

UTILITIES

Postal services, Water, Electricity, Sewage, Roads, Telephone and Newspapers

Tape 1 -

Postal service – same route as today.

Roads - Metalling of roads – prior to 65 years ago they were gravel.

Electricity – 1931/32 Edmonson's Electricity. 3 lights and a plug fitted free. There had been a danger to girls with long hair from oil lamps and candles.

Mains water - soon after electricity.

Sewage – central sewage came in 1950's. His father said provision of sewage disposal most notable event in the village.

Tape 2 -

Post – all done by cycle. 2 deliveries daily.

Roads – mid 1930's were metalled.

Electricity – about 1932, before that candles, oil lamps and paraffin stoves for cooking. Heating by coal.

Telephone - exchange in the old post office (High Street) put in about 70 years ago.

Tape 3 -

Mains water – their house in Green Lane had a borehole which served 7 houses.

Electricity – house had kitchen range, coal fired. Candles for bedrooms. Oil lamps for evenings.

Fuel - Coal and wood for heating, collected wood from hedges and woods.

Sewage – outside bucket toilets, disposed of on compost heap, newspaper tissue.

Tape 4 -

Telephones - First telephones – only 1 – 400 people. A doctor could be contacted on his rounds by telephoning a house he was visiting to see if he was there or not. Or flag down his car.

Water – remembers asking for use of the tap to wash hands pre mid 50's. Benson and Ewelme connected at same time. Friday night was bath night for dance on Saturday and church on Sunday.

Main drains – not until 1955 or 1956.

Central dispensary - at Dorchester.

Ambulance service - from Wallingford.

Tape 5 -

Postal - offices were good – only one delivery. Sorting office in Benson.

Tape 6 -

Mains water - about mid 50's. – the well at Watercress Cottage was contaminated with creosote so took water from the brook. When the men dug the ditch for the mains pipes the springs welled up so the pump had to work 24 hrs a day to pump out the water.

Electricity – no electricity when they arrived at the Lamb.

Sewage – none at the Lamb (cess pit) or Watercress Cottage – (used buckets)

Tape 8 -

Mains water - came in 1953. Had an impact as most people had outside lavatories. The village street used to flood. The springs came up around the village hall and flooded the High Street. Flooding stopped when sewers were introduced.

Electricity - came about 1936. Lights had the most impact in that one flicked a switch instead of lighting a candle.

Tape 9 -

Post - had a PO box put in the wall of the Mansion for her grandmother – still there today, the family requested it and got it. It was always called 'Grannies Box'. It was a VR box now changed to ER. She says she owns the old one.

Roads – theirs was a sandy lane in the 1930's.

Water – remembers a well on the tennis court, but they had one inside bathroom and a pull loo. The bungalow opposite, which they sold the land for, still is not on mains water.

Electricity – came in 1930 put in by father, before that they had a lamp room and a range in the kitchen which was coal fired.

Newspapers – Oxford Times, Reading Mercury and a Wallingford weekly paper that was distributed by Jenkins of St Mary Street.

Tape 10 -

Postal - service run by Fred Greenway – twice daily deliveries. She went to work there [shop?] after her 2 yrs as a 'skivvy' at the age of 16.

Newspapers - Her father used to read the Titbits magazine and they had the Berks & Oxon paper delivered on Fridays. Fred Jenkins was the distributor of newspapers and had total control of this.

Telephone – Ewelme was a telephone exchange pre war and Mr Howell ran it.

Sewage – came to the Hut in 1960. They had bonfires in the garden to get rid of the rubbish.

Taxi service – Amy Reeves charged 6d a mile in her taxi. 47 miles to Heathrow (ration fare £5.64).

Tape 11 -

Telephone – at Fords Farm in 1950.

Road surfacing – 1927. Used to be an open ditch from Days Cottage to the Watercress beds. Was a notice saying 'No rubbish'.

Steam engines used to come through the village. Wilders had 6 sets of steam engines.

Electricity - Wallingford Electricity Co generated electricity from the Old Mill at Benson.

Tape 12 -

Mains water - came in early 1950s with sewage following later.

Sewerage - No sewers – but had a cess pit instead.

Tape 13 -

Electricity - No mains electricity at Fords Farm before 1952. Her two old aunts lived in the house before that.

Tape 14 -

Telephone - exchange up behind the telephone box, a brick building manned telephone exchange. If anyone wanted to make a trunk call. It was still being used in the 1960's

Sewerage - Thatchings connected to mains in 1970 before that it had a cess-pit.

Tape 15 -

Post – Mr Justins came round on foot.

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.

Tape 16 -

Post – Postman delivered on a bike.

Mains water – they got their water from the brook.

Electricity – never did have it upstairs in their house.

Sewage – had an outside loo, bucket which went in the garden. Mains sewerage came to the village in 1957.

Newspapers – she did a round. The school inspectors used to come to check their cards to make sure they were not missing school doing deliveries. Had to mark the times on the card.

Berks & Oxon was the local paper taken by most people. Frank Harwood and Herbie Winfield used to send in local interest articles to the Berks & Oxon. In about 1956 it went to the Wallingford Herald.

Tape 19 -

Post - came twice a day and collected from Greenways stores. Mr Justins was the postman.

Telephone - Mrs Eagle-Bott at Hill House had a phone in 1929. Dialed exchange in Post Office who put you through. Used both letters and numbers. You picked up the phone and voice answered and asked for the number. Very good reception.

Road – surfaced 67 years ago. Concreted side of brook one year.

Water – In 1953 they moved to Council House when water and sewerage was laid on.

Electricity – came to Ewelme about 1936. Lady Hambleton's house Old Rectory first with electricity by generator prior to 1936.

Fuel - Coalman delivered about 100 cwt a week.

Rag and bone man (Raggie Davis) – came regularly which was made into paper eventually.

Tape 22 -

Post – excellent postal service, it used to cost a 1 1/2d for a stamp.

Roads – before they were metalled they were gravel and everything got very dusty in summer. There was a lot of mud in winter, Firebrass Hill was sometimes almost impassable.

Electricity – came about 1930.

Water - was all right if you used Kings Pool because you got it first, before it had a chance to become contaminated further down. Used to get water in pails from the Pool, lovely water. Used hip baths about once a week.

Sewerage – Lucy remembers having to dig holes in the garden. People didn't seem to get ill. Sewerage came to village about 1937/38.

Fuel - There were coal and clothing clubs you paid a certain amount and when you had accumulated enough you could purchase what you needed. The coal club was run by Weedons, coal merchants in Benson and Fields in Watlington (Field, Hawkin & Tomkin). You paid into these clubs monthly.

Tape 23 -

Telephone - Can't remember first telephone but he has never had one.

Fuel - Coal came from Wallingford.

Tape 24 -

Telephones - only 3 in the village in those days.

Electricity - no electricity in Green Lane when they first went to live there. Had oil lamps and a coal fired range.

Main Drainage - had buckets plus a chain. The chain didn't do anything, but was hanging there as 'practise' until they were modern enough to have one! His father emptied the bucket(s) every two days or so into the garden. The spot was marked with a stick to avoid disturbing the previous deposit. Grew good vegetables in the areas.

Tape 30 -

Water - at the School House - in the scullery near the back door was a pump and every morning the water had to be pumped (after the water began to run) had to pump 150 times to fill the tank in the roof. The well was under the red brick floor under a square aperture covered in planks.

Tape 31 - (Interviewed by George Cannon)

Water - What about water in the village, when were you able to turn on a tap?

Just after the War we hadn't got it before the War. We got our water from the brook. Only big houses had their own pump.

Were there many wells in the houses?

Oh yes, they had wells.

There were two in the cottage where we used to live - where Mr Tilley lives now - (Lever Cottages?) and a well in front of the others.

Tape 32 -

Water - coming to the village - I can't remember, but in the schoolhouse we had running water supplied from a well which had to be operated by a hand pump initially. First thing in the morning I had to pump 150 pumps on the handle for the day. When we got electricity in 1937/38 we had an electric pump installed. Originally the pumping was done by 2 or 3 of senior boys of the school. This would allow those who wouldn't have particularly benefited from the RE at the beginning of the day to get rid of their surplus energy and do something useful. The cloisters had a big pump in the centre of the courtyard with a huge wheel which is still there. The old men would wind the wheel and water would spurt into their buckets. Most people had wells. I do remember a period when there was no water because of frost and snow conditions.

Probably in 1946/47, the wells were frozen and tankers were sent out by the Council and there were huge tanks positioned. One in school playground. Don't believe there was piped water until after the war.

Tape 41 -

Electricity - We lived at No 1 The Terrace. Our house got electricity about 1934 we got electricity single phase. Had oil lamps before.

Sewage - dug into the garden. Plumbing came about after the war in 1945