

## Village Life between the wars

Norah Anderson

The First World War dragged on for four years. Some times a little progress made by either side, sometimes stalemate. But in 1918 it came to an end, and a hero's welcome was promised to those who had fought.

Like so much rhetoric from those in high places this proved to be an illusion. These wearied troops might have returned home, when many of their comrades did not, but they found that four years of war had to be paid for. Money was short, and the country suffered. Instead of a home fit for heroes there was depression, in some cases despair.

But for some, particularly those who lived in the country, there were compensations. Life in the villages now went on much as before.

A village in N. Bucks is a prime example of this. The Anglican Church, the Wesleyan Chapel, the two pubs (*The Crown* and *The Swan*) provided an unchanging framework.

The Bake House, on the village green, opened its vast oven doors, and on a Saturday cakes were carried down to be baked. On Sunday Beef, Potatoes and Yorkshire pudding were roasted in the oven – I can remember this because I lived there!

My brother and I went to the primary school, built in Victorian times, which was then run by an elderly couple. I don't know what their academic qualifications were, but they treated us children with great kindness.

A large coke stove belched forth heat and mid morning we were given a cup of Horlicks, made with water to sustain us. His has remained one of my favourite drinks ever since! We were taught the three R's and we worked hard; the aim being to get to Grammar School. This had to be by Scholarship, it was before the days of the 11 plus.

Overlooking the village green is the Anglican Church. I was taken there to see a funeral;

an awesome sight for a young child. Tombstones, new and generations old, stood there. It was a peaceful place. Wild flowers grew unchecked, birds and butterflies abounded.

Behind the church stood the rectory, an imposing building set in sweeping lawns. How many generations of Victorian ladies must have walked there? With their elegant bonnets and leg of mutton sleeves, they came and looked over the goods on sale at the annual church fête. They were careful shoppers these Victorian ladies! They then proceeded home to take up their household duties. I am writing about life post 1918, but little had changed since those days. World shaking events had taken place but village life went peacefully on.

The Post Office was an institution. It was kept by a rather fierce elderly couple who struck fear into any child who dared to romp in its premises. Here I made my first acquaintance with the telephone. It stood tall and, wonderfully, when one spoke into it, one's words made contact with another person!

There were many village worthies. One of these was the recently widowed rector's wife. Most would have removed themselves and left the field clear for the next incumbent. But not this lady! She continued to meddle – an apt word – in things that were no longer her concern.

Here, I think, I must mention my own grandmother, a strong minded lady who had brought up a household of unruly boys. She closely reminded me of Queen Mary. She had the same imperious air, and ruled her family and her grandchildren with authority and sternness.

Of course the *raison d'être* in the village was farming; all around were the cattle, the sheep and the horses. Hay time and Harvest, and of course lambing, made up our year.

## All Saints Alive

From time immemorial, the green fields of Middle England had echoed to these activities, linking us to biblical days.

One name that stands out in my memory is that of the Trotters. They were an extended family of scatty adults, hell-bent teenagers, unmanageable children and illegitimate babies.

Casual labour kept them going through the week, Saturday night was dedicated to drinking, ending up with a most satisfactory family row!

Higher up the social scale was John James. He had retired from business and settled down to being – in his own words – a country gentleman. Along the way he had collected a family. The boys he tolerated, the girls he treated with contempt.

Then there was Miss Fosdyke. She lived with her elderly father and could never leave him in the summer – the strawberries, raspberries or blackcurrants might be in season!

We all have a favourite habitat. For me it is this North Bucks village. Every good production finishes with a theme tune, but what? 'There will always be an England, whilst there's a country lane' strikes too modern a note. *Maybe Jerusalem?*

Reader – the choice is yours!

## Christian Aid Lunches

As usual, lunches will be in the River Room between noon and 1.45 every Wednesday in Lent, beginning this year on February 21st. A light lunch costing £2.50, consisting of soup, bread and cheese, fruit, tea or coffee will be served by members of all the HDCT churches working together on a rota. Coffee is served from 11 am.

The River Room is a pleasant place to meet friends (children are welcome too) or to drop in after shopping, and help others in greater need at the same time. For those working locally, this is a quick and worthwhile lunch-stop.

## Lent Talks

There will be a series of talks on Wednesday evenings given by Rt Rev Richard Inwood, Bishop of Bedford. He will be leading us on our journey through Lent, focussing on the Lord. The talks will be held in the URC at 8pm on February 28<sup>th</sup>, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. On March 14<sup>th</sup> there will be group discussion on the talks also at the URC.

## Christian Aid Walk

All Saints' are again taking on the responsibility for running the starting checkpoint to help out with such an important fund raising event. We need volunteers on Saturday 12th May 2007 from 7.30 am to 9.30 am only!

If you are able to help, would you please put the date and time in your diary and let me know - thank you!!

*Rosemary Bolton*

## Christmas Alone 2006

Thank you, once again, to everybody who contributed in any way towards the success of Christmas Day at Sele School. Despite Christmas Eve falling on a Sunday we had a happy crowd of people at the school preparing the hall, the food and the gifts and even the butcher came over to deliver the turkeys and have a look at what was going on!

On Christmas Day we had the usual mix of regulars and first timers and a jolly good time was had by all.

I cannot possibly thank everybody individually but can say that without the help and support from everybody who gave presents, money, cakes or most important of all, time, then well over a hundred local people would have had a lonely Christmas.

*Janet Bird*