

Memories of Chinnor Cliff Folley 1986

I suppose I am not really an old 'Chinnorite' for I was actually born at Manor Farm Henton as long ago as 1903. As I remember it then Henton was a lovely old village consisting of only 18 dwellings, 6 farms, 11 cottages and 1 public house. Everyone knew everyone, it was as if we were one big family but then those days the village belonged to Magdalene College Oxford. When it was sold new development started and thus the character of the village changed.

For those living in Henton then, as now, we relied on neighbouring Chinnor for shops, church, school etc. It was a good walk for us children to school every morning especially when the snow lay thick on the ground. Jack Bushnell and my elder sister, Miriam, would often keep me company as we trudged along in our school boots. Many mornings we would meet Mr Neighbour delivering milk from his bucket (there were no milk bottles or the like you see) but other than that the roads were very quiet. My grandfather, John Grey, ran a tailoring business (where the delicatessen now is in Lower Road). A new hand sewn suit would take on average 2-3 weeks as he was always very busy. On a Sunday I would again come into Chinnor but this time would attend the Congregational Chapel in the morning, have dinner with Granny and Grandad Grey and then go to Sunday School in the afternoon. Next door to them where Croxford's the butchers is now, was Tommy Turner the blacksmith, Mr Proctor kept the Royal Oak and next door to him was a saddlers shop (now demolished) run by Mr Cox. A versatile man was Mr Cox for he also cut peoples hair and played the organ at the Congregational Church. The organ was one of those which had to be blown by turning a large handle – Bert Howlett (nicknamed Giant) had that job. Mr Cox's wife ran a sweet shop next door to the saddlers.

At 12 years old I was needed on the farm and it was during the First World War labour was so short that you could obtain permission to leave school for three months at a time. In my case this request was renewed several times and I didn't go back, my education as such had finished.

In 1940 I started work at the cement works – at first I thought I would not last the week but after a while I settled in and became very happy there – I must have been for I stayed 33 years

The Eagle public house at Henton has of course played an important part in our family life for we were involved with the running of it for well over 40 years. My daughter in Law, on winning a large tin of sausages in a raffle couldn't think what to do with them, in the end she held a barbeque in the grounds of the Eagle in aid of Cancer Research and in so doing Henton Cancer Fund was born.

Since 1975 I have actually lived in Chinnor itself in the old peoples bungalows along Elm Drive. Although I like it here I cannot help thinking how unfortunate it is that

these bungalows for the elderly are built so far away from the centre of the village and all its amenities. At nearly 80 I am still faced with a long walk to church or to the shops – some things it seems are destined never to change.