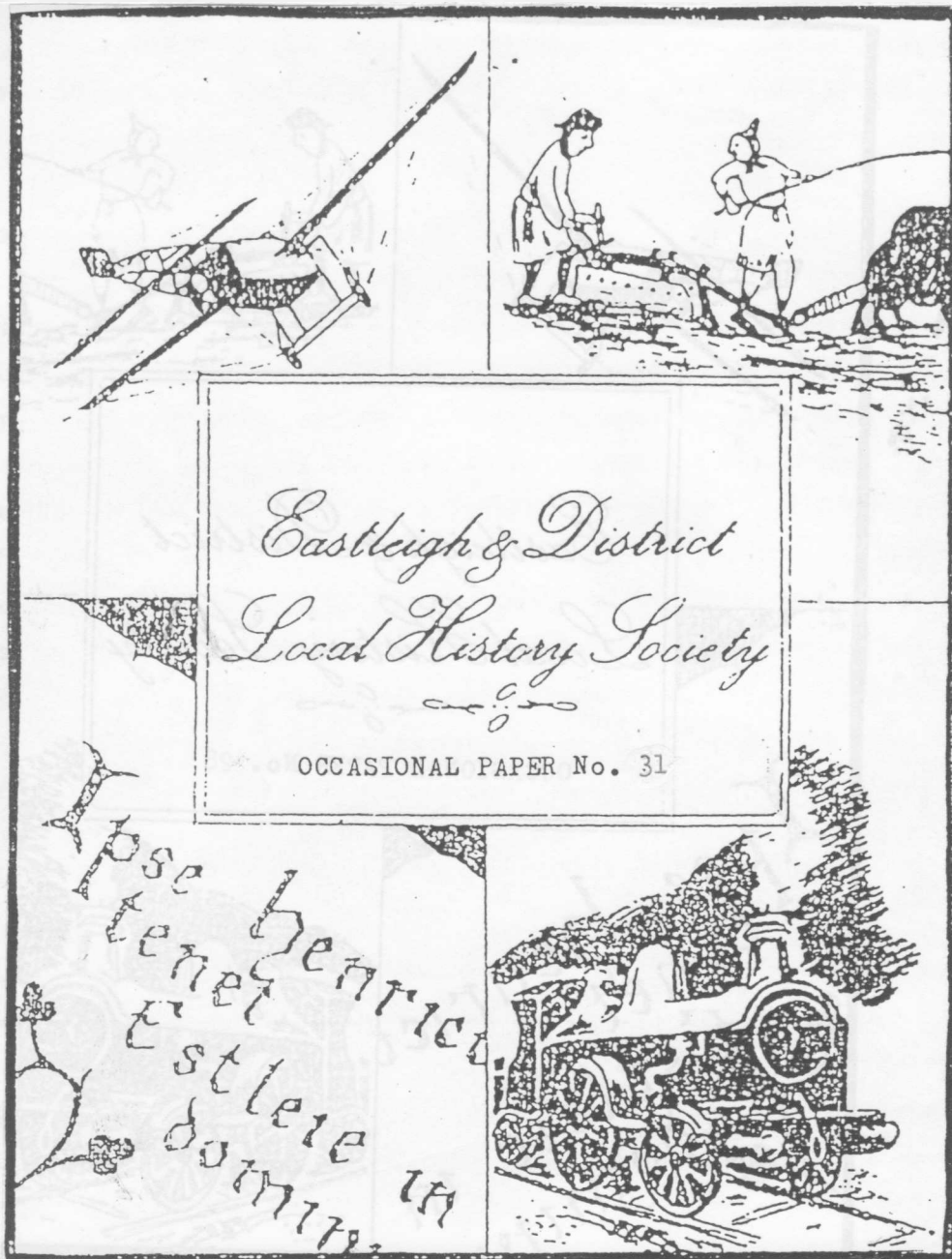
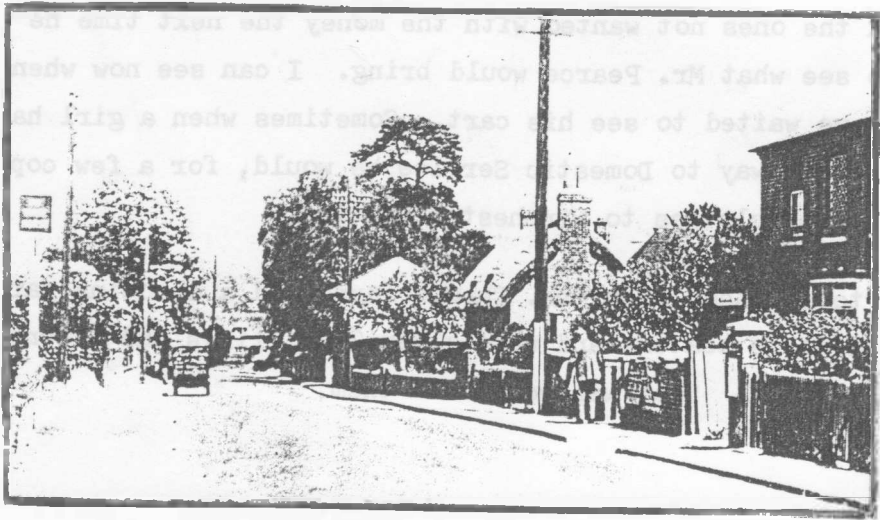
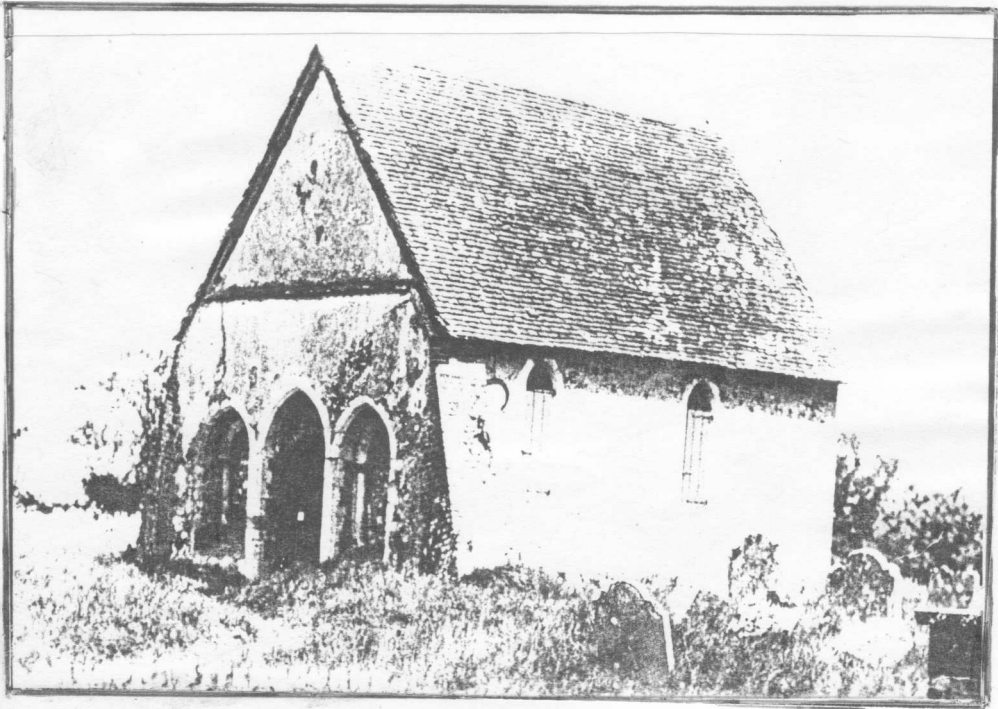


Memories of an Otterbourne childhood in the 1900s.





## MEMORIES OF AN OTTERBOURNE CHILDHOOD IN THE EARLY 1900s

I have just been reading the Parish Magazine for October 1986 and was very interested to know that some of the village children are wishful to know what the village was like many years ago. Well, I was born at 1 Stone Terrace, Otterbourne. It's over 80 years ago so my memory goes back quite a long way.

To begin with, the whole of Otterbourne was very different from the Otterbourne of today. Children can never know the happiness and freedom that we all enjoyed because many dreadful things happen these days which prevent them having the complete freedom that we had. A few years ago I wrote a book which is now in the Archives in Winchester (at least I gave it to them) in which I wrote what Otterbourne was like then, our daily life, our school, the games we played and many other things, because in those days we had to make our own amusements.

We didn't know about summer holidays away from home, unless we went for a few days to a relative but that was not usual. The only time we saw the sea was if we had made enough attendances at Sunday School. We went to Lee on Solent for a treat. We had to walk to Eastleigh Station where we joined the children from Allbrook and from Colden Common. There were also parents and friends, about 300 altogether. The train went through to Lee on Solent as there was a railway station there then and it was right alongside the beach and that always seemed to be so wonderful, to have the train coming to stop beside the sea. Now that has all gone and there are pleasant pleasure gardens now where the railway track used to be. In later years a large tower was built where the grassy common had been but the tower was taken down again some years ago. We children had to march up Pier Street in the afternoon for our tea in a marquee. Large mugs of tea, thick jam sandwiches and slab cake. Then, before we got on the train again to come home, one of the teachers came with a huge bag of sweets and scattered them over the grass and there was a scramble to pick up as many as possible. I'm afraid that I didn't for the grass seemed to be full of dirty rubbish. Anyway, that was our Sunday School outing.

The weather always seemed to be right for the seasons then, so we were never bored during our summer holidays for we could roam the woods and fields all day and the boys usually spent a lot of time at the river at Brambridge but we were never at a loss for amusement. There was no by-pass then and where the reservoir on the hill has been extended was a gravel pit with a small dew pond where the rushes grew and some of us would gather the rushes and make little baskets. Each one took two of us to be made. I wish I could show you what they were like.

Then, if we could make three, we would fill them with heather or other wild flowers or carefully peel some rushes to get lengths of white pith to make into little rosebuds. We would go to the roadside to try to sell them to people passing by on bicycles because motor cars were only just beginning to come by very occasionally. Well, if we could sell the three baskets at 2 pence each (no decimal money then) we would go to the shop near the 'Cricketers' (now the Otter) and that 6 pence would buy 1lb of mixed biscuits and 1 pennyworth of lemonade crystals and we would race home for a clean bottle of water and share the lemonade crystals to make our little lemonade drink, then share the biscuits and have a small picnic.

At times we were lucky to be given 1 penny which we spent on 4 different farthing's worth of sweets to share round for another little picnic because, in those days, we were all village children together and money was scarce and pleasures had to be earned and it seemed to be the natural thing to share. I never knew that any of them kept it secret if they were given a treat. We all were busy with our various games and pursuits and there was very little quarrelling because if that happened we were kept indoors to do some household chore to teach us to live without quarrelling.

We did have household chores to do, especially on Saturdays when, if it was fine, one thing we had to do was to go round Hocombe Road (no houses there then, just woods) and collect enough wood for lighting the fires all the week because it was all coal and wood fires then. Someone usually had an old pram and we would pile our bundles on it and take turns to push it home.

Sometimes a crowd of us would ask our mothers for a bottle of drink, sometimes water, and some bread and butter (sometimes a piece of cake) and then we would walk up to Shawford Down with an old tray and have slides up and down the slopes or fly kites that our brothers had made. We climbed trees, had paper chases, oh! so many games and interests; our 4 weeks summer holiday was never long enough to do all we wanted to do. At the end of August we picked blackberries for our mothers to make jam and pies.

We had "visitors" to the village. The Rag and Bone man came with his barrow and if we gave him jam jars he would sit on the road side and make us lovely windmills of coloured paper on sticks. Then, the chimney sweep came on his bicycle with the brushes strapped on the bark and we would run and tell him if our mothers were waiting the chimney swept. Then the muffin man walked out from Winchester with the large wooden tray of muffins on his head and he carried a large handbell. Then, on Saturdays, a man with a pony and cart came round selling winkles. There was the fish man (Mr. J. Goodchild) from Allbrook. I do remember that herrings were a penny each and bloaters twopence.

The milkman had a horse to pull the float (as it was called) with two large shiny cans of lovely fresh, sweet milk and there were two measures hooked on the side. He brought milk to the door in another can and ladled out the amount that was required in the jug that you handed him. Then there was a little man with a barrel organ and another one with a piano organ on a hand cart. He had a monkey in a red jacket who took the money you handed him and he gave it to his master. There was also a canary in a cage on the top and if you put a penny in the cage he would take a small roll of paper in his beak and post it to you through the bars of the cage. It was meant to be fortune telling!

The cars were just coming along. They were mostly open top. The drivers wore large caps and goggles and the ladies wore fine filmy scarves over their hats with a large bow under the chin. Of course, they didn't travel fast and if you were on the hill you could see them coming when they were as far away as Southdown Road because the trees then weren't much higher than the hedges and there was very little building. We started the game of running to get pencil and paper so that we could take down "motor numbers".

At times a circus made its way through from Winchester to Southampton. That took a long time to go past since the elephants led the way and they don't hurry. Then came all the animals in their cages which were on open back carts drawn by heavy cart horses, then the walking animals and their keepers and then the circus "props". I can remember a big "Oddfellows" (club) Fete in the field behind the Cricketers; where Ivy Cottages are now was one big house - "Ivy Cottage" - and down the side of it, between there and Stone Terrace, was an old building, the old Barracks. I never went inside but it used to be used for parties.

There were two small farms in the village. Mr. Percy Jewell lived in a lovely old farmhouse where Dr. Williams now lives and Mr. Fred Misselbrook who lived near the stream by Brooklyn. Then there was the Forge. Mr. Monckton was the blacksmith and he was kept quite busy with caring for all the horses at the various farms, also the hunting horses. The Forge is now a Restaurant but I have stood at those doors, now closed up, to watch the shoes being made - but I never waited to see them shoe the horses. We used to have lovely "meets" of the hounds then and the Common was filled with riders, horses and traps, people on bicycles or on foot, but gradually the farmers put more and more barbed wire round their lands and it was too dangerous for the hounds.

We used to have lovely Fetes in Cranbury Park near the lake with "all the fun of the fair" and races, flower shows, the lot! Mr and Mrs Chamberlayne, the grandparents of this present lady, were lovely people and greatly interested in us village folk. They and the other gentle folk from the Big House always were present at all the lovely socials, concerts, etc. that we had in the village in those days and they stayed until about 10 pm.

At times they brought friends down from London to make the concerts more special. I remember that one friend who came to sing was very beautiful and she wore such a lovely black lace evening dress and a gorgeous red rose. Mrs. Chamberlayne was always beautifully dressed, also her children, and they drove through the village in the magnificent carriage drawn by grey horses and the footman and coachman were in livery. Every Christmas, until the Great War came, having had a shooting party the week before, they had two farm carts loaded on Christmas Eve, one with rabbits and the other with pretty 1lb tins of tea; two rabbits and a tin of tea were delivered to every house in Otterbourne and that was very helpful in those days.

We never went to a shop when we needed new shoes because to go to Winchester we had to walk to Shawford Station and to go to Southampton we had to walk to Eastleigh to get the train there. However, there was a carrier, Mr. Pearce at Chandlers Ford, who went with his horse and cart most days and our mothers would tell him what was needed and he would bring some on approval and then take back the ones not wanted with the money the next time he went. How we waited to see what Mr. Pearce would bring. I can see now when, on dark evenings, we waited to see his cart. Sometimes when a girl had left school and was going away to Domestic Service he would, for a few coppers, take her and her box of clothes to Winchester Station.

I forgot to say that when Mrs. Chamberlayne had a shooting party, the village boys would go as beaters and were given 2 shillings and 6 pence and a bread and cheese lunch. That was wealth to them.

Poles Lane was Hursley Lane then and it was a narrow dusty lane. In the Spring the banks were covered with white violets and primroses and sometimes on May 1st we, all the school, went "a-maying" round the place to the big houses to sing our May Day songs, carrying our garlands of flowers we had picked from the woods the evening before. Then, when we had been the rounds, we were given a share of the money we had collected and then home for a half holiday. On May 24th., Empire Day, and on St. George's Day, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, we had a ceremony in the playground and saluted the flag, sang the appropriate songs and then they were half holidays. It was really a happy school and our Headmistress often did things for us which were "treats".

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