and in due course was apprenticed to one of the Shoemakers in Witheridge. At that time there were several Shoemakers in business in the village. In the 1902 entry for Witheridge in Kellys Directory reproduced in "Old Witheridge" there are four listed, one of which is William Partridge. By the time his son, Herbert, was married in 1911 William Partridge had become a Boot Dealer (entry for Father's Occupation on Marriage Certificate).

In 1879 William married Anne Foss the daughter of John Foss, farmer of Eastway Farm, Witheridge. The marriage was solemnised at The Independent Chapel, Witheridge. William was 27 years old and Anne was 28. They were engaged for seven years. William had to establish himself in his trade and provide a home for his bride before her father would allow the marriage to take place. The home to which William took Anne was Rosemont Cottage in West Street, Witheridge from where he also carried on his business.

A year later their first son, Herbert John Foss Partridge was born and the following year Anne gave birth to twins, William and Annie. Shortly after their birth Anne died. She was 31. Her baby daughter, Annie Foss, died three months later. William was left a widower at the age of 30 with two small sons to bring up. His spinster sister, Mary, came from Cadeleigh to help him look after the boys. A wet nurse was found for baby William. By all accounts Aunt Mary was a strict disciplinarian and not over found of children, even her little nephews. They were more affectionately treated by their Aunt Ellen Cruwys and Uncle George whom they visited frequently.

A journal kept by the mother of William Partridge when she was a young woman living at Little Silver, Cadeleigh before her marriage to William's father, says that her parents, i.e. William's grandparents, attended the Established Church at Cadeleigh and that her mother, William's grandmother, kept a Dame School, where she, Harriet Squire, was taught to read the Word of God at an early age. She records in her journal the coming to Little Silver when she was 15 (in 1838) of a group of Bible Christians, by whom she was greatly influenced. Later she records that in 1839 a number of Cadeleigh men and women built a Chapel at Little Silver which opened on 24th May 1839. There are two Chapel buildings at Little Silver today, one is a Bible Christian Chapel and the other, which bears a plaque to the effect, is an Independent Chapel, and this is the building opened for worship in 1839 – the same year as the Independent Chapel at Witheridge was opened. This probably means that William Partridge was brought up as a Congregationalist. His sons, Herbert, and William, attended the first Chapel School which was built at Witheridge in 1845 (the present Church Room building in Tracey Green). William Partridge was a staunch member of the Independent Chapel at Witheridge and for many years was the Sunday School Superintendent.

Herbert Partridge would have liked to have become a School Teacher. He was interested in Shorthand and in 1905 obtained the Senior Commercial Education Certificate of The London Chamber of Commerce and qualified as a Teacher of Pitman's Shorthand.

His brother, William, went to London and in time became a successful and reasonably prosperous Grocer in Ealing with a reputation for quality provisions, some of which he "imported" direct from Devonshire. This left Herbert (possessed of a strong sense of filial duty) with little option but to work with his father in the Boot and Shoe Trade, so that his dream of a career in teaching was never realised. He taught a number of students by Correspondence Course over the years and developed life-long friendships as a result. He subscribed to various Shorthand publications and kept his interest alive for the greater part of his life.

In 1906 Elsie Boyd came to Witheridge from Gloucestershire travelling by Horse Bus from Tiverton. She came in answer to an advertisement for a Post Office Clerk to run the Telegraph Office for Mr George Pullen who was the Post Master and Mr and Mrs Pullen lived at Rosemont and Elsie, who was a long way from home, lived with them. They were kind and considerate employers and Elsie was happy working in the Post Office. Very early on she made friends with Maudie Boundy, who with her mother, the Post Mistress, ran the Post Office at Worlington from their home, Stone Cross. Herbert Partridge lived with his father at Rosemont Cottage, so he and Elsie would certainly have noticed each other, both young adults of similar background, because Elsie Boyd was also a Congregationalist and attended the Independent Chapel from the first Sunday that she arrived in Witheridge. Elsie was a bright-eyed, pretty, energetic and efficient young woman and Herbert a serious minded, quiet young man with a good brain. Their personalities complimented each other and they each admired the other's qualities. They shared an interest in 19th century poetry and Liberal Party politics, and they had their religious views in common. They were married in 1911. Sadly, Elsie's greatly beloved father had been killed in a tragic accident on the Avonmouth Docks only a few weeks before the wedding date and their marriage, at The Napier Road Congregational Church, Avonmouth was in consequence a very quiet family affair which took place at 8.00 am on the morning of 4th June. Herbert and Elsie returned to Witheridge to live at Rosemont Cottage and from that time William Partridge had a devoted and loving daughter-in-law to care for him and to run his home. Mary Partridge moved to live in Tracey Green, where she also benefited in later years from the care and support of Elsie and Herbert.

In 1912, Elsinore (Nora) Boyd Partridge was born at Rosemont Cottage. With three adults, a business and a baby it was time to make a move to larger premises, and, a nearby house becoming available. When Nora was 2½ the family moved across the lane to "Avonore" where, having made some interior alterations to the house, they established a shop – "The Boot Stores" and a workshop and a new home.

The Great War took Herbert Partridge to Plymouth where he enlisted as a Royal Marine! During this period, until his release at the end of the war in April 1919, he made boots for Royal Marines, and at home in Witheridge, Elsie learnt from her father-in-law how to sew lather and repair boots. She was also working hard at building up the retail business. She was possessed of far more business acumen than either her husband or father-in-law! As time went by they became the only Boot and Shoe Dealers in the village. There were no other Shoemakers following the trade from the 1920's onwards and consequently a large proportion of the farming community and the local people were their customers. They continued for the rest of their lives to be active members of the Congregational Chapel. For many years Herbert held the position of Church Secretary and when he retired, Elsie continued the commitment until her own retirement in 1964. They both took an interest in village affairs. Herbert Partridge was a Parish Councillor and from 1923 until 1930, Elsie Partridge was President of the Witheridge Liberal Association. She was also a member of the Witheridge Women's Institute which she attended regularly with her great friend, Mrs Lily Maire.

Holidays were rare. Visits were made to Bristol to visit Elsie's family and they in turn visited Elsie and Herbert in Witheridge. Visits were also made to Ealing to see William Partridge and his family and this was an opportunity to explore London. Elsie and her sister-in-law became good friends and enjoyed each other's company. There were holidays at Dawlish and at Teignmouth and later at Minehead and there were days out on Chapel Outings, and picnics with friends, recorded in photographs, but by and large their business responsibilities kept them at home, and there were Aunt Mary and Granddad to be cared for in their declining years.

Nora spent her early school days at The British School and then at Tiverton Girls' School where she was a boarder, the ten miles distance between Witheridge and Tiverton making this a necessary in those days. From Tiverton Nora went on to Teacher Training College at Stockwell in South London where she qualified and became a Primary (Infant) School Teacher, greatly to her father's satisfaction.

Mr William Partridge handed over his business to his son, Herbert and his daughter-in-law, Elsie, and had time to indulge his interest in gardening. He had a greenhouse in the garden at Avonmore and grew prize Begonia which he exhibited at The Witheridge Flower Show. He was a founder member of the Witheridge Horticultural Society and a diligent worker for the Liberal Party. His little granddaughter, Nora adored him and they were great companions, the more so because a great deal of her mother's time was taken up by running the "shop" and caring for Aunt Mary who had become an invalid. There were three other grandchildren living in Ealing and they came with their parents to visit him every summer. He lived to see Nora happily married, but died a few months before the birth of his first great-grandchild in 1935.

William Partridge was buried in the Congregational Church yard with his wife and baby daughter. His gravestone is inscribed "Well done, good and faithful servant".

My great grandfather, Arthur Trawin, wasn't the first of my ancestors to immigrate to Canada but we know the most about him. Although he died before I was born, I have heard my Mom and her relatives talk about Great Grandpa Trawin (originally pronounced "tra win").

ARTHUR TRAWIN

October 12, 1895 – November 4, 1976.

Arthur, the youngest of eleven children, was born to Henry and Sarah (Bastow) Trawin October 17, 1895 in Witheridge, North Devon County, England. He took his schooling in Witheridge until age 15.

At this time in history, just previous to World War I, there were no jobs for young men like Arthur and family businesses were passed down to the eldest son, which eliminated him from inheriting a business. However; an older brother, Frank, had immigrated to Canada around 1905 and purchased a homestead in the Belgrave, Saskatchewan district. Frank returned to England during the winter of 1910 and told his family about the vast fertile land in Canada and of his many experiences. Arthur, being a young and impressionable lad, became very excited about Frank's new home and begged his parents to let him return with Frank (28) and his sisters, Annie (29) and Sarah (25). His sisters were going over to Canada to keep house for Frank and get teaching positions. Their mother made them promise they would take very good care of her "baby".

Arthur, Frank, Annie and Sarah left from Avonmouth, Bristol, England abroad the S.S. Royal George steamship of the Royal Line on March 22nd, 1911. Frank travelled first class which cost him £100 and the other three travelled third class, costing them each £25.

During the trip the ship's surgeon had to examine each passenger (a total of 890) to ensure that they all met the regulations of the Canadian Immigration Act of that time and would not be barred from entrance. Each passenger was examined and "believed not to be insane, epileptic or consumptive or idiotic, feeble-minded or afflicted with a contagious infections or loathsome disease" and to see if he or she were "deaf, dumb or

blind or otherwise physically or mentally defective". The passengers were not allowed to leave the ship until the surgeon had presented his report to the Canadian authorities.

The Royal George docked in Halifax, Nova Scotia at 7:20am, March 28, 1911. The uneventful trip had lasted five days.

From Halifax, the foursome travelled by train to Melfort, Saskatchewan where they loaded their belongings on a wagon and journeyed 15 miles to Frank's homestead (SE36.46.18W2nd).

Great Grandpa Arthur farmed with Frank until 1919 when he enlisted in the 15th Canadian Army Corps. He was sent overseas to serve at Ripons, Yorks. (This was the last time he saw his family in England).

Following his discharge he returned to the Belgrave district and purchased SE25.46.18.W2nd. In the early '20's Frank returned to England and Arthur rented his land until he purchase it in 1939.

Arthur married a teacher, Jessica Anna, daughter of John and Catherine Gordon (Mitchell) Robertson of Kinistino, Saskatchewan. They raised a family of four children: William, Ellen Margaret (my Grandmother), John Henry and Jean.

In December 1944, Arthur and Jessie sold their land at Belgrave and moved to the Naisberry district, where they continued to farm. This farm known as Trawin Seeds Ltd., located a couple miles east of Melfort on the old Star City Road, is still being farmed by Arthur's sons, Bill and John and John's sons, Ross and Brent. They grow pedigree seed and operate a seed cleaning plant.

Great Grandma died of cancer at the age of 57 on December 27, 1957. Grandpa Arthur had some heart problems and had a pacemaker for a number of years. He died quietly at home on November 4th, 1976.

My Mom's memories of her Grandma are fresh home-made bread with home-canned raspberries and her standing on the big rocker rung while Grandma rocked a younger grandchild as she sang "God sees the little sparrow fall" or "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star". Mom says Grandpa was a quiet man with a full head of dark hair (even to his death) who was always whistling. He loved music and had a good record collection with his favourites being classical or the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and his favourite movie was 'The Sound of Music'. She can still see him playing ball or riding his motorbike at the age of 80.

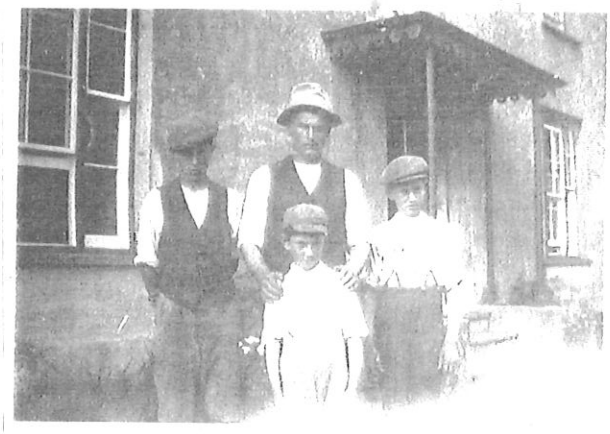
By Devon Robb, Grandson of Margaret (Trawin) Groat, Canada

Mr and Mrs R Woollacott, West Yeo, Witheridge, now of Appletree Close.

Notes taken on 14th May 1999, on farming in the 1930s.

James Woollacott with his wife, Ethel, and three sons, Bob, John and Bill, came over Exmoor from Kipscombe to West Yeo in 1929. The move took three days. The first day saw the horses and carts reach Kinsford Water, from where the ponies were ridden back to Kipscombe for the night. At the end of the second day they reached Ash Mill, and the ponies were ridden on to West Yeo for the night. On the third day they arrived at West Yeo with their belongings. The sheep and cattle came by lorry; the pigs had been killed and salted before the move. James Woollacott came on his BSA belt-driven motorbike, with Bob on the pillion, but coming up Rockford Hill near Brendon the bike began to fail and Bob came off. Whereupon the bike surged forward and climbed the hill to his father's surprise, as he had not noticed Bob's fall. At West Yeo the bike was kept in the cider house; James never owned a car.

Notes on farming will be divided into the seasons of the year.



James with Bob, John & Bill

WINTER

Once a week chaff was cut for the horses in the chaff-house. A Hornsby engine powered the belt-driven barn machinery, which drove not only the chaff-cutter, but also the winnower, the thresher and the grinding stones. Mending bags for corn with bag-needles was a winter task. Wheat was in 2¼ cwt bags; and barley in 2 cwt bags; a man was expected to be able to carry one of these under each arm.

Spar gads for thatching, usually of withy or hazel, were cut in the kitchen. When finished the floor was swept and the sweepings used for the fire. The spar gads were for thatching farm ricks, and for sale to Venners, the local thatchers.

Hedging was done in winter. Hedge material, especially whitethorn and beech, had to be steeped towards the sun, otherwise new growth could pull them up. Steepers were held in place by crooks, cut from hedge stuff and driven into the bank. It was best to steep beech at the end of the winter, because of the rising of the sap. No saws were used, but the cuts were made with hooks (billhooks), after the grass had been cut with a paring hook. Before the hedge could be made, however, the bank had to be cast up with clats (turf) taken from the hedge trough. In North Devon this was done with the long-handled Devon shovel, but the Woollacotts preferred to use a stone-fork, as was the practice the other side of Exmoor. Where banks ended at gateways, or where they were weak, stone-walling was used. For this it was essential for the bottom layer of stones to be three quarters under the ground for stability. The angle of the stone-walling had to be right – too flat and the sheep would get up it, too steep and frost could get in and bring it down. Several long stones would be driven into the bank for extra firmness. Banks suffered

damage by rabbits, and with the help of ferrets these would be netted, 40 rabbits a day being the target.

Winter was the time for making gates, and the Woollacotts made their own from oak. The cross-pieces were known as shuttles, and at the ends were the hanging post and the hapsing post. It was said that if a gate was well hung it should be possible to open it, place a full glass of water on the top shuttle, let it go, and see it close so softly that not a drop was split. The gatepost were also made of oak; the bark had to be removed or water would get in, and the cuts of the bark had to be made with upward strokes, again to avoid the entry of water.

Sometimes corn ricks had to be made away from the farm buildings. For these Nott's steam threshing tackle would be booked, and enough coal ordered. Two men came with the tackle and stayed overnight, ready for an early start to get steam up in the engine before breakfast. A dozen would sit on forms at the kitchen table, and they included Perce Woodman, Ned Partridge, Webber from Adworthy, and Charlie Middleton. For spring threshing a reed comber was added. Beans were grown, cut with the horse binder and threshed, but the threshing drum sometimes threw them back at the man feeding. Mole catching was another winter job. No traps were used at West Yeo, but a watch was kept for moles "heaving", and then "down with your heel". Dry weather drove the moles down and wet weather brought them up. Bob's best was 37 in one day. The skins were dried and sent to Grantham and fetched fourpence each.

Sixty to seventy Devons were kept in the 1930s. After a few days on the cow a calf was bucket-fed. It was reckoned to milk 8 cows an hour. At that time about 500 sheep were kept. At the start they were Exmoor Horns, but later Devon Closewools were favoured. There were three cart-horses and two ponies, one butt cart and one cart, but no 4-wheeled wagon. The acreage included West Yeo moor and amounted to 356.

SPRING

One of the first signs of spring was the purchase of 25-30 chicks from Venners. As soon as the weather and the ground were right ploughing began. An acre a day was the target for horse-ploughing. Implements also used were scuffles, heavy and light drags, flat stone rollers, Cambridge ring rollers. Grass fields were stone-rolled, and grass seeds were chain-harrowed. As soon as the bracken began to grow on the moor, the set of heavy drags would be turned upside down and dragged over the young shoots to check them. 30 to 40 acres of corn were tilled. Their first tractor, a Fordson on spade lugs, was brought in 1940.

Lambing was planned for April. Corners of fields were wired off and the ewes driven into them at the end of the day, so that it would be easy to find and inspect them at night. The meadow, or "mead", was kept for the ewes and lambs.

Basic slag was applied in spring. A lorry would bring a ton or ton and a half and tip it out loose. It was then shovelled up into a butt; one man led the horse and the other spread the slag off the back with a saucer. It was mainly used for root ground. As a succession, oats were followed by barley, roots (with sheep folded on them) and wheat. Dung was taken out in the butt and put in heaps (two heaps per load) and then spread by

hand with a dung fork. The Devon cattle might be turned out in mid-April, but the sheep always had priority on early grass.

SUMMER

Bob remembers hay being once made in May, but June was the usual hay month. Grass for hay was never cut when damp. After being tedded hay was brought in with a double horse sweep to an engine-powered elevator for rick-making. In damp weather the hay "yetted a bit" (heated) and smaller ricks were made. A long iron bar used to be inserted into the rick to test for overheating. There were other hazards; once they were making hay in Lower Park when a whirlwind caught up the hay and strewed it all along the main road. Ricks were thatched as soon as possible with wheat reed or rushes.

Roots were horse-hoed and then singled by hand-hoe. In steep fields the soil accumulated at the bottom and from time to time had to be drawn back up. At times pigeons were such a plague on the swede greens that you could get three with one shot. They went to Notts the poultry packers in Nomansland. In wartime the government provided ammunition for pigeon shooting and neighbours worked together. Also during the war West Yeo was made a depot for government machinery.

Usual clothes for farm work in the 1930s were breeches, leggings, hob-nailed boots and waistcoat. A sack round the shoulders and another round the waist kept the rain out. For shearing, however, the shearers wore white trousers and white jackets, which had to be clean every morning. When hands were washed during shearing a bucket of water with ferns in it was used instead of soap, another idea from "out over" (Exmoor). Several from there came to help with the shearing; they either rode over or came by taxi. A retired Witheridge butcher, Reg Rodd, tied the wool. Charlie Middleton always helped, and at the end of the day after food and beer the kitchen table would be pushed to the side. Charlie would put two crossed brooms in the middle of the floor and do his "Broom Dance" to music played by James Woollacott on his accordion. Among the wives who came to help on these occasions were Mrs Rodd and Mrs Webber. West Yeo brewed their own beer in three grades, the best for parson and doctor, the next for farmers, and the last for everyone else.

Bill Woollacott started keeping bees in the 1930s. When he went into the army Bob took over the 14 hives. Orders for honey came from places like Exmouth, Teignmouth and Minehead, and deliveries became family outings paid for by the money received.

AUTUMN

Paring hooks were used to clear the edges of the cornfields, and then scythes cut room for the horse and binder. As the area of uncut corn became less many rabbits bolted and were killed.

There were two two-acre orchards mainly of cider apples, but there was a Russet tree in the garden, and a tree of "listener", a yellow apple shaped like a quince and the size of a breakfast cup. Maunds were used to carry in the apples. There was a two-screw cider-press in the cider house; all cider was consumed on the farm. Mangolds were gathered in by butt and stored in "caves", long heaps against a wall or bank, covered with rushes

or bracken or browse against the frost. Late summer was maggot-time, and a dead rabbit was hung on a bough near where sheep gathered, with underneath a bath with a Jeyes Fluid mix. The flies left the sheep, laid their eggs on the dead rabbit. When the eggs hatched the maggots fell into the bath.

The only "vet" in the area was Matthews of Rackenford. If he was needed someone would have to ride over for him. West Yeo had no telephone until the Ministry of Agriculture put one in wartime. Stanley Andrews of Romansleigh travelled for a West Country animal medicine firm and visited from time to time. Cattle would be "drenched" by having medicine poured down their throats by means of a cow's horn with a hole drilled in the bottom.

In the 1939-45 war John served in the Life Guards and Bill in the Marines. In 1940 the Woollacotts were allocated 6 evacuee boys aged from 3 to 10. Queenie Long had been a landgirl at Newhouse, but had left. She was asked to come to West Yeo to help look after the evacuees and give help at harvest time. In Autumn 1940 Bob and Queenie were married.

One autumn a couple of years later John Woollacott was on leave and went rabbiting on North Hill with Bob. Queenie remembers pushing the pram with young Robin and Fred in it all the way out there with a hot drink and some food for them, and then coming back with rabbits hanging from the pram handle.

Mrs Betty Alleyne (nee Way),

17 Fore Street, Witheridge

Memories noted down on 12th May 1999

Betty's Grandfather was Samuel James Way, referred to in these notes as James. He came to Witheridge from Morchard Bishop before the year 1878, when he is mentioned in the Devon Directory entry for Witheridge as a glazier. By 1880 he had established himself as glazier, builder and undertaker in the house at the right hand end of the row running from the churchyard. He had not been there long before a fire broke out in this block of buildings and completely destroyed it. James Way rebuilt this block in the style that is seen today in 1999. He made sure that his house, nearest the Vicarage wall, was designed to be as convenient a house for a builder as possible. For example, there was no garden at the back, but a cobbled area fronted a store, with a loft above it where coffin boards, deals and ladders were kept, the ladders on special hangers so that they could be let down to the ground when needed. The workshop was on this floor too. Downstairs in the store were roofing slates, a handcart for local jobs, a hand-turned grindstone which the village butchers used for sharpening their knives.

Betty remembers her grandfather's white pony "Polly". Polly was kept in the field called Upper Lime Close, now known as Parish Hall Field, where there was a shed for the cart. This field became known as James Way's Field. Fred Bowden, Percy Bowden's father, was James's mason, and one of his jobs was to turn powdered lime into putty lime by adding water to a cauldron kept at the back of the house. The resulting paste was shovelled out and sold by weight. People would come and buy putty lime for whitewashing their walls. James Way had another use for it. Twice a year he would mix up a certain proportion of lime and water and make his family drink it; it was said to purify the blood. Betty recalls that the flavour was horrible. Also outside was a pit for sea sand, used for mortar.

Upstairs at the back of the house the workshop also had two long workbenches, a full set of planes and other carpentry tools, and a container for glass, which would be cut by a diamond. Betty still has her father's glass-cutting diamond. Above the workshop a kind of garret ran from the back right through to the front of the house. Here paint was kept, wood mouldings for doors and picture frames, and the pony food, for which a wooden pony basket was used.

Betty recalls the enormous deal wardrobe that James made for himself and his wife. Her grandfather was very fond of attending sales.

At these it was his habit to wait until the end, and then buy mixed lots of what was left and bring them home. He had special skill at mending leather pumpsuckers, when they

became worn and no longer airtight. He was a skilled saw-sharpener. He employed Arthur Brent as a carpenter; Arthur's mother was a Cockney, with a fund of Cockney stories. James was a great Congregational Chapel man, and ensured that his granddaughter attended not only the Chapel, but also the Chapel School ("British School"), which he himself had built in 1898. His jacket usually held pocketfuls of the small white Bassett's peppermints, which he used to give to adults as well as children. James's wife was a great herbalist, and sent her orders from the catalogue of the firm "Health and Heather".

James was also Witheridge Waterworks caretaker for the South Molton Rural District Council. Twice a day he would open the trapdoor of the Witheridge Reservoir (at the corner of today's Sports Field by the entrance to Lakelands) and with a long stick measure the water level. Depending on what depth he found he might have to turn off one or more of the stopcocks further down the village, so that all would get a share of the water. Water shortages were for very many years a feature of Witheridge life, and dry summers and the introduction of baths and flush toilets made things worse in the 1930s. Places like Ebrington's Row , Ditchetts, and Well Cottage in the Square had their own wells, but they were not enough. Eventually a source beyond Merryside towards Woodford was found and a pump installed. This was cared for by Betty's father; it filled the reservoir and the water tower at Merryside.

Betty's father, Sam Way, worked with his father. He was in the Devon Yeomantry early in the 1914 – 1918 war, but transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. On his return home he brought with him his leather flying helmet, which Betty enjoyed wearing. He had been stationed on the East Coast, where he met his wife who came from Essex. After the war he worked for an estate agent in London; due to his ability to turn his hand to anything he was nicknamed "Friday", from the story of Robinson Crusoe. When Betty's grandmother died, the family returned to Witheridge and the house where James still lived.

In the 1939-1945 war direction of labour was brought in, and the Way family had to leave Witheridge again. Her father was sent to Cirencester on essential Government building work. Her mother was directed to Smiths Sectric Timers near Cheltenham to work on watches for the Admiralty. At the start of the war Betty was working for Rodney Culhene at the Village Stores and Post Office; work in a food shop was at first classed as a reserved occupation, but before long she too was directed to Smiths Sectric Timers, where her work included instruments for Halifax bombers, such as altimeters and automatic pilot equipment. The Ways were released from war work in 1946 and came home. Sam had his building work and also the South Molton RDC contract for refuse collection in Witheridge. This was done by horse and cart, and taken down and dumped near Witheridge Mill. Betty returned to Mrs Culhene's Village Stores and Post Office.

In the 1950s Sam died, and a move was made to Leigh House, on the corner of the Square opposite 15 West Street. It was owned by Miss Annie Trawin, who lived on the ground floor. Betty and her mother had the two upper floors. Water for cooking and washing had to be carried up by bucket, but there was a toilet on the first floor fed from a tank filled with rainwater piped from the roof gutters.

Lakelands

Witheridge

(1948 – 1952)

Memories

of

Childhood

on a

Small Farm

in a

Devon Village

by

Diana E

Manning

(nee Taylor)

Lakelands was a happy place for me. I had my ponies, a freedom to roam the moors, I'd left the confines of the Convent and had a couple of very enjoyable years at Chulmleigh Secondary Modern School where I, an aspiring young writer, was given much encouragement from Mr and Mrs Richards, who taught English and Drama, among other subjects.

I became Dad's right hand girl on the farm when he became ill, staying off school to turn and rake the hay with old Smarty, the heavy horse and the great iron horse-drawn implements.

Henry, being six years younger, had lighter tasks such as collecting the eggs or helping Dad fetch in the cows for milking. He also had numerous pet rabbits and Bantams of his own to tend. Henry, also, was often ill with Bronchitis.

Our local postman, Sid Radford, whose girls Edna and Joyce, I went to school with, helped with the milking, hay harvest and many other jobs.

There was one job that Sid refused. Two, on reflection, We had about fourteen dairy cows and, Daisy, a large Ayreshire cross, was rather temperamental. Fine some days, but if the mood took her she would lash our with a hind leg, throwing the milker off his three-legged stool, and the pail of milk would fly through the air to land with a clatter on the concrete floor, making the other cows jittery. I was given the task of milking Daisy.

Neither would Sid be persuaded to use 'Simplex' milking machine Dad installed, so when Dad was laid up for several weeks with Lumbago, I had to do that as well. I always preferred milking by hand. I liked to lean against the cows and feel the warmth of their bodies.

I soon befriended two local girls, Ann Godfrey, daughter of Olive and Fred, the latter being a retired policeman. And, Margaret Baker, daughter of Annie and Leslie, he being the local Blacksmith.

First, I met Ann as we all awaited the school bus at Thelbridge Cross, then Margaret, who passed on her fine horse, Jackdaw, as I was riding Bonnie Boy in our top field alongside the main road. We are still friends fifty years on, although I 'lost' Ann for twenty fives years when we both moved and lost each other's addresses! It was my brother Henry who accidentally found Ann when his job as the AI man, took him to Ann's husband's farm at Rackenford! We had so much news to catch up on!

Margaret, on the other hand, was more ladylike. I believe Mother felt Margaret would have a 'calming influence' on me. I often wonder, on reflection, if Margaret's Mother hoped I would not influence Margaret to become as wild as myself!

We went for sedate rides on our ponies, attended Church on Sundays and prepared for our confirmation with the Rev: Jasper Castlehowe, a gentleman of well-rounded proportions. 'Jumbo', as we children cruelly nicknamed him, was a very patient man who could quickly become impatient when provoked!

There was one occasion when Margaret, (having a spare key to the door) and I climbed the steep stone steps to the Church tower, where we could lean over the parapet and watch the villagers below. A good viewpoint of the village and surrounding countryside. It was amazing the things we saw. Unbeknown to us, someone locked the door at the foot of the steps. On discovering our exit was barred, we raced to the tower and, at the top of our voices, shouted for help. Jumbo had to be summoned to release us. He was not amused and we were banned from the tower from that day on!

Margaret often played the Church organ for services and, on one occasion when she and the regular organist were away I, having had piano lessons, was asked to stand in and play for a Christening. On the organ I was hopeless and, after much tut-tutting, mutterings and exclamations of "Oh! No . . . Timing! Timing!" from Jumbo – I was never asked to play again!

The village of Witheridge was always a peaceful, friendly place, as I remember. Lakelands is situated on the Tiverton road at the upper end of the village, left-hand side beyond the Chapel and 'Higher' or 'Chapel School'.

Walking down the hill and through the village, Butts Close the Council estate lay to the left, where many of the children lived whom attended both Chulmleigh and Witheridge Schools. I recall Roy and Terry Harris, Roy and Jean Manley, Leslie Pyne, Freda and Dorothy Davey. Dorothy Davey and Jean Manley often came to Lakelands to play with Henry, being nearer his age and, attending Witheridge Church School. Johnny Bryant, too. Many of these, I have since learned, are deceased.

There was Doctor Mackenzie who lived in a large house on the right, which also acted as his surgery. I only ever remember going once when I had tonsillitis, followed by the removal of the same in Tiverton General Hospital. He was, I believe, separated from his wife and his two daughters, Daphne and Fiona, stayed at Lakelands during one Summer holiday, so they could spend time with their father, when he wasn't working.

Almost next door lived a Mrs Dick and her young daughter Davina.

Sandy-haired and freckle-faced, the child appeared on our back doorstep one day, stating, "I'm Dinny Dick, and I've come to play with Henry!" I believe Dinnie's mother and ours became friendly. I don't recall a father figure. I always remember Dinny as being a sunny, outgoing little tomboy. What happened to her, I wonder?

A short walk on was Greenslade's Garage, on the left, though there were few cars in those days. They did have one unusual customer, however. Mum and Dad bought Henry a lovely cream Austin racing, pedal car, probably for a sixth or seventh birthday present. The bonnet opened by undoing two leather straps, to reveal an array of plugs and points on a mock engine. One day Mother had a phone call from Greenslade's to collect young Henry. He had driven up our long drive, down the Main Road, and into the garage to, "have my car serviced like Daddy's, please!" He said his sparkplugs needed changing. What child would be safe, one wonders, in today's climate, to go off on their own like that? Yet, in Witheridge today, I still feel safe.

Greenslade's also had a small shop next door to the garage. I remember only ever going there once with Ann.

Mr Holloway's shop was where mother ordered groceries to be delivered, especially when she took in paying guests to supplement the farm income. Very often, something extra would be required during the week and added to the bill; which was paid at the end of each week. Imagine her surprise to discover several small amounts of sweets added to her bill. On talking to Mr Holloway, she was informed that young Henry had been calling in on his way home from school, selecting his sweets and stating, "Put them on Mummy's bill, please, she'll pay!" That was soon nipped in the bud!

We were still using sweet coupons at that time and, many of the older people kindly donated their unused coupons to the shop for the children to take up, providing they had pennies, they could have more than their 'ration'.

When we were children, everything was sold 'loose', be it teas, sugar, dried fruit, biscuits, flour, sweets. It was wonderful to enter a shop and inhale all the different aromas, cheese, hams, dried fruits, and biscuits. Even more exciting to watch as everything was carefully selected and weighed, put into individual paper bags which, with a flick of the wrists, were 'sealed' at the corners with a twist!

As well as Mr Holloway delivering groceries, the butcher and baker delivered, also. They came to the back door, (or tradesman's entrance) and rang the bell which attached to a long piece of wire with a wooden ring to pull. Bonnie Boy often followed the baker into the courtyard, knowing he would be offered a stale bun, kept especially for the occasion, after he had helped himself to a fresh one from the basket one day! It was not

long before Bonnie Boy learned to grip the bell-pull between his teeth and so ring the bell, summoning Mother to the door. And, he wouldn't go until she had feed him a bun or a crust of bread!

Margaret lived almost opposite Holloway's shop when I knew her and I was often invited home for tea. I believe young Georgie Aplin lived next door.

And, a little further on was 'The Hare and Hounds', run I believe by a 'Digger' Ford. Or so Henry remembers.

The Baker's shop was centre of a fork in the road, which snaked either side of it to curve left to Selley's Dairy, the Post Office and general stores. Right, towards 'The Angel Hotel', the Vicarage, newsagents and Church. Both roads ran down to the square.

There was a house built in the centre, an island to itself. A Fish and Chip shop stood to the left at the bottom of the street running into Drayford Lane. And, on the South Molton road was the Blacksmith shop and the Church School.

I loved to stand at the 'Smithy' door and watch Mr Baker at his work. The heat of the fire, the great bellows fanning the embers to a bright red, watching as he moulded a horseshoe shape from a straight piece of iron, the smell of hot iron against cool hoof, the sizzling sound as he measured the shoe for size. It was wonderful!

There was always a queue of horses and ponies, all shapes and sizes, being a strong farming and hunting area. Men would gather to gossip and smoke as they waited their turn, many passers by would stop to pass the time of day. It was a general meeting place to 'put the World to rights'. And no one was ever in a hurry. People had time for each other. Time to absorb their surroundings. Time to share each other's joys and sorrows.

Bill and Ruby Buchanan ran The Angel, Ruby being Margaret's Aunt. Another Aunt, Olive Vernon and her husband Bill, owned the newsagent and sweet shop, along with a good selection of knitting wool, haberdashery and some clothing. Both Ruby and Olive were sisters to Leslie Baker.

Back at the farm, there was never a dull moment, As well as the dairy herd, we had a few pigs, the ponies Kitty, my little Exmoor (now outgrown), Tommy, a Welsh cob about 14.hh, and my own beautiful, 13.2hh dapple grey Bonnie Boy, with flowing cream man and tail. There was also Smarty, the carthorse, who was purchased with the property – old, smelly, but kind and gentle and, a willing worker.

Apart from milking, feeding, mucking out stables and sties, hosing the milking parlour, there would be mangolds to feed into a huge contraption of a machine in winter, (my job) to come out at the other end neatly chopped up as supplementary feed. It was similar to a mincer used in the farm kitchen, but much bigger. There was always wood to be sawn on the 'saw-horse' with a two-hand saw, for the open fire and Rayburn, along with chopping sticks for kindling. And, of course, eggs to be collected from the coops or hedges, wherever the hens chose to lay. There were occasions we didn't find a nest until a proud mum introduced a brood of chicks she had hatched.

When he had a glut of eggs, Dad preserved some in Isinglass in a big 'Ali Baba' style crock kept in the Dairy. I still had that crock, filled with plants, until recently when it split wide open during a particularly cold spell. The remains are placed in the bottom of garden tubs to encourage drainage. The obvious thing to do but, today known as 'recycling'.

Dad also experimented with butter and cheese making. I recall muslin bags of the latter, hanging from hooks in the dairy, the whey dripping into bowls beneath. I remember, also, the wooden butter pats, Dad with one in each hand 'patting' the butter into shape. These often had a design that transferred to the butter pat. But of course, before using the butter pats, milk was put into a small individual butter churn. This little churn was made of glass with a metal screw-on lid on the top of which was a set of cogs and a handle. As the handle was turned by hand, wooden paddles attached to a metal spindle in the base of the lid, turned and churned the milk until it thickened. It was a long tedious process, taking a lot of patience, a steady consistent turning of the paddles until the butter was produced. The butter was eventually shaped with the wooden 'pats', and all this by hand. The joy was in the eating of a product one had made. We were given many different 'textures' and flavours until Dad got a perfect result in his little 'gallon-size' churn!

Horses needed regular grooming and exercising. That was no hardship. Tack was cleaned regularly, lather soaped and polished. Margaret and I did these tasks together. There was often a local Hunt, we followed the Tiverton Foxhounds, or a gymkhana to attend, or regular visits to the Smithy.

Dad kept a few beehives at the bottom of the vegetable garden, having started this hobby at Lower Loxhore, our previous home. I would watch at a distance as Dad removed the honeycombs from the hives, clad in his thick gloves on his hands and 'protective net' over his head. There is nothing like honey on the combe straight from the hive!

I loved the apple harvest and since we had a Market Garden prior to moving to Lakelands, I had already been taught to handle fruit with care, and to store apples for the winter months. These we lay out in rows on wooden racks, or wrapped in newspaper and lay in single layers in boxes. They had to be checked regularly and any beginning to bruise or go rotten would be removed and taken to the house to make apple tarts.

I enjoyed helping Mother in the kitchen preserving fruit in both 2lb and 1lb Kilner jars, making pound upon pound of jam in huge preserving pans atop the Rayburn, stirring the rich colours of plums, gooseberries, black and red currants and raspberries. The jam was potted in pre-warmed jars, topped with a small circle of greaseproof paper and covered with a larger circle of clear cellophane held in place with an elastic band. The labels were all hand-written, or course!

The Kilner jars were stored in the dairy on wooden slatted shelves round the walls. I can see them now, in my minds eye, the apple rings, Victoria plums, damsons, red and green gooseberries, red and black currants, maybe a few loganberries.

The pots of jam included gooseberry, black and red currant, raspberry and strawberry. Mother made her own marmalade with big, juicy Seville oranges, to add to the store cupboard.

When the hedgerows were hanging with big, lush blackberries, we, and any cousins or friends staying with us, trailed after Mother round the fields, she hooking down the higher brambles with the crook of a walking stick, we all picking – popping two in our mouths to every one dropped into the newspaper lined wicker baskets. These were also made into jam or blackberry and apple tarts. Our lips, chins and fingers soon became a rich purple, as did the front of our shirts!

Hay making was a big occasion, too. Sid was always there with Smarty and the hay wagon, the hay having been cut, turned and raked. We usually had a houseful of cousins for the summer holidays and Dad had taken on a college student, another John Bryant, on his 'year out on practical work'. John and my cousin John Wilson (home from boarding school) both worked hard on the farm.

Mother would prepare a tea to have in the fields, having cooked our main meal at midday when everyone ate round the kitchen table. What a spread we had, cooked hams and other meats, rich fruit cakes, Victoria sandwich, fruit tarts and meat pies, scones and cream, all washed down with hot, sweet tea, or Eiffel Tower lemonade, (made from crystals) or, 'Scrumpy' from a flagon, kept cool under the now stationery Wagon.

As summer ended, Autumn dawned, we worked hard to build a huge wood pile of cut logs, filled an outhouse with kindling wood and, ensured all outhouse doors and windows were repaired and secure against bad weather.

Wellington boots, thick trousers, thick hand-knitted sweaters and duffel coats or trench coats, replaced the summer shorts, shirts and sandals.

With the rain came the muddy yard and fields. With icy winds there was ice to break on water troughs and the duck pond daily. With the snow came more mucking out and extra feed when animals were confined indoors.

I remember Dad battling against strong winds to push the milk churns up the long drive on a trolley. To be left on the stand by the entrance gate for collection. It was slightly uphill and hard work. Much easier on the return journey, being downhill and with the returned empty churns.

I remember a visiting fair, a very small fair by today's standards. But very exciting for us. I was standing in a queue for the Swing Boats; I must have been about fourteen at the time. An older, very attractive, boy from a neighbouring village was standing in front of me and I whispered to Ann Godfrey, "I wish I could go up with him!" He must have heard me for he turned and smiled, "Come on, then", he said taking my arm.

I stuttered and blushed with embarrassment, even more in the swing-boat. He swung me high and, on the downward sweep, my full skirt flared up – exposing thick, cotton, elasticised, regulation navy-blue school knickers! The style with a little pocket in front for a handkerchief! Battling with my skirt and trying to hold onto a rope of the swing

was pretty nigh impossible! The more agitated I became, the higher the boy swung the boat! I was near tears as I climbed out, and hoped I would never come face to face with the boy again.

The Carnival was another event we eagerly looked forward to. Weeks, sometimes months of planning tableaus and costumes. Many evenings of designing and sewing outfits, in secret of course, so others would not know what your character would be. Freda and Dorothy Davey's mother had a float and Ann was included on it for at least two years. One theme was 'The Parade of the Tin Soldiers', which must surely have been tiring for those having to stand to attention. Another theme was 'Somewhere over the Rainbow'. What a wonderful display of colour, all the costumes having been made of crepe paper. What luck that it didn't rain that year!

Margaret made a beautiful and very authentic Indian squaw with her long, glossy, black hair braided and interwinded with coloured ribbons, looking very straight and regal on Jackdaw. I dressed in a cowboy outfit as her partner. Dad produced a lovely Stetson from somewhere, and made a lanyard of thick white cord. I also had my holsters and mock pistols.

I don't know who won – it didn't matter. Our prize was in the fun of dressing up and entering in the spirit of the Carnival.

There were occasionally concerts and social evenings held in the rooms upstairs in The Angel. Dad got quite involved in the concerts, singing and telling jokes. I was so proud of his singing, he had a lovely baritone voice, but not overly impressed with his jokes – probably because we had to listen to them at home as he rehearsed on us!

There have been a few changes after fifty years that is to be expected, but much of the 'old Witheridge' is still there. And I hope it will stay that way!

Memories of Margaret Gillard (nee Baker) 1999

'Why do I have to go back?' (Jottings from a 1980's notebook)

Why do I have to go back? Why is that every so often the urge comes upon me to return to Witheridge – the ugly, North Devon village where I was born and brought up? Something in me changes as I near the village. There is an excitement, but also a feeling of inner peace. I have the feeling of 'shedding a load'. I don't know if it is just 'escapism' – the safety I feel of returning to my childhood.

So much I remember. It all comes flooding back as I tread familiar paths. The village has changed in many ways but I can still, almost instinctively, arrive at the places I see so often in my mind's eye. The trees, the stones, marks on the wall - they are still there. When I walk in the woods, I know exactly where the muddy paths will be, though goodness knows the path these days is ankle deep in mud where it used to be a firm, dirt path. I understand this is a cause for concern – the children ride their ponies through at a mad pace and churn it up. I rode through on my pony often enough – I don't remember doing any damage. Except, perhaps for the day I went galloping around what I thought to be a lovely field of grass, which later turned out to be a field of young corn! I well remember hiding when the farmer visited my father, on another matter, and complained bitterly to him about 'kids on their ponies'! I suppose as a country child, I should have known better but I suppose seeing things so often we didn't really observe them properly.

I was not a farmer's child. My father, whom I adored, was the local Blacksmith. His father had come from Torrington and gone to work as a Blacksmith in London. There he met my Grandmother. We were not a local family – in fact, I think we were always looked upon as being 'a bit different'. Grandpa and Grandma Baker came to Witheridge when my Uncle was about two years old and my father was six months old. Grandpa became the local Blacksmith and later took over The Angel Hotel.

There were seven children, Uncle Willie, the eldest, then my father, (Leslie) then five sisters, Hetty, Olive, Ruby, Stella and Cora. Cora died at the age of eighteen, but the rest grew up and married and all stayed near Witheridge. Father was the restless one, the 'madcap' of the family. He went off to America in the early 1920's and worked in the Ford factory in Detroit, which qualified him for ever after as, 'someone who knew

something about cars'! After a bout of pneumonia, he was sent home to England by the Doctor – the sea voyage being a form of convalescence. Whilst at home, he began to work with Grandpa, but he married my mother, she never returned to America.

We lived in 'May Cottage'. It belonged to Miss Whitfield who, with her family, ran the Bakery next door. My sister was born at The Butcher's Arms at Alswere. My Mother's parents lived there and Grandma Hill died, I believe, soon after Jose's birth. I was born at May Cottage some eleven years later. I was 'meant' to be a boy! Dad wanted a boy but had two girls and doted on us both. This 'baby who was a great disappointment to Mother', he spoiled completely. I was a disappointment because she had so hoped to give him a son after first having a girl. The District Nurse put me into a drawer whilst Mum wept. I never suffered for it. I grew up with so much love and happiness. My mother worked hard for all of us (and still does). Nothing was too much trouble and she was so unselfish. Dad could go anywhere and do anything and take me with him, which he most often did, and Mother would stay at home.

At May Cottage, I remember playing in the garden – as with most childhood memories it always seemed to be sunny. We had a canopy – that's what I always called it. A sort of canvas shelter. We played houses in it for hours. One of my earliest memories was of having a doll's pram. It was only very small, made of tin, but I loved it. At the time my mother had the local Schoolmaster lodging temporarily. One day, his wife and small daughter came to visit him and that was the day I had my pram. Mary was about my age so, of course, when it was decided to take a photograph of us both in the garden she wanted to hold the pram. Being a good hostess and trying to show me how to behave to visitors, I suppose Mother said "Let Mary hold the pram". I wasn't having any and the photograph we have today shows my face, I bitterly resented it! I believe it was about the same time, playing with Mary, whom I hated ever after, that a further disagreement arose. Mother was brushing the stairs at the time with a hard brush. I shall never forget racing up over the stairs on all fours, desperately trying to escape as my backside was beaten with the brush, all the way up! Children are notorious for letting down their parents when there are visitors around, and I was no exception. Mum had had enough!

May Cottage was thatched with a pretty garden, but it had none of the conveniences of modern houses. However, we were very happy and comfortable there, except when it rained too hard and the drain in the garden blocked then all the water would come in the front door. I must have been an awful nuisance to my parents. I used to just yell when this happened, whilst everyone else set to work as fast as they could to lift furniture and carpets. I know they all got pretty mad with me. I don't know what I thought was going to happen apart from everything getting wet!

Next to our cottage was the Bakery. Old Herbert Whitfield was the Baker. I used to go round into the bake-house and watch the bread being put into huge ovens whilst the fires were stoked with faggots of wood. I cannot describe the thrill I used to feel looking inside at the great fire. I watched them knead the dough, then I'd have a bun. Herbert always said, "Ave you got an 'appeny?" On Sunday, Mum carried the roast in the tine into the bake-house and the oven was filled with the Sunday dinners of half the village. We'd fetch it at 1.o'clock and it tasted good. A man who is related to the Whitfields runs the Bakery now. I believe he is a nephew. Of course, there are now modern ovens, mixers and everything run by electricity.

Across the road from the Bakery was Mr Buckingham's shop. Mr and Mrs Buckingham sold everything but most of all I remember buying Bull's Eye's – striped peppermint lumps from the big jar. It was fascinating to watch them cutting and weighing everything and putting it into bags. I don't think our health suffered at all, but it certainly wouldn't be allowed today. I think people must have been a lot cleaner a few years ago or, maybe we were more used to the dirt and germs!

Witheridge has one long main road right through the village. There are a few pretty houses but it is not full of Olde Worlde thatched cottages and pretty gardens – in fact, that is probably what it is – there are no garden on the roadside – May Cottage had one of the few gardens and that was not on the main road. I had never realised quite what it was until now that made the village so bare and bleak. How strange in the middle of the country, but maybe that was the reason – most people were too busy with the farms or their back vegetable gardens to be bothered with flowers.

One enters the village at the top of a hill then running down into the village comes a division of roads at Trafalgar Square. The main road continues on and another runs down to the left and they meet again at the Main Square on a short distance down the road. Between them they leave an Island shaped like a triangle. In the Trafalgar Square at an angle is the Baker's shop. Right through is one house width so that May Cottage had it' own back door on Fore Street and the front door and garden onto South Street. At the base of the triangle it becomes suddenly wider and fronting onto the large square is The Angel Hotel, plus one or two other houses. Around the corner – South Street was the Chemist's – a shop made from a room at the front of the house. Old Tom, as he was always called, never changed as far as I remember. He wore metal framed glasses on the end of his nose and, I swear was as blind as a bat. How he ever made up prescriptions without poisoning anyone, I'll never know!

In splendid isolation, in the middle of the Square is a cottage, which was the house of Millie Joe, as we called her. She was one of the teachers at the village school. Her husband, Joe, was a shoe mender I think – did bits of all sorts. I'm not sure of his actual occupation. He much enjoyed the bar of The Angel, which did not please his wife who was so prim and proper.

I started school as early as I possibly could. Miss Alford was the Infants Teacher – completely dedicated, no training or qualification. I can see here now riding her old bike in all weathers. She taught us though, and taught us well. I loved school but, unfortunately, as soon as I started I caught everything that was going, so spent more time at home than at school.

After Miss Alford, we moved up to Millie Joe. She made us work and I suffered agonies over the beastly sewing she made us do but to this day I remember the tips she gave us – something stuck!

Millie's classroom and the Headmaster's room were separated by a wooden partition, which could be removed. To go out to play, the girls could go through the Headmaster's room. One day I had a particularly annoying time with Millie and left through the partition door, and having closed it poked my tongue out as far as I could back through the window. Unfortunately, I had forgotten to look behind me and the headmaster was

watching. Imagine my embarrassment when I had to go back and apologise and also explain what I was apologising for! I had to be pretty careful, too, my parents were particularly friendly with the Headmaster and his family. I think that was why he was always hard on me.

I loved it when I went up into his class. He used to sit on his desk and read us marvellous stories – mostly I remember 'The Jungle Book' and 'Just So Stories'. Listening intently one day and fiddling with my handkerchief, I tied my ankles together. I cannot remember whether someone spoke to me or passed a note, but I know he jumped on me and told me to stand out in the aisle. This was practically impossible, as I was unable to untie the handkerchief. He became madder than ever when I hesitated. I was ordered to come out to the front. I hobbled out making the knot tighter and tighter whilst everyone began to giggle. I forgot exactly what happened after, but I know he boxed my ears and being unable to balance, I almost went through the glass cupboard in which he kept the books. I don't know who was the most worried. Looking back, I expect he had a few qualms but all was well. I daren't tell my parents! I often wonder if he did! It was a source of amazement to me that some children dared to tell their parents when they got into trouble at school.

We had one very large boy with a very large mother and I remember how we all sat with baited breath as she came to the door – which was in Millie Joe's room. The door was in two halves and normally only one half was used. She attempted to squeeze through this, but was unable to get in, so the headmaster was fetched and there was a terrible row and threats before us all as to what she would so if he touched her boy again. We all talked about it for days wondering what would happen – nothing did.

My Father worked in the Blacksmith's shop right next to the school. He was always whistling in fact he was always happy. I think I can only remember once that he was angry with me and it really frightened me. He was extremely popular and rode up and down the village on his bicycle – always whistling. Everyone loved to hear him and they often said they could tell what the time was when they heard Leslie. He worked hard and we always had enough money to be comfortable and to have and do things we wanted, but Dad would never have made a fortune. He spent his money and helped all the 'lame dogs' that came his way. His customers, of course were mainly farmers. Very few of them bothered much about paying their bills and he would never hurry them. Often jobs were done as a favour but Mum could never get anything done!

In the village lived an old man who could barely see. He sold 'Old Moore's Almanac's' on the streets of Exeter. I know I was amazed to see him there – I suppose he travelled by bus. He never seemed to have shaved, his head nodded to one side and he was tall and very thin. I always thought of him as the 'Noddy Man'. After my Father's death, we discovered that the old Noddy Man went to the local diary every day for a half a pint of milk – Father paid for it.

There was one young boy who spent a lot if time with my Father. He adored my Father – I suppose he talked to him and treated him kindly. My Mother kept turkeys and chickens behind the Blacksmith's shop. One day there were screams of "Les, Les! Help! Get back you buggers!" The boy was discovered surrounded by turkeys who all had

their wattles and feathers raised and were gobbling furiously. I think they were harmless but he had been teasing them and was convinced his end had come!

There was one very memorable occasion in my early years, when The Cossacks came to our village. I was mesmerised, with the other children and adults, I watched the dancers whirling and dancing in their elaborate costumes and high boots, to the strains of music, which was very strange to my ears. The Cossacks were the talk of the village for a long time to come and made a lasting impression on me.

Auntie Ruby and Uncle Bill Buchanan ran the Angle Hotel. 'The Big Room' was used for skittles, dinners, concerts, and whilst drives. Auntie Olive and Uncle Bill Vernon ran the Newsagents Business in the Square. Uncle Bill also managed the local branch of Lloyds Bank in a room in the house they owned, which was rented by the Bank. Mrs Culhene, helped by Betty Way ran the Post Office and Village Store. The Hill family had a Fish and Chip shop where we spent many happy hours – though when we were younger we often nipped around the corner to knock on Bess Crook's door, then run away and hide!

When I was really young, I can remember taking the Accumulator for the wireless to be charged. Buying milk straight from the Diary – even helping to deliver the milk, measuring it into jugs. Bert Westcott used to travel around to the farms in a pony and trap to collect the eggs. He was a very bad tempered old man but for some reason, he would allow me to go with him.

My earliest friend was Thelma Selley. I spent half my earliest years across the road from May Cottage in the Selley house. They had a farm and The Diary. I watched cream being scalded and separated so I know what 'real'; cream is! Thelma left Witheridge and has lived in Australia for many years, but we still keep in touch and I have also retained my friendship with Freda (her sister) and Peter Tout whom I visit when I am in Witheridge, usually to check on the family graves! Thelma and I spent a great deal of time in the Churchyard, and were particularly fascinated by a child's grave upon which was a posy of china flowers under a glass dome. I'm sure that I remember correctly – they were blue and white. I wonder if it is still there and if it would last long today!

Next to the Church was the Vicarage. I have a picture in my mind of a lovely large green lawn and huge trees. We would go across from the school during the War years to feed the rabbits kept in runs on the lawn. On one occasion, I had been lying on the grass and must have been on an ant's nest. When I stood up I was bitten all over my back and spent many uncomfortable hours – scratching! Sadly, the Vicarage is no longer. I don't know who occupies it or what it is used for.

Below the Church School was the School Garden. We all tended our plots and surprisingly I think I learned quite a bit about gardening from that experience, despite the worms stuffed down my back by the boys when Mr Dryer, (the Headmaster) wasn't looking. He also kept bees and we all helped. I must have been stung many times, as my Father also kept bees, so I was amazed to have a severe allergic reaction to a bee sting somewhere around the end of the 1970's, when I went into anaphylactic shock, and almost didn't survive to tell the tale!

Note: Since these jottings were penned my Mother Annie Baker has died.

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