

# AGRICULTURE

## Memoirs of Farming and the Countryside

### *Tape 1 -*

Beginning of mechanisation brought about the changes and destroyed the country villages from places where people lived and worked to places where people just live and commute to work.

### *Tape 2 -*

Disappearance of hedgerows – notice many have gone.

Dutch elm disease – there was a line of elms along bridleway to the west of Martyns Way.

Barn conversions – North/South barn used for storing grain. Back of Lower Farm was a rickyard.

### *Tape 3 -*

**Eyres Farm** - Remembers farm horses stabled in farm by Shepherd's Hut (car park now) and Orpwood's horses turned out in Horse Ground (now Martyns Way site)

Used hedges for blackberries and wood.

Remembers elms to the north and west of Martyns Way.

### *Tape 5 -*

**Allotments** – these belonged to the Council but rented out to villagers on the village side of the stream, those on the other side were worked by both the villagers and the RAF. This sometimes resulted in problems when the RAF neglected theirs due to postings etc. Harry Keene dug the piece next to the bridge and made a nice garden there. He had to move when the owner of the watercress beds evicted him.

### *Tape 6 -*

Beginning of mechanisation they lost the horses on the land – her father worked for Bill Edwards, shoeing farm horses, mending machinery etc.

Farmers – Cooks had a family of 10 children in Cottesmore Lane. Mr Medley farmed there too.

### *Tape 10 -*

**Eyres Farm** - Steam tractors on the Orpwood's Farm. Eyres Farm opposite the Hut. Mr Lawrence was in charge of the horses along with Percy Tuckwell. Agricultural cottages opposite the Hut, removed when airfield was built she thinks. Now the Hut's carpark.

She has a photograph of Raymond Lawrence, who looked after Orpwood's horses, standing with his bike at the front of the row of cottages pulled down to make way for the runway, near the Shepherds Hut.

**The Manor** – The Misses Quinn and Miss Jervis lived at the Manor and had a herd of Jersey cows looked after by a cowman called Albert who lived at the Manor Cottage. The cows had bells on their necks, nice to listen to as they drank at the pond and went to the Common. Miss Jervis looked after the Misses Quinn.

Harry Keene's father who took the cows to the pond from the common - used to have his favourite chair in the Shepherds Hut to the side of the fire. He eventually wore two indents in the wooden floor where his heels rested!

**Lower Farm** - She used to love horses and would lead the Orpwood's farm horses at harvest time. Stables in the Cart Shed by the Hyde. Earned 5/- a week in holiday time. Led them with their loads to Lower Farm.

**Church Farm** - About 1959 Mr Castle, a Pole, bought Orpwood's Farms and stopped the players on his fields. Lived at Church Farm. Mrs Castle a nice woman who had lots of horses and built stables at Church Farm. Bought them from Stowe Fair. Held riding holidays – she rode with her.

Has vivid memories of steam tractors on the Orpwood's Farm –

She used to love horses and would lead the Orpwood farm horses at harvest time. Stables in the Cart Shed near the Hyde. Earned 5/- a week in holidays leading the hay carts with their loads to Lower Farm.

### *Tape 11 –*

**Fords Farm** - Eight horses and 2 ponies kept on Ford's Farm. Ford's Farm employed 4 local worker and casual labour came from Wallingford. They would walk as they couldn't afford bicycles. To help out at certain time of the year they had steam tackle for ploughing. One person had to cart water all day and one person cart coal. Used water from sheep brook. Had to pay so much per acre for steam tackle. Wilders had 6 sets of steam engines. 1947 was the last time that was used in Ewelme. Ford's farm had own steam engine for threshing. Hired steam tackle for ploughing.

At the bus stop there used to be steps. A water barrel was kept there for farmers to use for their animals. Known as Sheeps Brook.

Had a reaper known as a sailor boy – a mowing machine with 4 sails. It cut a roadway round the field and then the corn cut with a sickle. Nothing was wasted. Local women would glean – pick up the broken ears of corn to feed the chickens. This finished in 1930's. Extra farm workers had own live-in vans. The two engine drivers slept in them.

**Ewelme Park** - Three wealthy families in the area – the Herrits, they were bankers. Land extended as far as Grundons.

**Ewelme Down House** – built in 1903. Rented Warren Farm for 3/6d per acre from Herrits. No artificial chemicals used because of the chalk, so if there was a dry year there was no pasture.

**Warren's Farm** was rented for 36 years. It was near Potters Farm, a track to the left which dropped down into a warren. Mr and Mrs Green lived there. When they gave it up it was left empty for 2 years and then Chamberlain family bought it. Stride was third wealthy family – lived in Benson and Crowmarsh.

The cowman would go to Lesters [butcher] on Saturday night and buy the left over meat which would keep his wife and family for a week. All food used to be cooked in one pot.

At one time in Ewelme there were hundreds of elms. Always had rookeries where there were elm trees. A farmer would never buy land unless there was a rookery and elms as this was a sign of rich soil and would always have trees to make a living.

**Cow Common** – everyone had permission to register common rights in 1975 if they wanted any grazing. He registered 10 cows and 1 bull. Can't be charged for this. To have common rights you needed to own at least 1 acre of land. Col Calvert, chairman of the Council thought everyone should be entitled to register. Everyone was also allowed the right to suggest places for footpaths. Ewelme Common was the first common in England to be enclosed. Lord Somervell instigated this. Prior to the war there were bushes and a bridge on the common. When the springs rose the stream would run through the common to the brook. Over the years less and less water due to the gravel pits.

**The Pound** – opposite the post office. The idea was that any stray animals would be put in the Pound. It was kept locked and the owners would be charged to have animals released. The Pound was made of oak post and rail. Mr [Jack] Winfield said he would keep it tidy as he lived next door.

### *Tape 12 –*

**Cow Common** - First place in England to get authority to fence a Common. During the war commons were ploughed up for agriculture.

**Farms** were run largely manually. Workers lived in tied cottages so when they retired they had nowhere to go, so the almshouses were there for people who would otherwise be on the street. They were one up and one down and had outside toilets.

Elm disease killed all the elms, a large number. There was a previous outbreak about 40 years ago.

### *Tape 13 -*

**Fords Farm** - Great decrease in labour with mechanisation. Employed tractor driver, a pigman, 2 cowmen, gardener and part time maintenance man. Also a lady in the house. All the people employed were local and very little turnover in staff. Fords Farm kept their hedges because they had stock – changed from pigs to sheep. Fords is the last working farm in Ewelme. Since 1992 farm does bed and breakfast taking in up to 6 guests.

**Church Farm** - finished about 25 years ago (Orpwood's)

**Lower Farm** (Orpwood's) stopped about 30 years ago.

**Cottesmore** – Oliver Medley – worked it up to 15 years ago.

**Potters Farm** – still working.

**Winmill Farm** – Dixon farmed it (up behind Shepherds Hut).

**Ewelme Down Farm** – still farmed.

**Trout Farm** started in late 1970's but stopped in the 1980's. Thought they would try it as they had the ponds, but too many people helped themselves.

Lots more trees, but lost elms in the 1970's. Burnt the elms because there were so many.

**Common** enclosed in 1957 for animals. Each farm had rights on the common. Fords Farm keeps 10 cows and 1 bull from May to October. Ewelme Down Farm has sheep rights for winter grazing.

### *Tape 14 -*

Remembers the elms dying in Manor grounds.

**Chaucer Court barn** - Beautiful tithe barn next to Chaucer Court was converted.

### *Tape 15 -*

Remembers the elms in the Manor going.

**Tithe Barn** - Remembers being totally shocked to return to the village and find the tithe barn [off Chaucer Court] converted. Before Chaucer Court built there was a tumbledown farmhouse [The Mount] covered in brambles.

**Common** – in 1950s there was a land fight between PC and Lord Macclesfield who claimed it was his land. However, there was no evidence. Common now belongs to the village and absolute title was granted in 1994. Pound – a seat for the Home Guard. After the war it was turned into a sitting area.

### *Tape 16 -*

**The Barns (off Chaucer Court)** - Spent a lot of holiday time on the farms watching the lambing, harvesting, threshing etc. grain was stored in North/South Barn. Sheep kept off Chaucer Court.

**The Pond sheep dip** – remembers the sheep being dipped at Kings Pool.

More hedgerows then than now. In the bad winters they had to put up hurdles on the road to the B4009 (Firebrass Hill) to prevent drifting when the hedgerows were cut down. When they lived in Hampden Way there was a whole line of elms behind them which all came down. The Manor and the church lost a lot.

### *Tape 18 -*

**Horse Field** - He had to take the horses out to the meadow (Martyns Way was built on a portion of it) to graze. Took them out at 10.0 pm and brought them in at 7.0 am to brush and harness up. In busy times he had to knock off school at midday to help on the farm.

### *Tape 19 -*

Can remember scythes and sickles and her father walking behind the horses. Far more people on the land, grew mostly cereals.

**The Manor** - Cows the Manor had bells round their necks. The Manor were careful about Foot & Mouth, used disinfectant when it was about as a precaution.

**Common** - Harry Keene's father lost an arm in WWI and looked after the cows on the Common. Had a hut at bottom of Clive's place on the Common.

**Church Farm** - where Fred worked sold in 1953 by Orpwood's. The Harwoods applied for a Council house and Mr Orpwood was on the council so they got one. They were lovely houses, luxury, hot water, toilet, Rayburn.

Elms all the way along the brook. So many that from the top of Days Lane you couldn't see the village. There is a theory that the elms used so much water that when those near the church died, the church became damp.

### *Tape 20 -*

Pigs raised by the Oxfordshire Method in little corrugated huts was quite an eye-opener.

### *Tape 21 -*

In the past Harry Keene's father (who lost an arm in the First War) used to herd the animals to the Common with his dog, and water them at midday at Kings Pool That went on until the 30s. There was a pump installed (near where the existing pavilion is now - some of it is still there). We got an income from the Common to spend on maintaining the recreation ground and other things the Parish Council decides upon. The biggest issue of all in that, and it keeps cropping up, are the people who have Cow Rights on the Common who in the past demanded a certain share of the money involved. I do not think anyone does now but they still retain their Common Rights on the Common which sometimes causes friction between them and the Parish Council. Anyone who had a cow had Common Rights. We tried to find out how these people got their Cow Rights - no-one knows, but most people believe that it was a local arrangement made between the local 'bigwigs' at the time. Anyway they had to be accommodated and by that time they were going to get 1/52nd of the net profit on the Common per Cow Right. Most of them at that time waived their Cow Rights but some took it. At the present time I don't think anyone now takes money from it. Bill Edwards has Cow Rights and he is very generous but he pays for the privilege over £1000 a year to graze his cattle there. Ewelme Down Farm were the only people that established grazing rights and they do graze through the winter, from October to April. Bill Edwards has the spring and summer grazing. Ewelme Down Farm pay for one extra strand of barbed wire in the fence to keep their sheep in. About 1959 that was set up. [See minute of Parish Council meeting April 22nd 1959]

**Barn Conversions** – flint barns off Chaucer Court used for lambing. Arthur Walklin's father was the shepherd, allowed boys to help move the sheep, but they were forbidden to watch a lambing.

**Cow Common** had mature trees and scrubland and had not been grazed since the early 1930's. Before that people employed a cowman [Mr Keene] with his dog to take their cows to the Common each day, water them in the pond at lunchtime, and return them in the evening. After the introduction of traffic this practise ceased. Cow Common was requisitioned for WWII. When it was de-requisitioned in the early 50's it was fenced and a portion allocated for recreation. He is puzzled as to rights of acquisition of title to graze cows.

### *Tape 22 -*

**The Orpwood's** were the main farmers for a time and were quite rich. Pressed Steel Works in Oxford took men away from the land as the wages were so much better. As children Lucy remembers going 'leasing' picking up stray ears of corn and tying them in bunches and the farmer gave them 2d a bunch.

### *Tape 23 -*

Remembers people working in the fields, used to help with the harvest.

**The Pound** – remembers animals in there. Charge of £1 to get them out.

***Tape 24 -***

Hedgerows - Ewelme had two men who were roadmen who used to keep the verges clear, cut the banks and keep the village clean and tidy.

Dutch Elm - a lot of the trees were sawn down in 1939 and when RAF Benson was built. Had about 50 Australian and New Zealand lumberjacks and dig out woodland and trees to make the flight paths to RAF Benson safe. Remembers following the jacks around taking the chips from the felling which supplied them with domestic firewood.

***Tape 26 -***

**Tithe Barn off Chaucer Court** - When they stopped putting grain in the large flint barn Simon Orpwood kept pigs in it for about 4 years. Flies and rats and slurry seeped into the gardens but it was accepted as they had moved into the country. Horrified when flint barns converted as the open country aspect was lost and the beautiful hipped barn facade covered with black boarding.

Elm trees - Ewelme was a village of trees, particularly the stately elms. When they came down the village landscape altered considerably. This used to be a wooded valley. Also hedgerows were uprooted to make larger fields.

***Tape 28 -***

Farming methods have changed greatly and he has noticed how few people work on the land even compared with 20 years ago. He said he thought Mr Chamberlain had 15 people working for him where now, now son Philip, has three.

***Tape 33 - (interviewed by George Cannon)***

**The Manor –**

GC said In the pictures in their (ie the Exhibition) Iris Sawyer's husband contributed a photo of an oak in the Manor grounds which had been cut down - must have been in the 70s. It was allegedly the one associated with Queen Elizabeth I going for a swing.

I heard she swung on the walnut tree.

You remember the oak tree at the top of Days Lane. I brought my two older boys back in the autumn of 1974 and showed them around the area. Took them to it and told them how we played in it. They took a pocket full of acorns back to Penzance and they planted them in the garden. Three are growing in the driveway about 25ft high. And there is a new 4" tree growing underneath now in 1998.

**Common -**

- There was an oak tree planted on the Common this end for Victoria I think, that was pulled own when they ploughed it up for the war.

***Tape 34 -***

**Fords Farm** - I used to visit Sandy Edwards in her farm and she used to give me duck eggs but Granny Dymond wouldn't let me eat them. She said they could be poisonous. I used to do sewing with Sandy Edwards onto canvas worked with lovely silk material. I have always loved sewing and since retirement have done textile design and creative embroidery studies and am now a textile and design artist - which makes a change from teaching maths and geography which I did in the Comprehensive School until I retired.

**Tom Orpwood** or Tom Awkward we used to call him sometimes, probably is not his real name, but had had a farm next door to Granny Dymond on the other side of the road [Church Farm]. We used to scump his apples and he would chase us.

**Medleys Farm** - was down by the PRU. We played there for hours, we went there for haymaking. We used to bottle the milk in the evening and put two tops on the corner ones and then rush for them the next day in school. Goodness knows why.

I used to hate walking down the cowshed because although I knew they couldn't get me their tails used to flick and the idea was to run from one end to the other without getting caught by a tail and we used to love feeding the cows with pieces of cow cake to keep them quiet whilst they were being milked. They were milked by machine.

**The Manor** - Sometimes I used to go with the Brooks family to collect their skimmed milk from the Jersey cows and then Norma and I used to scoop the foam off the top. (I wonder what happened to the cream)

**The Common** - was half wheat, half potatoes during the War and if we found any unusually shaped potatoes we could take one home. Granny Dymond used to cook them in the ashes of the hearth for us to eat. I can remember taking one home which looked like Sweet Pea who was a Popeye character.

I also used to enjoy the two weeks off school in the autumn for potato picking.

### *Tape 35 -*

I came to Ewelme in August 1940 – in October we had 2 weeks off for potato picking, we went on the same farm and I used to go back on Saturdays working. [In 1943 - I can remember being paid 6d an hour, 4 hours a day, 5 days a week!] We did threshing where all the rats ran around, we used to chase them with a stave.

### *Tape 38 -*

**Fords Farm** - In the early 1960's I remember there were pigs in the rickyard and a number of chickens in the other sheds on a deep litter system. He remembers collecting the eggs and feeding the pigs. Cattle at Fords Farm and Berrick Salome. Also a flock of sheep came in about 1968. Cannot remember any working horses, although one of the carters lived in a cottage until fairly recently. The yard at Fords Farm was a working yard with cattle and chickens, not tidy like today.

**Cattle** - Remembers the TT blood tests, rounding up the cattle to get them into a stable for the vet. Some steers were tied up in stalls as they were shown by Bill up at Smithfield and Birmingham. Those for showing were tied up, fed, groomed and brushed. The other cattle were out, wandering up the top of the hill (where the present dung heap is situated). There was a tin shed up there which was burnt down in the early 1950's.

**Breeding** - John said Bill's reputation as a stockman was as good as anyone in the country – he was a wonderful showman with cattle and pigs. He was the first to bring the Landrace breed which had such an influence on the pig breeding of this country. He also bred Tamworths and had a herd called the Homefield Herd of Pedigree Tamworths.

**Chickens** – We provided eggs from battery hens with a round in Benson and locally. Chickens given up when she died. It was not unusual for farmers' wives to run their own flocks and have an egg round in the villages. The Belchers at Hale Farm did the same.

**Sheep** - were introduced to Fords Farm in the late 60's and it was a flock of mainly Dorset Downs which lambed at Christmas so there was a fat lamb available for Easter. Mainly lambed inside and the lambs kept in with their mothers and usually finished in about 12 weeks. Latterly, there was a flock of Cotswolds and some Teeswaters. Then Scotch Halfbreds which were crossed with a Suffolk ram. The ewe lambs are sold at the annual sheep sales for breeding and the wether lambs are kept and fattened up for meat. These days there are also Moules which are slightly more prolific and gives a good lean carcass which is what the modern housewife prefers. He had a Dorset ram called William who lived to a great age and who used to butt behind the knees to bring people down. Everyone knew him and was on ITN news when they did a documentary on the trout farm and the final scene was when people went out of the field and William was running after them. We had a Cotswold ram and his fleece weighed 28 lbs and he weighed 280 lbs live weight. Normally, the fleece would weigh 6 or 7 lbs. The Cotswolds were named after their place of origin, but now there are only 3 or 4 flocks left. Their milk was fantastic which made lovely cheese.

**Trout Farming** – in the 70s he started a trout breeding business. He excavated a pond at Berrick and stocked it with trout. Bred fish at the rise of the Spring behind East/West Cottages. Sold locally and to restaurants. There was a succession of tanks to bring them on through the stages. One tank was only demolished a couple of years ago. Project abandoned due to cost of pumping water up for the hatchery which outweighed the profit and from poaching, either by rod or by nets!

**Marketing** – big changes with the local smaller markets closing down over the last 10-15 years. Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester Wallingford have all disappeared. Local market at Thame, Winslow and Reading, but they are small. Bigger ones at Northampton, Rugby and Stratford but they are too far to be economically used by us.

**Abattoirs** – most of the local ones have closed – Lesters in Wallingford closed in the 90s. There is a small one at Didcot years ago and one in Reading. The nearest ones now are Witney, Guildford and Bedford. Pigs – Bill was considered an expert on pigs. George was surprised to see the tin sheds or pig igloos when he came to Ewelme. The Richard Roadnight was the originator of that system which is now copied countrywide and the first man to commercially set that enterprise up. Enabled sows to be kept out to run free but have shelter. The pigs were healthier and cheaper to keep as they had access to grass. He crossed Saddlebacks with a Large White and that was the foundation of his stock. Bred for hardiness. Over the years pig breeding has increased in the South Oxfordshire and Chilterns area on the chalk and gravel ground and there are more pigs here now than in any other part of the country. It built up fertility in the poor ground and enabled a rotation of wheat and barley afterwards.

**Cereals** - Fords Farm used to grow barley and often won the malting barley competition. In the early days it would be bought by the local mill and go to the ABM in Wallingford. But latterly it went anywhere in the country with better transportation systems. Before the ABM in Wallingford there was a network of small breweries that used to malt their own barley. Brakspear in Henley and Morrell in Abingdon.

**Machinery** – the old Threshing machine in the big barn is currently being moved out. It is a Wallis & Stevens of Basingstoke machine all wooden with wooden wheels with steel rims. It is going to John Edwards Snr as an heirloom for his family. It cleaned and graded the corn into large, medium and small which was deposited into bags. The chaff was expelled. It worked with the old Field Marshall tractor. It would be nice to see it go to an agricultural museum. He remembers the old Field Marshall tractors before the Fords. Called them Puffing Mabel's. (Today's threshing machines are combine harvesters which don't grade or clean. This is done in the barn's separately). The sacks used with the old thresher were hired from the West of England company, made of hessian and you had to allow about 2 lbs for them when weighing off. People employed to repair them. They held an amount of grain ie wheat weighed 2 ¼ cwt, barley about 2 cwt, oats 1 ½ cwt, beans 2 ½ cwt. These great weights were hauled about the farm by the men. Today farm workers are only allowed to carry 25 kilos about ½ cwt! In the days of the old threshing machines the corn was stacked in ricks. All farms had a threshing machine and there were contractors who went around and it was a big undertaking all through the winter. As long as it was dry enough it was then bagged.

The numerous staddle stones around Fords Farm show that there were many buildings built to store grain. The staddle stones prevented rats from entering the grain stores. There was a building on staddle stones where the modern concrete barn now stands.

**Crowmarsh Battle Farm** - Philip Chamberlain was the first farmer to bring mono-culture into the system. This is a continuous growing of cereals without a break. He would also plant a little bit of rye grass or clover in to boost fertility and help keep the moisture in.

**Diversification** in farming – this is now a necessity as farming isn't good at the moment. Many barns converted to residential or workshops. Some doing bed and breakfast (as is Fords Farm) or open for visitors as 'theme' farms.

John's father was a great friend of Fred Greenway and Reg Winfield. He remembers seeing Fred when he had the house next to the Post Office. John has seen many changes in the village.

### ***Tape 41 -***

When I was young there was more land at the top of the Common – the old golf course.

### ***File 46 -***

**Farm experience and the Runaway Cows** - When Horace Hedges was a neighbour and working at Lower Farm he introduced me to farming including milking cows. I suppose I was about 8 yrs old when this began and continued with an interlude whilst I was hospitalised for 6 months. I remember going with Mr Chamberlain and his farm workers on their annual excursion to the Smithfield Agriculture Show at Earls Court London on two occasions. After one of these I produced a painting showing exhibits of the show - this was displayed in the School. At that time there were only 3 cows (have forgotten their names) remaining on the farm during what I now believe was the period of transfer from Orpwood's to the Chamberlains. Anyway I was shown that when the gate opened at milking time the cows knew the way to the milking sheds [the building with the corrugated tin roof that abuts the road to the left of Lower End's gate], and when arriving there would also position themselves at the exact milking point within the shed. I was then shown how to milk by hand into a bucket and how the farm cats would appreciate a carefully aimed squirt in their direction. Gradually getting to grips with this I accidentally pulled a wart on the teat of the cow I was milking. With this the cow kicked hard and I was propelled from the milking stool. This did not discourage me. This milk would then be taken to Mr Orpwood's immediately adjacent farmhouse [now Lower End House]. The lady there showed me butter she had made and part of the process. On one occasion after School I arrived at the farm wanting to help with the milking. However, Horace had not arrived and the cows were waiting to be let out. [They grazed in the field still existing behind the houses in the High Street, the field to the left of the bridleway by The Hide]. Keen to please, I opened the gate and let the cows make their well-rehearsed journey to the milking stables less than ¼ mile away. I followed slowly on my 'cycle but unfortunately, when within yards of the stables, they detoured into the village and scattered either up the hill or down and beyond the Post Office. When Horace did arrive we rounded the animals up on our 'cycles. Thankfully the roads were quiet in those times and no damage was done. In addition to this I would also go out on the tractor with Horace and learnt how to plough. I also learnt how to drive a tractor with trailer including reversing into a barn. The tractor concerned was a Fordson Major which used petrol and paraffin – this was designated TPO. In reality this meant that to start the engine, which incidentally was by means of a starting handle, you opened the petrol tap to the carburettor. Once the engine started and became warm you would close the petrol tap whilst opening the paraffin tap. I can only assume that this was caused by availability problems before or during the war.

After a days ploughing the tractors were refuelled in an area approximately opposite the old wooden barn building which is now converted into two dwellings – North and South Barn, off Chaucer Court. I recall that the tanks were buried and we would hand pump the fuel. From there the tractors would be parked in the cart shed directly opposite the house built for Doris Chamberlain [The Hyde]. It was important to remove the tall and very hot exhaust, as this would otherwise impact on the roof edge of the shed. I received a massive blister doing this when there was a hole in my glove. I also enjoyed helping during harvesting, potato picking and sugar beating.

### ***File 51a***

Every afternoon we assembled at the Manor House complete with our jugs to collect fresh milk, a produce from their own herd. What more could one ask having come from London. [As evacuees].

### ***Interview 52 -1945-1947***

During the long summer holiday, some of the children went potato picking. We waited at the village centre where the farmer collected us at 9 o'clock. We trundled off sitting on a flat trailer pulled by his tractor. We worked until lunchtime and then we were brought home. I earned one shilling! Five pence in today's currency. It was probably against the law – child labour. I was only eight. My employment didn't last long – just three days. It was very hot and back-breaking, so I resigned.

Frances, the pig, was bought to share with the family [Lansley] on the farm. [Lower Farm now Fields End] We already had a pigsty that was in good condition so she lived in our garden. She became quite a pet but we happily waved her goodbye when she went to the abattoir, and we ate the meat and bacon. Our chickens had a perfect roost and nest box right at the top of the garden. It had been a shepherd's hut that was towed by horse around the fields where the flocks were feeding. During lambing, the shepherd lived in this gypsy-type



caravan so that he was on hand to keep watch and help if needed. My friend, Kathleen Winfield [Baker], who lived opposite [Kings Pool Cottage] and I often played in the hut when it was empty and before the next batch of chickens arrived. It was summer and very hot so we had ended up in vest and knickers playing house. We were hot and scratching ourselves. Mum called us in for tea – took one look and pushed us outside – stripped us naked and scrubbed us from top to toe. We were smothered in chicken fleas!

### **Interview 55 –**

My father told me he dug the well by Paget's hut above the dairy - it would be about 20 yards west of the walnut tree which I think is still there! Stewart Paget was an eccentric who ran a market garden up there at one time but was renowned for having invented the Paget lamp. You manually squeezed a trigger mechanism that drove an electric dynamo - a fore runner of the bicycle dynamo (in a way) that replaced the old King of the Road spirit lamps that I can just remember!

The orchard was indeed there but was past it's best by my time and Stewart Paget who used to live in "Paget's Hut" behind the dairy (and where my father had dug the well) was the inventor of the Paget lamp. Paget had run the orchard I believe. He had obviously been a character from all the stories about him still current when I was small. My father also dug the well at WinMill.

Priester Cruttwell wrote in Romantic Village -

*Mr Justins was friendly with another strange inhabitant of Ewelme, one of the Paget family- who spent most of his time in raising cucumbers and tomatoes from his glass houses on the southern slope behind the village street. He was extremely musical and used to play his piano alone in a shed for hours: he was solitary by nature and used to sit at the bottom of a deep well, where he had a platform constructed to enable him to escape unwanted visitors! He was also given to scientific inventions, of which the patents were to make his fortune; unfortunately, they were always snapped up beforehand by a more wide awake sort of person. But there is no doubt that 'our Paget' had more than a touch of genius.*

(1901 Census Stuart Paget boarded with a widow Rebecca Vernon aged 47 in High Street in 1901, Nurseryman aged 29 born in Cork Eire).

Win-Mill Farm – named after Win[field] and Mill[er] – Tony Munday.

### **File 56 –**

The whole area was a farming area, in the village there was also Rowses' honey, and the watercress beds. I can remember spud picking, and riding on trailers during the harvest. We would also play, and fish in the stream and watercress beds; we could pass right under the road by the post office great fun. We rode our bikes that we had built ourselves between the rows of potatoes in the fields; there were many open spaces to play such as the common, and the school field.

### **File 57 –**

Along the top road we passed the Orpwood's farms (Leaver Farm/Church Farm now), and this reminded me of the times which I had spent with Brian Orpwood doing beating and helping collect the birds and hares which he often shot. I also remembered one school holiday when my brother Roger and me had been employed by the Orpwood's to hoe and weed a whole field of kale. Talk about child labour!. I remember the water cress beds, which stretched across to Mr. Rowse's large garden which in the old days was covered in Mr. Rowse's bee hives, and masses of bamboo canes grew between his property and the large cress bed and the pond. Often when I was up at the top paddock at The Greyhound attending to my fathers chickens, I would see Mrs Edwards in the next field attending to her beautiful Light Sussex chickens. I think that she fed them with some by products from the dairy on her farm and these memories became embedded and led to my lifetime interest in poultry of all types.

### **File 58 –**

Agriculture – Orpwood's owned most of the farms and the Franklins had one. Leavers Farm, Lower Farm and Home Farm, by the pub. There were cottages at Home Farm where Percy Tuckwell lived. He worked with the horses and when he moved to Martyns Way he would sit on the wall. As I passed him I would call out, but his sight wasn't good but he knew who I was and we would have a chat.

Father only 5 ft tall worked with the farm horses for Orpwood's. As he was so short he was paid 30 shillings a week instead of the 33 shillings the other men got. But he had a two furrow plough and could ride on the handles – the other men had only one furrow and had to walk holding the handles

Orpwood's farm horses grazed in the Horse Field behind Martyns Way, and the ones for Home Farm were in the fields now owned by the Bloomfield's.

Remembers Nancy Edwards from Fords Farm wearing 'sinkers' stockings.

Cattle for the diary grazed on the Common by Mr Calcott who had a white beard, of Waterside Cottages. He used to bring them back for milking. Had 28 stalls and the 25-6 cows would walk straight into their own stalls. Had milking machines but when the electricity failed it was by hand. When I was about 12 or 13 I would help Mr Calcott bring the cows back – one day a cow jumped over the iron palings at Peter Lemaire's cottage got her legs trapped, and we had to physically lift her off. She didn't hurt herself. Winfields cows for milking grazed on the common, didn't drink at Kings Pool because it was fenced off then. Every cow had its own place with a drinking bowl and the cow put its nose on the top and the water ran whilst it was held down. Horace Hedges looked after Orpwood's cows, but didn't have many of Orpwood's.

Godden's Pit behind the Forge next to The Views. Some villagers used to dump the ashes and household rubbish in it. [The pit presumably caused when gravel material was taken to make the road up to Ewelme Down House].

Paget's Barn pulled down, but there was a well, he was probably an author. In the front of the barn there was a big building which covered a well and we always understood that Mr Paget used to do down the well to do his writing, because he had a boat down there! Paget's Barn right behind Winfields Dairy. We were always warned not to go near the well.

The boys used to go into the harvesting fields, kill mice as they bolted, fill up their caps with the bodies and take them to Mrs Garlick, an old lady living in Brook Cottages (now demolished) for her cats. She gave them a farthing a capful, then they would go straight to the sweet shop run by Mrs Annie Clack for big slabs of toffee, about 3 inches long and half an inch thick! Mrs Clack (second wife of builder Henry Clack died 1916) had her step grand daughter Winifred living with her (born 1915).

I worked initially for Sydney Winfield's Dairy, milked the cows, fed the pigs (kept at Winmill Farm and got 12/6 a week, gave mum 10 shillings and kept half a crown for myself. I had to take a bucket milk churn with a handle round the village with a metal measuring ladle, and people would come out and buy half a pint of milk. I left because the pay was so poor and got a job at Wallingford Brewery in Goldsmith Lane, Ushers. Used to go with the drayman to the pubs delivering barrels of beer. Got £3 a week there. Cycled to work.

#### **File 71 -**

Sheep Dip – Remembers watching the men standing on the steps and dipping the sheep under with long poles.

#### **File 72 -**

My father (1910-1988) was a farm worker at Fyfield Farm and mum a housewife. My dad left Ewelme school at 12 years of age to begin his life of working on the farm, he was probably one of the last of the plough boys, working a team of horses on the land. There was a number of b&w photos of him and his horses, but I don't know what happened to them. I don't know if Clacks Farm is where he was first employed. I do remember him saying that he worked at Fifield farm, most of which became the airfield, and it was then owned by the Wilder family from Wallingford. Wilders had several businesses in the area, including an agricultural machinery factory in Wallingford and the steel foundry in Crowmarsh. He was there at the start of the war I believe and was later put on hauling timber to High Wycombe. I think his mate on this was Wilf Dix (Des Dix's dad?) from Benson. The barns at Fifield were eventually converted into houses when what was left of the original farm was owned by John Allwright. I know that dad worked at the Colony Institution (aka Turners Court, now known as Oakley Court) I think Mays Farm was part of the Colony Institution but not sure if it also had Potters Farm. I did have a book on the Colony. Dad left the farm

in either the late sixties or early seventies I think and then worked at RAF Benson. He retired aged nearly 65 in 1972/73.

A friend of dads back in the fifties was Don Silverstone, he was shepherd for Gemmell's, the racehorse people at Ewelme Downs farm. The Gemmell's lived at Ewelme Down House and Mrs Gemmell owned Gregalach who won the Grand National. I guess that I was about three or four years old when Don and dad were using a shire horse to take a flat bedded cart up to Potters farm, they sat me on the horse's back. I was told to hold onto the hames, these are the two pieces that stick up from the harness that the traces attach to. My little legs were splayed out in front of me across the flat broad back of the horse. The gentle nodding of the horse's head and me hanging on as it pulled us along the farm track is a memory that I'll never forget. There are remains of the old horse fences at the top of Grindon Lane. By the time I started at school, a Mr Hackey? owned Down Farm. I take it that Down House and the farm had become two separate entities by then.

If asked what is the biggest thing that has disappeared from the village in my life, I would have to say the allotments, the ones that I remember were those that ran from opposite the Shepherds Hut up to Smockacre and then from there up to the Ford. There were ones that ran opposite these from the bridge to Brownings. Harry Keen's allotment ran from the bridge down to the waterfalls where the old mill once stood. My father's allotment is now just an overgrown wilderness behind the Shepherds Hut car park. Other allotments went from the Garage up to High House and there were more opposite the 'Copper House', all now gone.