

GORDON READE'S MEMORIES

Interview Recorded By Ray Gigg on 25 May 2011

School

Miss White taught Gordon for his first two years at school, and then he went through the partition to Mrs Woodhouse who had her class in the centre section, and then Mr Saunders who took the Senior Class in the section by the road. Mr Saunders was the headmaster and he was a good shot with chalk!

School was heated with a tortoise stove in the first room, the middle room had a smaller tortoise stove and the top class had a cast iron grate with a big open fire. Pupils sat on long benches.

During Mr Culley's time Gordon played a flute and was in the drum and pipe band.

Gordon had someone to take him to school on his first day, after that he walked backwards and forwards by himself. He came home for lunch.

At playtime Gordon played pretend games connected to the farm, such as three boys holding on to each other, and four boys in front being the horses pulling them.

Small schools from around the area went to the old school at Bourton for woodwork and cookery lessons. Children were transported by car to Bourton, and when Gordon was 12 or 13, the tyres burst on the car and, with a car full of children, it went up onto the bank.

Gordon remembers Mr Culley arriving at Ashbury School, with an armful of books and cane sticking out the top, as if to say "look out"! Mr Culley thrashed one boy, and the brother went home and told his father and then the brother got caned for telling the father. The father gave Mr Culley what for!

Mr Culley had been an army PT teacher and he put the school children through it. Gordon's sister could do two somersaults in the air. Betty Sealey was very good too. Gordon was too stiff!

Shops

'Strouds' was in the row of cottages next to Gordon's College Farm House. Tishy Stroud sold sweets, sherbet dabs and aniseed balls, and always had to go upstairs to get change. The Nurse lived in the first house.

'Southwells' (now called the 'The Cottage' in Chapel Lane) sold grocery items, and had a post office.

Berrycroft had quite a big bakery and delivered bread around the area.

Mrs Simpson sold sweets and bottles of drink in what is now called 'The Cottage' in the High Street.

The Whites ran the Post Office and Shop at the Cross Roads in what is now called Ridgeway House. Rene White was a teacher at Ashbury School, and her sister and mother ran the shop. The shop sold everything including paraffin. If Mrs White was weighing something and the scales didn't quite go down she would put her finger on them.

In Kingstone Winslow there were two shops. Granny Sealey ran one shop which sold sweets etc. Nancy Norris' shop sold general things.

Mobile Shops

Butchers – Baulch from Swindon would bring meat to order. One butcher used to do the chopping in the van. Another butcher came from Lambourn.

Bread – Hintons from Bishopstone sold bread house to house, as did Hilda Webb and also Joan New.

Groceries – Masons from Swindon delivered around Ashbury. They picked up eggs from Reade's when they were in the village.

Fish – someone sold fish, not sure who

Clothes – Morses from Swindon brought clothes

Milk – Gordon had milk straight from the farm! Tom Halliday sold milk in the village. In the 1940s the 17 gallon milk churns were taken from the farm down to Shrivenham station by horse and cart to be loaded onto the milk train. Later they were collected by lorry and it was at about this time that the smaller 10 gallon churns were first used.

Farms

Farms in the village included: Kingstone Farm, Manor Farm, Malt House Farm, College Farm, Berrycroft Farm. Gordon commented that everywhere you went in Ashbury there was cow-mess on the road!

Crops grown: wheat, oats, barley, mangles, swedes.

Animals: The Reades kept cows, pigs, ducks and chickens. Gordon used to come home from school and count the eggs. One day he dropped the lot! Gordon's sister Abbie won a pig at a village fete and Gordon had to collect it. They had a sty to put it in, but eventually ate the pig! The Reades had working horses on their farm.

Haymaking: College Farm used to make a lot of hay. Everything had to be done by hand. All the hay ricks and corn ricks were thatched to keep them dry until the hay or straw was needed. Combines came after the war.

Fred Reade (Gordon's father) came out of the army after the war and was looking for a job. He rode his horse from Baulking to Ashbury, and at the crossroads asked someone the way to College Farm where he had heard there was a job. He was told that someone had already been taken on, but Gordon went to College Farm anyway, was set to work. He married Eva Willis the farmer's daughter.

Water Supply

Water was pumped up by ram to a reservoir above the village and piped to stand pipes in different parts of the village (including half way up Church Lane, by Alyn House, by Millstream Cottage in Kingstone Winslow). When the water ran out, it had to be bailed out of the Lye. Gordon had water on the farm – they had a well which had to be pumped by hand.

Gordon's wife Doreen said she had been used to having flush toilets and hot baths, but when she came to Ashbury she had to get water pumped up, then heated up, and put it into a tin bath. The contents of the 'bucket' had to be buried!

Electricity came first to Manor Farm in 1944, and by 1947 the rest of the village had electricity. Oil lamps were used during the war.

Watercress Beds – watercress was sold by the bundle, sixpence for a large bundle. The watercress went by train to London. It was eaten with bread and butter. People from Childrey cut the watercress. When the Rose and Crown caught fire the fire brigade came with two pumps and they used the water supply from the watercress beds.

Coronation of Queen Elizabeth – Gordon won a pocket knife and he was anchor man for the tug of war team.