

# ENTERTAINMENT

## Memoirs of how the villagers entertained themselves

### *Tape 1 -*

Concerts held in the school and pantomimes.

Games and pastimes of village children – mostly ball games for boys. Hoops, hopscotch, skipping and tops for girls.

Cubs, Scouts, Guides and Brownies. Mr Poupart Scout Master. Provided uniforms out of his own pocket.

Taught boy how to pack parcels, mend shoes and boxing to settle disputes.

Sunday School prizes/outings. Stiff competition for Bishops Prize.

Cinema - at Wallingford Corn Exchange.

Church focal point. Choir went to Old Rectory every Sunday afternoon for tea, and then to evensong. 40 - 50 in choir but no females.

### *Tape 2 -*

Annual Fair.

Wireless - Grandfather bought wireless about 1930 – before that it was a cats whisker.

Regal Cinema in Wallingford.

TV came about 1953

### *Tape 3 -*

Village pageant in 1951 – village girls sang the Watercress Songs. Held in the Manor Grounds.

Village Dances once a month – danced to records.

Cubs, Scouts and Guides – Guides Miss Jervis ran. She lived in the Manor and was very good to the girls.

Wireless – parents had crystal set.

Cinema – Regal at Wallingford. Another at Watlington, they took Kemp's bus.

Children played mostly in the street, hoops, tops and skipping. Roamed spinneys and lanes.

### *Tape 5 -*

**Annual fair** on Common, used to decorate the float for the Dairy.

**Cinema** - Used to visit the cinema at RAF Benson – too difficult to get to Wallingford. Camp cinema not officially open to the village, but they used it.

**TV** - Bought his first TV when he came to the village in 1960.

**Youth Club** – He ran the village Youth Club in the Rifle Range and then continued in the Village Hall when it was built. Helped to build and raise money for the village hall. The Rifle Range was a tin-roofed building with ladies and gents WC's between it and the Reading Room.

**Maypole dancing** at the School.

### *Tape 6 -*

**Village pageant in 1951** – son was 'younger' Duke of Suffolk – it was a beautiful day.

**Cubs, Scouts and Guides** – all children involved. Mr Poupart used to ask Scouts what they would like to do – they answered, "have a fry up". Mrs Edith Burgess took over Guides after Mrs Poupart.

**Wireless** – father would cry listening to news of the blitz.

**Cinema** - the children went to the camp cinema.

**TV** – didn't have until 1960's. Rector Kenneth Jenkins had one and they sometimes went to the Rectory to watch it.

#### *Tape 7 -*

**Golf Course** - There was a golf course on the Common before the War, the 9<sup>th</sup> hole is where the new trees were planted in 1995, the course was made by Lester Palmer, previous occupant of High House (now the Lee's).

#### *Tape 8 -*

**1953 Pageant** - Mother played in the 1953 pageant, the start of which was signalled from the top of the Manor to the Church tower where at once the bells started ringing.

**Dances** - Mother attended dances every Saturday night about 1922 which was very well attended and held at the School. Considered the best entertainment around. The school was quite a centre for entertainment, including concerts.

**Cubs, Scouts and Guides** all running very successfully in the Reading Room or in the Boys Club next to the existing Reading Room.

Seasonal games like hopscotch, conkers were played in the streets.

**Wireless** - Crystal sets came and they went to the cinema which was considered remarkable.

**TV** - The first TV belonged to Rev Jenkins. The Boat Race was the first programme she saw – the Rector invited lots of people to see it approx 1954. Later Fred Harwood got one and the villagers would gather to watch his set all sitting on wooden benches around a scrubbed table. The door was always open to anyone wanting to watch and they were most welcoming at Weasel Cottage. Home of Fred and Norah Harwood then at Levers Cottages.

#### *Tape 9 -*

**1953 Pageant** at the Manor – the Rev Jenkins and Norah Harwood were the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk. Kath Baker was the Princess Elizabeth, Fred Greenway was Henry VIII.

**Maypole dancing** and dancing in the Reading Room.

**Cinema** - Went by bicycle to cinema in Wallingford.

Miss Eaglebot of Hill House used to sing "Drink to me only" at most concerts much to the annoyance of some people.

#### *Tape 10 -*

**1953 Pageant** - Took part in the 1953 pageant – she sang Greensleeves and The Spring is Coming. Remembers that there were not enough people to play the part of the nuns so got a man up to play the part. He recited a naughty poem not realising that he was the only man present. This shocked the ladies. The Shepherds Hut had the bar for the event in the Rifle Range.

**Sunday School** collected stamps for attendance. When book full received prayer book. All three sons went there.

**Dances** were held in the Old Reading Room, also went to a fancy dress dance at the school, she went as a watercress seller. There is an old London cry about the watercress. Sometimes she played the piano for the dances.

Was a member of the **Brownies, Guides and Rangers** – she also played the piano for these organisations. Miss Quinn and Edie Burgess and Mrs Bennett were the Guiders.

Played with spinning tops, hoops, the better off children had wooden ones. Made daisy chains on the Common.

Was a member of the **Ewelme Choral Society** which practised in the Reading Room. Her father had a wireless – the 210 one with a horn one of the first in the village.

**TV** - They had TV in 1948.

Her father used to read Titbits magazine and they had the Berks & Oxon paper delivered on a Friday. Fred Jenkins was the distributor of the newspapers and had total control of it.

Mrs Strickland held Whist Drives in the Reading Room on Tuesdays – the money raised was used for an outing to Whipsnade Zoo and similar places. She lived in the cottage now called Cherry Cottage.

### *Tape 11 -*

Doesn't remember date of pageant in 1953 but might have been the pageant when all the village had tea in the barn. There were many barrels of beer and the carter got very drunk.

Young people made their own entertainment. People went to the Common and Bill and Mr Green used to snare rabbits. Would go with rabbit nets 200 yards long. Three people would go at 1 or 2 am. The net would be staked across the field and one of them would chase the rabbits into the net. 20-30 caught at a time. A rabbit would fetch 8d to 1/- and the rag and bone man – Raggie Davis from Green Lane would buy the skins for 2d a skin. He would pay 1/2d for a jam jar. As a boy Bill used to go to Green Lane where the ricks were and would go ratting in the ricks.

When he came to Ewelme in 1952 there was no electricity at Fords Farm, no television. Some people had crystal sets but he didn't.

### *Tape 12 -*

Son Richard and Richard Winfield played football and when at prep school took Richard Winfield who was picked out.

No televisions so had to organise entertainment themselves. Went to football club, **Young Mens Club**, guides etc. The population was fairly static. Everybody knew everybody – so could tell parents if child was naughty. Now by the time you think you know everybody in Chaucer Court they've moved – It's a constantly changing population. It was much more united.

Sir Donald Somervell lived at the Old Rectory and coming from Benson the difference was marked. There was no jealousy, the church was dominant as there was nowhere to go on Sundays. They didn't have a car (came in 1946) because there was no petrol, there were no cars.

There was mutual respect. Because everyone now uses Christian names and Mrs Rowse asked her friends to use hers, but they said they couldn't, but they knew she was a friend and if they wanted anything they would come to her.

Different atmosphere – security of position. When they came to the village they were shown to the Rowse's pew in church. Very rural and everyone was helpful.

Norah Harwood lived opposite and when Mr Rowse was ill people helped. Everyone was much poorer –no one is really poor today.

They had only just arrived for the **Pageant (1951)**. Men grew beards. Everyone came for tea at once. Tim Buswell pulled the flex out and didn't put it back so there was no hot water. There was the same number as now for tea. It was in summer in the grounds of the Manor. The narrator sat in the porch. A dreadful debacle, there was no hot water.

At one fete Mrs Strickland's jellies melted. Her pitch was in a very hot position. She had decided where she was going to be, and as it turned out to be a very hot day her jellies melted. This was in the 1950's.

**Fete** - Always had a fete, run by the Church. Made money one fete for the roof - £300. Started church restoration fund. When Mr Rowse stopped being treasurer, they spent the money. For a while they couldn't be bothered to have a fete as they had some money. When Mr Rowse was Chairman of the Village Hall he suggested running fete with each village organisation getting something. Now it alternates. When David Simmonds came they spent money and fetes altered as nothing to keep people there. Hired pipers etc. Previously fetes had been in gardens, the Manor one year, the Old Rectory the next. Because people didn't have cars, buses were organised. Yellow book of information of previous fetes. Came from Chinnor etc.

One year they knocked one of the windows out at the Manor, so they always had insurance since.

#### *Tape 14 -*

**Barn Dance** - In 1960's there was a barn dance in the tithe barn next to Chaucer Court – thinks it was a church event and most of the village went.

Barbara Blakeley started a **Ranger Group** and assisted in organisation of the Brownies and Girl Guides with Nora Medley and Barbara Rowse.

Fred Greenway was renowned for 'pulling legs' of the village children. He would sit in front of the Post Office dressed as a monk telling stories. Rumour has it that the Kings Pool story and the Elizabeth I story originates from Fred. He would tell the children that the stone outside the school on the right was a sacrificial stone and when it rained it would run with blood. In the mid 1960's Fred lived in one of the Lower End cottages and died around 1970.

**Cinema** - Barrie went to the Regal cinema in Wallingford and had no television out of choice.

#### *Tape 15 -*

**550 Anniversary of School** - Remembers the 550 years of the Schools foundation. That was a big event. They got an actress to play Duchess Alice. A week of medieval exhibitions. George Cannon dressed up as a monk. The children tried their hands at ancient crafts. The children recorded this on their computers.

**Village Fete** – 30 years ago it was held in the grounds of the Old Rectory (Lady Hambleton's home) It was a charming, almost pre-war atmosphere. Same sort of stalls as now but scattered round the garden. It was held in the Manor's garden one year (1961?) the year Cynthia Harnett published her book 'The Writing on the Hearth' and she signed copies of it. Fete much more intimate in those days. Now it is too big.

**Village dances** – remembers a harvest dance in Chamberlains beautiful tithe barn off Chaucer Court. It was like a church inside and we sat on hay bales and had a fiddle band.

**Scouts and Guides** – I ran the Ranger Guides and a Group of Ewelme and Benson girls in the 1970's. We visited ballets, fire stations, went to Watlington Hill to watch a dawn. Decorated someone's granny's house.

Games and pastimes – Jennefer Miners and her friends used to play hockey, rounders or cricket in the High Street – no traffic.

**Playgroup** – I helped set it up in the early 1970's with Jill Bell on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. But when it was set up many of the established villagers wouldn't use it, it was frowned on. They wanted to keep their children at home with them. The outlying farmers sent their children, Susan Passmore, Julie Davey were first 2 children in the playgroup. It had no equipment, just wooden boards. Set up in the Reading Room.

#### *Tape 16 -*

**Pageant 1951** – She was Princess Elizabeth and had to use a swing. Heavy encrusted dress and Juliet cap, had hair dyed ginger. A nice day.

**Annual Fair at Wallingford** – held on Bull Ground as now.

**Outings** – village used to run a coach to the seaside once a year. Mrs Strickland organised that in early 50's. The choir had a weeks stay in Skegness or Clacton Butlins each year. It's where she met husband Richard. Church paid some and parents paid some, Mrs Jenkins organised it.

**Village Dances** – finished off the Fete with a Dance. Went to RAF Benson for dances or the Working Men's Club in Nettlebed. Norah Harwood and husband used to give dancing lessons in the Reading Room.

**Concerts** - Concerts held in the Rifle Range. Fred Greenway organised them, local talent, shows and plays – everyone did their party piece – held on a regular basis.

Games – hoptscotch, skipping rounders on the Common.

**Cinema held in Reading Room.** Hired old B films on a Saturday. Reasonably well attended. Mrs Cauldwell took her to Wallingford to the cinema. The bus used to wait for the cinema audience if it was a long film. Also, RAF Benson had a cinema.

**TV** - Watched the Coronation on TV at Norah Harwood's house.

**Fete** - Had a huge fancy dress entry at the Fete.

They joined in anything going on providing it was for youngsters. Village people far more involved than they are now. Youngsters getting up to mischief – would still meet at the Kings Pool under the road in the pipe. But wouldn't get up to mischief, the headmaster always knew about it the next day. There was a village policeman with a bike PC Dire (Dyre) lived by the London Road Inn.

#### *Tape 17 –*

**Guides and Scouts** - still going when he arrived (1970). Not any Scouts, but Cubs, Guides and Rangers. Mrs Vowles [Bowles] had a lot to do with Rangers. Mrs Eustace used to help her. She lived opposite the Shepherds Hut. Flourished at the time. Brownies here as well.

**Annual Fete** held in grounds of the Old Rectory. One was to celebrate the completion of the renovation of the almshouses as Lady Hambleton was a trustee. There was a great 'do' held in the Old Rectory and people who had scholarships through the Trustees were invited, all kinds of people connected with almshouses too, and it was a lovely place to hold a fete. Had a feeling of belonging to the place.

#### *Tape 18 –*

**Cinema** - Went to cinema for the first time during the war with George Foster. He was more interested in pubs. Went to Watlington cinema more – cycled there. He and the Munday brothers and John Snell, Sir Donald's gardener.

#### *Tape 19 –*

**Fair** - took place on the green on Burrows Hill.

**Dances** - Mr Herman ran dances. His first wife died during one of the dances. She went aged 15, used to dance the Lancers.

**Scouts** – before he married - Mr Poupart took the Scouts.

**Cinema** - Walked to Watlington for the cinema and caught a bus back run by Kemps, now Chiltern Queens. Wallingford Cinema in the Corn Exchange.

**TV** - Had first TV in Ewelme, also Reg Winfield, Nell Smith and Mr Jenkins 9 inch screen and terrible reception, very snowy. Someone local tweaked aerial and changed them to Birmingham channel. Couldn't believe different in reception. Always had a wireless.

**Shows** - Fred played football in Reading. Caught train to Reading, stayed on and went to a show. Caught midnight bunk [train] and cycled from Wallingford. The bunk was the train used by working men on shift. Acetylene lamps on bikes lit way home. Went to a café in Reading to eat. Saw Max Bygraves on his first visit to Reading. [Max Bygraves' wife was a WAAF at RAF Benson during the War and drank pints at the Hut].

#### *Tape 20 -*

**Fete** - Remembers village fete when it was in The Manor Gardens when a decreasing number of sisters lived there. Fete was a proper village fete attended mainly by people from local villages.

#### *Tape 22 -*

**The pageant of 1953.** The Rector was instrumental in getting it going – Rev Jenkins.

**The annual fair** - was held near the Shepherd's Hut.

**Dances** - She attended village dances when she was at home, going with her brothers. She also attended concerts at the school, done by the school.

**Guide** meetings were held in the Reading Room run by Miss Jervis. She was a Russian. Who came as a companion to the three Miss Quin's, who rented the Manor. Miss Orpwood who lived at what is now the Browne's house (Lower Farm) was Brown Owl. She was the aunt of Brian Orpwood. There were three sixes in the pack. Guides was once a week, and they went to camps, had barbecues. They only went to Wallingford when it was really necessary.

**Travelling Players** – plays put on now and again and very good too. Remembers crying her eyes out in "East Lynne".

#### *Tape 23 -*

**Pageant – not 1953 – in 1951** – Took part in three scenes. Held in Manor Gardens. Covered 2 days Friday and Saturday July 1951. Rector organised it.

Sunday School – attended Sunday afternoon. Miss Quin of the Manor used to take it.

**Village Dances** - Attended Village Dances in the village hall before the war. One of the older people played the piano. Waltz and Foxtrot. Taught to dance by the schoolmaster's wife – Mrs Herman. He was in both Cubs and Scouts. Mr Poupart ran it. Started it in 1921 and died in 1953. They went camping.

**Wireless** – can remember getting a crystal set. His father was very taken up with his and took it up to his bedroom.

**Cinema** - Cycled to cinema in Wallingford.

**TV** - The family got a TV for the Coronation in 1953.

#### *Tape 24 -*

**Games** – football and cricket in the little field – hoops and tops with whips. In the war the Common was taken over for the war effort and Mr Chamberlain ploughed it up to plant potatoes. The schoolchildren helped lift the potatoes and afterward the villagers had the right to glean. He remembers a huge clump of potatoes in the family's back garden (Council House in Green Lane). Games and pastimes mostly made up by the local people themselves. Used to make dens in the woods and form gangs. They would 'borrow' ink from the school and make a mark with their palms on paper – the Black Hand Gang. Brother Leonard was the leader. They made bows and arrows and practised on the marshy land to the west of the Shepherds Hut.

**Dances** – when George Cannon came to Ewelme School 1970 he introduced square and barn dancing. His children were at the school at the time and he and his wife would attend to take advantage of the tuition. Danced to a record player. Always been a good dancer as a child a Bidy O'Sullivan put on a show (Brer

Rabbit or the Mad Hatter's Tea party) in which he participated, and Amy Strevens (Reeves) can still sing 'Silver Wings in the Moonlight'.

**Wireless** - Remembers his father bringing a radio home and a battery and accumulator - a Mr Herbert Harris was the only man who charged batteries - 4 1/2d One would be being charged and the other at home working. Used to listen to the BBC - music etc. All had to sit quietly, especially as the battery became weaker.

**TV** - He married in 1955 and bought a 14 inch TV. After 3 months gave it to his mother and that was the first time she had seen it.

**Cinema** - Watlington or Wallingford. Wallingford was more up to date and not so cosy. In their early teens the children preferred Watlington which had a balcony and they used to do their 'courting'. On many occasions the lights would come up unexpectedly and catch them out. The Three Tuns at Watlington only pub to serve young boys as long as they stood out the back - ie a pint of shandy. Used Kemps buses to get to Watlington.

#### *Tape 26 -*

**TV Production of 'Paradise Postponed'** - TV Company took over the village for this and many villagers were extras. Notices asked for volunteers. Paid well and the commissary vans were positioned in the school yard. Marvellous food. Peter Egan and Michael Hordern were charming and used to drink in the Greyhound where one of her boys was serving. She had an extra part in the choir - the company provided new gowns which the choir still use. RAF Benson asked not to fly when shooting in progress. Here for many weeks, but people began to resent it as some got more work (money) than others.

#### *Tape 27 -*

**Dancing** - Most entertainment taken outside the village. Ballroom dancing in Oxford. Travelled by bus, last bus 10.0 too early in the evening. Daughter went mostly to friends in Benson - Benson is more tailored to needs of young people now - Farmers Man Inn etc. Buses still a problem. There is nothing for the youths to do in Ewelme today. However, she would still like to settle here rather than Didcot etc. Appreciates the peaceful surroundings and the countryside. She was also glad she managed to move back.

**Cinema** - Went to Wallingford or on the camp. Cycled. Remembers listening to the radio a lot, only had TV in the late 50s.

**Paradise Postponed** - Daughter in the choir for that. Given costumes to wear and put in the congregation. Fish and chip van parked outside. Paid about £20 for two days. Mrs Renshaw, the vicars wife, organised the TV choir. Had mainly children in the congregation, wearing hats but with their backs to the cameras to disguise their age.

**Plays** - She remembers being involved in a play with the vicars wife Mrs Thomas. Held in the Manor grounds called the Princess and the Woodcutter. She was the woodcutter, the princess played by ? Cox, the sister of Graham Cox the landlord of the Greyhound.

**Village Fete** - One year the actor (Bob Arnold?) who played John Tregorran from the Archers opened it. On another occasion the singer Barbara Dixon. Remembers fancy dress competitions at the fete.

**Dances** - Remembers country dancing being held in the school.

The girls to Reading or Oxford clubbing. Sometimes to Rivers although it's not much good. Trouble is transport and relying on parents. Used the cinema on the camp before security clamped down. Friday nights, Saturday morning for kids, and Sunday nights. Stopped showing before late 1960's.

#### *Tape 28 -*

He remembers live groups playing in the Rifle Range before it was pulled down. Packed out on a Friday and Saturday night to the sound of John Dempster who used to play regularly there. Three lads the same age had a group in RAF Benson and once a month played at the village hall. The RAF Station was full in those days and the villagers mixed with them. Buckets hung from the roof because it leaked. Dances and Youth Clubs.

He had his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday there. Overall, he said there weren't many boys of his age in the village, he thinks only three.

### **Tape 29 -**

Went up woods climbing trees, making camps in Eyres Shaw. Not a lot of children his age. Hung around with brother's friends, usually 3 + years older. Mostly friends from Chaucer Court. (ie All newcomers). Little mixing with village children as there were few his age. Only one child his age in village. After school it was children in immediate locality. No divide between incomers' children and local children at that age.

Holidays and weekends went into surrounding countryside to play. Took bikes to Swyncombe Woods. Parents didn't worry about personal safety, could be out all day with no worries. Played on the dump by B4009. Stubble fights - grabbing lumps of stubble and earth out of ground and using it as ammunition to throw. Didn't help formally with harvest. Remembers Harvest suppers held in flint barn off Chaucer Court. Played in barns - flint and wooden. A couple had grain silos, most had just junk dumped. Derelict buildings. Did no harm. In woods played 'Mop Mop', Kick the Can. 'Mop Mop' - Made someone 'it', the rest went to hide and had to make it back to a point (usually a tree) and not be caught by 'it'. Cannot remember how 'it' was picked. Cowboys and Indians, Army games etc. Space games came in later. Star Wars film influenced that. Moved on to structured games involving sports ie football. Felt he was not good enough to join village team games. Played informal football on school fields with jumpers for goals. Playtimes extended. Did not play cricket.

Freedom played around with no problems. Mother didn't worry. Had other activities outside the village. Canoeing on Thames at Henley. Dinghy (2 crew) sailing at Goring (parents took other children from village along as well).

About 1980 to 1985 - Leisure pursuits in village at that time? Nothing. Read a lot. Entertainment for young people poor. Was a Youth Club and sitting in bus shelter. Had to be in with the 'In Crowd' to do that. Mainly village children (not incomers). Only went to Youth Club very few times. Didn't belong to sports teams.

**Paradise Postponed Filming** - In summer of 1985. He was an extra and earned £25 a day and as much as he could eat. Trucks and caravans in school playground. Seemed to be for months. Took over village. April Thompson in charge of recruiting local extras. Could be couple of hours to a whole day. Played crowd scenes and church choir scene. Had to walk past leading lady coming out of church in one scene. Filming affected whole village, would shut off roads etc. Pubs benefited. Talked to Michael Hordern, Peter Egan. Cast parked Limousines in Church Farm [Leavers Farm] yard. Didn't have makeup just clothes provided. Racks in vans. John Mortimer here quite a lot. One day they lost a whole days shoot because a Meteor flew over (from Chalgrove Field), but they did not realise a Meteor was totally 'in time' with the series.

### **Tape 30-**

Children played with whipping tops - and bowling hoops which were wooden and could be bought in the village shop. Some of the luckier boys had fathers who made iron hoops - probably discarded cart wheel rims. The stick to run that was 12 to 15 inches long with a little hook at the end of it so that it could be stopped quickly.

### **Tape 31 -Interviewed by George Cannon**

Did you see the news yesterday about children being encouraged to skip in school these days?

*Yes, We always used to skip up to school.*

What other games did you play

*Games? - We used to have hoops as well to take to school.*

Hoops made by Mr Godden?

*No that was hoops for cart wheels - they were steel rings.*

So you didn't use those.

*No we girls had wooden the boys had steel. We were always running after one another. Got into trouble when they washed the sheep on the corner because we used to stay and watch them washing sheep and we were late to school.*

### **Tape 32 -**

**Concerts** - During the war I don't remember amusement of being particularly significant part of the life for a while. Fred Greenway began to organise evenings of entertainment here in the village hall. Remember Wg



Cdr Hussey singing and playing his banjo - a good evening - like a Victorian entertainment. The village cricket and football teams continued in a modified form - not as active as pre-war but it picked up.

Certainly played war games. Remember dressing ourselves in old clothes and mimic military uniform and go to the fields and pretend to be involved in battles. Remember a boy called Leonard Ivert whose father was a Sqdn Ldr at RAF Benson. We were playing near Elliotts Field and Fords Farm crawling around with broomsticks as rifles I suspect, Leonard lived at Easington and cycled across here to play war games during the summer holidays. Remember anguished cry – Quixley, the games up I'm caught on the barbed wire. Thought he would get a good hiding for getting his clothes torn.

### *Tape 33 -*

**Maypole Dancing** - RQ – The maypole dance was first revived in 1935 in preparation for the Silver Jubilee celebration and I think it was found stored in one of the village barns. I think in Fords Farm. They spent some time restoring it and Miss Walker got hold of books on Maypole dancing to discover how to dance it.

**Wireless** - Mr Heather used to re-charge the accumulator batteries for the wireless.

Remembers coming down Days Lane on a pram wheel truck of Dennis Belcher's facing backwards - Dennis was steering. My job was to put heels on the ground to slow us down. Well coming down Days Lane a sharp right hand turn at the bottom, before we got to that point Dennis tried to turn to the right, there was a huge ditch and gully under the road, and the truck went out of control. We crashed.

I remember on the common was good for tobogganing we used to come down. The people who lived next to the Atlanta garage - they had a piece of corrugated tin turned up at the front and the one in front had stopped and they went over the top with the corrugated tin.

We had steel runners on the better ones, idea was to ice it up to make it slide faster. Was the owner Jack Rowley? My father had been a schoolmaster for 22/23 years and served in India between 1906 and 1911 and had taught Jack Rowley's father in the army and Jack Rowley in the army school in India before the family found their way to Beggarbush Hill. So my father actually taught, grandfather, father and son - all three generations.

### *Tape 35 -*

**Scouts** - Mr Poupart ran the Scouts and every year took the boys to Wallingford for a picture show and to their house to tea. They walked in and back and this way they saw all the film. If they went on the bus it was unusual to see the end of any film.

### *Tape 38 -*

**Jubilee Disaster 1977** –Bill Edwards donated a bullock for spit roasting an Aberdeen Angus Cross about 450 kilos. Carefully kept and fattened up for the celebration. The event was mismanaged by the people cooking it as they kept its hide on. They said they cooked beef like that in Germany. At the end of the day it went bad on them and the villagers had to eat corned beef instead.

### *Tape 41 -*

**Cinema**– Met future wife about 1944 in Watlington where there was a cinema The Electra in the High Street opposite Barley Mow,[now a house] near where the Watlington Memorial Club is now

### *File 44 -*

At the back of the new churchyard is Mr Orpwood's field where we used to spend many happy hours playing football and cricket in the 1950's – my Uncle Bill played in goal here in 1906!

### *File 46 -*

**Television** - In the early 1950's televisions were expensive and very few people owned one. Anyway it was to my good luck that Mrs Alice Harwood who lived further down the High Street owned one. One day when she was walking back from work and I was sitting on the wall outside the Greyhound Inn she invited me to come and watch her television. This became a regular arrangements and I would enjoy from 17:00 to 18:00

such programmes as “The Lone Ranger”, “Whirly Birds”, “Rin Tin Tin” and “The Cisco Kid”. It became easy to recognise TV set owners by the aerial mounted on the chimney. Gradually more and more people had television. . Because we all now had television, we would be concerned if the [Church] Sunday evening service was likely to overrun past 19:00. The additional time to change and run home could make us late for choice programmes: Sea Hunt and the London Palladium. This was in the period of the Beatles, the Bachelors, Jimmy Tarbuck, Brenda Lee, etc. And for Bruce Forsythe’s Beat the Clock – which led to all his Television Game Shows. Mr and Mrs Langsley (2 Martyns Way) would invite Horace Hedges up to watch television on some evenings - the Langsley sons Don and ?? were also Farm workers. I would sometimes go along with him on Fridays and remember seeing programmes such as Emergency Ward Ten (can anyone remember Jill Browne and Charles Tingwell) and Michael Miles in a Game show with Box Numbers (have forgotten the name of the show).

**Ewelme Fetes** - were always well supported by village folk - Bowling for the Pig was incredibly popular. This was a cross between ten pin bowling and skittles. The skittles (9 or 10 ?) widely spaced for difficulty - top scores were incredibly rare. As youngsters we would sit on the straw bails which half enclosed around the skittles ready to return the balls and reset the skittles. There would hardly be a gap between participants. I don't know what the winners did with the Pig.

The Fete in Lord Somervell’s Garden (The Old Rectory) was opened by the very shapely actress known as Sabrina - she was very attractive - I would estimate this took place around 1953-54. Other venues for Fetes were, Mr and Mrs Rowse’s Gardens [Saffron House] and the Manor.

**Cinema** - In the 50's and 60's the ASTRA cinema at RAF Benson was used by village folk - when still quite young and small enough James Busby used to take us there riding cross bar on his cycle - it was much cheaper than the Wallingford Cinema and more convenient in the evenings.

**Tree Climbing and the ‘Round Table’** - As youngsters we would climb the easier, and then progress up to the most difficult trees. Days Lane was the favourite area for this, as it was close to our homes. At the top of Days Lane on the bend is an oak tree we called the Round Table. Once able to climb this very broad tree, several of us could sit together in a circle as if around a table. The view overlooked much of that end of the village, though subsequently Dutch Elm tree disease took away many of the elm trees which lined the Lane, including those which previously blocked the view to the School and Church.

**Village Stream** - One evening I watched as friends were catching trout from the stream immediately across from the Shepherds Hut. They were using a technique of probing under the bank edges, which caused the fish to swim out rapidly and into their nets. To my amazement over 24 trout were caught in a very short space of time, and then released, unharmed. Trout were a common sight at the Post Office end of the village particularly under the bridge entrance to the Manor, though until then I did not realise there were so many. A large variety of small fish could also be caught including sticklebacks. On one occasion whilst looking for fish under the Bridge by Mrs Poupart’s Chapel [now the site of Suffolk House] I saw what I believe to be an otter, it swam rapidly downstream and out of sight.

**Pram Carts** - Many of my friends, notably from the Green Lane end of the village, had small trucks or “carts”. These were assembled using the front and rear wheels/axles from the large prams of the early 1950’s era, attached to a wooden base plank steered by a pivoting front cross plank with wheels. Wooden sides were attached to the base plank, which formed the seat. Improvisation was very much the order of the day. Some (most) of these trucks were bodged, it wasn’t unusual for wheels to fall off and wood splinters were a common problem. Today youngsters have the much safer plastic moulded variety, and, more importantly, do not venture out onto the roads, which were very quiet in the early 1950’s, as we did.

#### **File 49 -**

Although probably no record exists, the BBC came to the school and filmed an item which included one or two classroom shots and a studio interview with Miss Walker. I can't remember what the item was about, but Miss Walker was impressed with the BBC's efficiency and timing and suggested how we might benefit by applying the same attitude.

Village Fete Sabrina opened - I also remember a village fete being held in the grounds of a house just to the right of the school (looking from Rabbits Hill). The fete was opened by Sabrina, a bosomy, blonde young lady who had recently been discovered by Arthur Askey. I remember trying to impress (although I didn't know why) as a 'B' member of the Ewelme School Gymnastic team. We had to dive through paper covered hoops held on the vaulting horse and land on coconut mats. In my enthusiasm, I flew beyond the coconut mat and landed in the 'Bowl for a Pig' skittle alley amidst much squealing (me AND the piglet!).

### **Interview 52 -**

Village life was busy and we all joined in. There were Magic Lantern shows in the Village Hall. In the summer, I was a fat little fairy in the production put on in the Manor House farm garden of 'A Midsummer Nights Dream'. Dad had become involved with the cricket and football teams and mum was recruited to help with making the tea during the summer and hot suppers in the winter. Most of my friends and I were in the church choir. The vicar had been a Padre in the RAF. He arranged lots of social outings for us – picnics and parties. We had a reputation as a good choir and were often invited to sing in neighbouring churches.

At weekends and holidays, we would be away all day playing quite far away from home. Our mothers would make us a sandwich and give us a small bottle of lemonade, water or milk. We didn't have any bicycles, just walked. How wonderful if children could be as free in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Interview 53 -**

I loved Ewelme village with its gardens full of pansies, polyanthus and sweet Williams and the watercress beds where we watched and played with tiny golden frogs, and the mysterious, to me, almshouses where some of my friends lived – Pat and Pete Harwood and Hazel Brooks. No traffic but many fields, flowers, tumbledown trees with strange fungi growing in their hollow depths, and a general feeling of safety. In my memory it was a paradise for children and nowhere quite matched up to it after that. In the summer we loved to play in the field opposite the school, making daisy chains and having races

### **File 56 -**

We made our own, and hopefully did not get caught by the local policeman.

### **File 72 -**

In Green Lane the same row of cottages were the Hutchins family, their daughter was a similar age to us boys. They were the first family that I knew of, to have a TV. Their front room was like a cinema on certain evenings of the week, when all us kids sat on the floor to watch 'Boots and Saddles', followed by 'Popeye'. Mr Hutchins would come in from work and his words were always the same, "Get those kids out, I want my tea." Mrs Hutchins was a diamond in more than one sense, firstly she was always kind to us children, certainly by letting us watch the TV, and secondly, Dymond was her maiden name, as she the daughter of the family that ran the Lamb public house, it was demolished when the runway was built.

The council rubbish tip at Rumbolds, now the Hazel and Jeffries site, was a magnet for us kids. The remains of an old gravel pit, it was the perfect playground. We would find old motorbikes that had no engine but two good wheels and get them to the top of a hill before piling on, to ride it down the slopes for as long as gravity would take it. Another favourite was to get an empty metal drum and get a good fire going in it before scouring the tip for old aerosol cans and light bulbs, these we would toss into the by now red hot drum and wait for the explosions as the aerosols went soaring into the sky. Occasionally someone may appear and chase us off but not often. There once was a gentleman of the highway or tramp if you prefer, who set up camp there. He had a couple of chairs and a standard lamp as decor and as there was no permanent management of the tip, he was making pocket money by charging the casual dumpers a fee to drop their rubbish. The proceeds of this scam was spent on his evenings in the Shepherds Hut. It was quite a while before he got moved on, but one had to admire his enterprise

At fourteen I was old enough to join the Ewelme youth club. Table tennis, snooker and music, a Mrs Hill? from High House ran the club with help from Tony Cherry and Rose if I remember correctly. I wasn't allowed to stay till the end, it was a 9.00pm curfew for me to start with. At sixteen, the youth club at RAF Benson and the 'Barracuda' youth club in Wallingford were the places to be. Eighteen and the local pubs beckoned, I played in dart teams for the Skinny Dog (the Greyhound) and the London Road Inn. The

Shepherds Hut was only visited on away matches, for obvious reasons! The Ewelme youth club was held in the old Rifle Range, it still had the sand bank at the end of the building, which would have been the backstop for the bullets fired during practice. I think this building may have been HQ for the wartime Home Guard.