The Memoirs of Stan Jones

Early Memories

One very special day, I must have been about 2 ½ to 3 years, it was pouring with rain. I was in the kitchen of No 58 the Brache. Mum was fed up and so was I, so it was not a very happy atmosphere. Our neighbours at No 56 were a family who had escaped from Belgium, so there was talk of them being spies. No-one wished to have anything to do with them except mum. It was around midday when the back door opened and in came one of the Belgium's daughters, about twentyish. She had bought me a bag of marbles with a large bosser with colours of the rainbow running through it. My day brightened from then on as we had a brick floor with spaces in between, so that if you rolled gently you were sure to hit your object. I can still see the black grate that had to be polished with black lead. You could toast bread or herrings in front of the bars. Mum also stood the iron on it to get hot, always spitting on it to test if it was hot enough.

Another memory is of standing outside the Albion public house in Dunstable Street, Ampthill. It could have been at the end of the first war, as the pub was full of soldiers. Mum was inside, enjoying herself with some other women in the male company though. I hated the soldiers. Now and again one would come out and pin a cap badge on my jersey. I didn't want their souvenirs, I wanted my Mum. When they turned out of the pub, mum and her escort would go down to get some fish and chips from a shop run by a person named Lucy Letting, and don't forget we still had to walk home. We lived in a thatched cottage in the Knoll. The soldier would pick me up for a ride on his shoulders. I can still smell that uniform.

Chapel Outings

I visited the Methodist Chapel in the Brache. For a start a tea drinking, this was held in a field near Kings Farm. Tea was the highlight of the year for us. They would set up some trestles and stools near a hedge and they would be loaded with sandwiches, no cut bread at that time, with currant buns and a large tea urn at the end of each table. Of course we played games but not organised ones. I remember standing at the top of Badger Hill and watching a Church Sunday outing to Barton Hills for a while. They were travelling in some drays, four wheeled carts with stools along each side. I suppose they held about twenty children, pulled by a pair of horses. They were passing up Silsoe Road towards Beaumont Farm. The transport was hired from a Mr Stokes who lived on the Moor and ran a knackers yard.

The first real outing when we travelled by charabanc was to a fun fair at Bricket Wood. I understood it was near Watford. It was like travelling the length of England. Wicksteed Park was the next venue which became very popular. I have one outstanding memory of a visit to that place. I must have had some money to spend, and it was a very hot day. I must have eaten four or five ice creams, I did feel sick. I found somewhere out of the way to hide and suffer alone. It was a relief when it was time to return to the coach to return home. I visited it in later years with my family,

and having been in the Navy we took a boat out on the lake, four of the children and myself, and then my Mother decides she would like to come. We pushed off and I soon realised any rocking of the boat and the water would come onboard. We did not stay out our full half hour, and made for the shore.

School

I don't remember my first day at school but I do remember being in the infants' schoolroom, very large windows, very much like Church windows, high up with no hope of seeing out. The bench seats were long and hard, with the small desk in front. Later on they used the infants' classroom for political meetings and for voting day. One thing stands out in my mind, learning to knit. I had white wool. It was not that colour for very long. I did about 18 inches and six inches in width. Mr Eatell was headmaster of the big school, his wife in charge of the infants. Another outstanding memory, Mr Eatell was entitled to any surplus potatoes grown in the school garden and he stored them in a shed in his yard. In the spring they started to chit, grow again. Eric Burgoine and myself were asked if during the afternoon lesson we would like to go into the shed and remove the unwanted chits. We were very keen to avoid lessons so the next three days we performed this task much to Mr Eattell's satisfaction as he awarded us each with a shiny sixpence. As then a penny was a huge amount to us, I remember tearing round that school on my way home. I must have nearly taken off. My great joy was very short lived. Grandma Summerfield soon relieved me of such a large sum, with the words your Mother can do with any money there is.

The Knoll

There were six houses in a row in the Knoll and two more abutted on the back. Tabby Stanford and George Kempson lived in them and above us was Codger Northwood, Albert Robinson, Mrs Newman a widow who had two daughters, and Sidney Lane and his family. Northwood's moved up to Snow Hill, the next house to the Black Horse, and George Garner and his family came from Silsoe Road. When the first council houses were built, Albert Robinson moved to Snow Hill and George Garner got one of the four down Flitwick Road. So those two houses were left empty. Mrs Newman's daughter's got married to Alf Cole and Ray Huckle from Clophill, and later on as she passed away Sid Lane was given a council house up Clophill Road. That was when we took over the two top cottages, and as I was working I cultivated both gardens. We also claimed the old pear tree in the back yard as we were now the only tenants left.

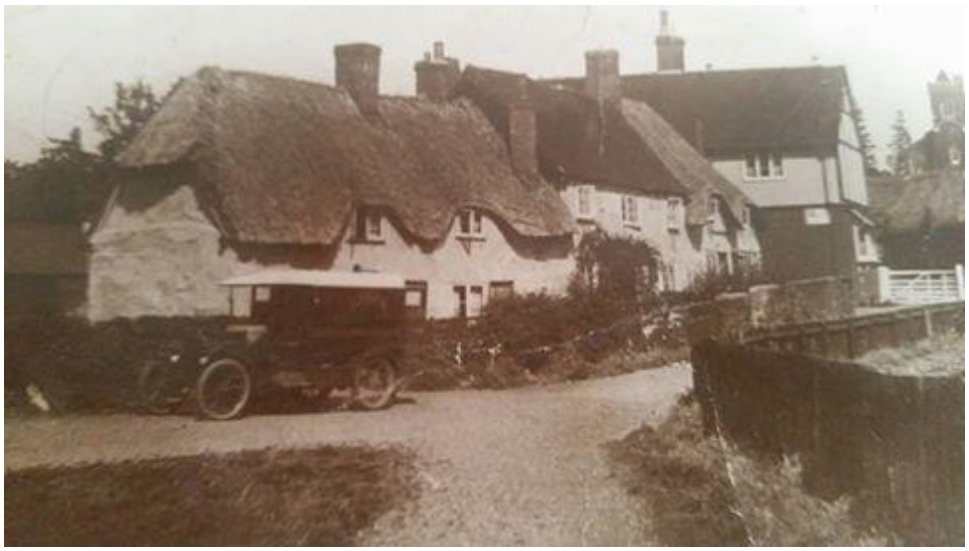
I well remember the diphtheria epidemic which occurred in the village. Nearly every family was affected. The doctor called and took what was called a swab, something placed at the back of the mouth and in the throat which was sent away for analysis. If confirmed you had diphtheria you were removed to Steppingley Hospital for isolation. I was playing in the Knoll when what we called the 'Fly' pulled up outside our abode and Mum called for me to come in. The 'Fly' was a black four wheeled carriage with the driver sitting high in front pulled by a single horse. It had dark glass windows in the doors. We could see out but no-one could recognise who was inside. On arrival we were taken to the main block and registered, then across a grass square to a wing of the hospital which contained six or eight beds. Walter Bandee was in one, father of Joe Bandee who went with me. All our clothes were removed and taken away for

fumigation, and we were put to bed. I don't think I had ever slept in a bed alone before, and those large great windows with no curtains looked very ominous at night with the light on inside and black night outside.

After the first day I really enjoyed it. I certainly wasn't ill, maybe I was a carrier. It was lovely to have warmth and regular meals. I can still taste the egg sandwiches we had at tea times. I had never eaten a whole egg before, the only taste I had had was when Gran topped a boiled egg and I was given the piece off the top. Visiting was allowed twice a week; mostly people came weekends, Sunday in fact. It was like being in a goldfish bowl, no one was allowed in the ward. Everyone was mouthing at someone through the window. After some time we were considered to be recovering. We were moved out to make room for others coming in. We had been given our clothes back ready for transfer to a galvanised tin shed part way down Fordfield Road. It was originally known as the typhoid ward but it had no tenants. We were sent there with a flea in our ear. The ward we were leaving had a lovely shiny polished wooden floor, but my old boots had a few ragged nails in the soles, and whilst we were waiting we decided to have a slide, and after a few times up and down that floor neither looked shiny or polished.

The man that drove the 'Fly' was gardener, caretaker, and general dogsbody. There was a rumour that a nurse had been attacked one night whilst crossing from the main block to our ward, and for a while always two came together. I was always expecting to see a face appear in one of the windows if I was looking at them in the night.

The first house in the Knoll



Stan was born in the end cottage nearest to the George Public House

As I understood later in life, we were like present day squatters. We moved there because the landlord could not charge rent, because the property was condemned unfit for human habitation. It consisted of one up and one down and a barn connected. At the side a door from the living room led into the barn. You had to step over about two feet high, step down into this barn but it went straight up to the roof. It had everything in there. Spiders' webs hanging from the ceiling and walls, bats, and

sparrows got in. It was scary for a little child. That dwelling had everything that lived, beetles, cockroaches, crickets, bugs, and mice. As soon as the fire started to die at night the crickets would start to serenade us, and we only had a paraffin lamp for light. The cockroaches would take a walk. When they got too many we had to then get them out. We placed a bowl in the middle of the room with some beer in the bottom. If no beer was available we used some wine. Some pieces of stick were places around the bowl for the creatures to crawl up, and they tippled into the liquid. It was very successful.

An old sea dog named Mr Parsons lived next door when we moved there, with a real old grey beard. But he died and a family from Ridgmont named Bunker came there. He had apparently lost a leg in the war, and they were as hard up as us. One thing comes to mind during the first war, was a concoction that was like 'Tea and Cocoa' mixed, a good job the water was drinkable in those days. We carried it from a pump at the bottom of the Knoll, came straight from an underground spring. The reason we were so poor my father was one of thousands of volunteers who thought war was a great adventure. I don't think they were forced to make an allowance for their families in the first war, and of cause my ole man had no intention of returning to us. I think he fancied a French maiden instead.

I was never told anything about my father and I realised in later life my mother was very fond of male company. I remember one night we were sitting in front of the fire, roasting chestnuts on the bars of the fire, our seat consisting of a plank of wood resting on an upturned bucket at each end. I sat between my mum and this soldier and how hard I tried to keep awake, but I had to give in and go to bed. My sister Millie by my dad was already living with her Grandma, and along comes Melvern when this event came along. I was sent to my Aunt Kate and had to sleep with her two daughters at the bottom of their bed. In about two years brother Bertram arrived and I was sent up to sleep with Aunt Alice's daughters bottom of the bed, but I remember there was some toe tickling going on and I got the blame. I seemed to get blamed for everything those days.

One thing my mother was she was a worker. She would do anything to earn a shilling. Hat work, laundry, or gathering peas. She would sit for hours pedalling the hat machine, turning plait into hats, they had to fit shaped blocks. Hurrying to get a lot done before they were collected. Tried on the shape, did not fit, tear them undone and start again, talk about frustration. Her blood pressure must have been way over the top. There are now 3 boys in the one bed, plus mum. The blanket was usually an old Army great coat, warm but very heavy, until a lady named Miss Moore, lived in Hall End, started a scheme whereby anyone needing them could hire a blanket for the winter months. I think it was Oct until March for one shilling and sixpence. When it was returned to be washed and cleaned ready for the next year. The next door cottage became vacant, and could not be re-let as that also was condemned, so Mother and myself started to sleep in there. We used to go in the back door. Of course our dwelling only had a front door. A papers van always came round on a Saturday afternoon, it came from Pulloxhill. Another regular visitor always on a Saturday night, winter or summer, or in the snow, was a Mr Bailey who sold boots and shoes always in a cardboard box tied on a carrier on his bike, always with a piece of string round the box. He would come in rain dripping from his trilby hat and his moustache, and pull an ordinary child's notebook from his inside pocket of his coat. The corners

would be curled and he would peer through his glasses turning pages till he came to Mum's name, put the pencil in his mouth to wet the end, and then enter Mum's payment of sixpence weekly for the last pair of shoes we had. There was prolonged pleading and arguing if we wanted another pair before the previous debt had not been cleared.

Mum found employment in a laundry down Chandos Road, Ampthill, owned by Mr Philips. I think it was 8 o'clock in the morning until 6pm. A lady called Aunt Mary looked after the others for a few shillings a week. I looked after myself. Grandma's was my haven if I was in any difficulty, in fact she had a much bigger influence on my life than my Mother did, although by now I was beginning to think I was the man of the house. I remember Mum was having a slanging match with a Mr Newberry who lived in the row at the bottom of the Knoll near the pump. I can't bring to mind what it was about, kids I suppose, so I decided to put my pennyworth in to support Mum. All I got was a clip around the ears and told in no uncertainty to shut up, but I think it took their mind off the dispute. It quietened down after words. I suppose I am between seven and eight now, and spent quite a lot of time with my Grandparents. Philip thinks I can help him on his allotments, mostly pulling weeds up, or fetching and carrying, running errands, and taking messages.

Philip Summerfield

Martha Summerfield

I must explain at this stage Grandma Martha was known by everyone in the village as Aunt Martha. She was like the midwife for the village, attended births, and laid out the stiffs. I suppose it was because she had had so many children of her own, 13 that she had knowledge. Only 9 survived. If the doctor was sent for his first question was is Aunt Martha there? If not he had no need to hurry, in fact sometimes he did not turn up. That year in the winter I used to accompany Gran on her expeditions to carry the candle lantern. The wind blew and the candle flickered casting shadows on everything that moved. At this period of my life Granddad worked for Ted Fisher a Market Gardener. He owned a piece of land at the top of Badger Hill, so in the winter it was very cold. Gran would say you hurry home from school and run up Clophill Road to take Philip's hot dinner, a dumpling, potatoes and brussels, taken from the pot, placed in a basin, and tied with a cloth to help keep it warm. Always in a red handkerchief with white spot placed, and the four corners tied at the top, so that I could put my fingers through the loop and run with it. My reward was what was called a swimmer. A piece of dough, flattened and floated on top of the saucepan, taken out, a piece of marg put on top and a dusting of sugar. It tasted like nectar to a hungry lad. When I arrived out of breath Gramp would throw an old coat or a sack on the bank, out comes his shutknife, and usually he would carve me a small portion off the end of his dumpling but it never contained any meat.

The next winter Mum was still working at the laundry and an old lady named Mrs Smith lived in a thatched cottage below the Dog and Badger. One night, walking home from Ampthill, someone jumped out of the hedge in the dark and frightened them, so that for some weeks, after when I came out of school, I had to walk to that laundry and wait outside in the dark until Mum finished then accompany them home. Some nights if it was very cold or rough, we would walk Mrs Smith home and then return to the Knoll. The laundry closed down so Mum had no income at all, and we are desperately hard up. I accompanied Mum to Chandos Road, Ampthill, to see a Mr Jeffs who dispersed what was called Parish Relief. All she asked, pleaded, begged, nearly cried for, was 3 half-crowns and she was to pay it back if she earned any

money in the near future. Every small shop in them times had to give credit, otherwise they would never have shifted their stock. One evening we sat in that old cottage, Mum was so hungry she found a few dry crusts of bread, put them in a basin, poured on some hot water, and added pepper and salt just to give it some taste. Until I went hawking at Bedford on a Saturday with Isaac Stokes, lived on the Moor, I had never tasted butter, it was always lard, dripping, or margarine, and not always some of them. My outfits were always a jersey and trousers, no vest or pants. In fact during the cold winter I slept in my jersey, got up in the morning with a ring of flea bites around my neck.

We had a bakery first at the 'George', and later up Sleaford End. There was also a baker named Vass which called twice a week and came from Pulloxhill. Sally Parrott kept the small shop in the Knoll, and her husband went around with a pony and cart selling fish, mostly herrings, and very cheap. Occasionally someone would be coming out from Bedford selling fish or muffins, and an ice-cream salesman with a three wheeled cycle with a wheel at the back and box on the front, with a metal container holding the ice-cream which was surrounded by crushed ice. Another visitor came around selling leather laces which all the men had in their boots. He was known as "Black and Brown" as he sold both colours. I well remember when the R101 crashed in France, someone in Bedford printed single sheets of paper about six by four, with the particulars on, and we were running around the village yelling out and charging sixpence for this piece of paper. Not a great sale I'm sure. Another occasion I would ask Gran's assistance. A man would come around the village presenting windmills on a stick for some empty jam jars. She usually found me some. They whirled round if you ran with them when it was not blowing. Another regular visitor was a Mr Vintner who came from Flitwick with horse and trolley with a huge container of paraffin on the tailboard, and hanging on it were brass measures from a pint, quart, and a gallon not used very often. In the trolley he had washing baskets, pots, pans, saucepans, bowls, string, pegs, and other knick knacks.

The village had a blacksmith and an undertaker. Charlie Draper was the smith, quite a character was Charles. He always took a liquid lunch at the 'George', and woe betide any horse which misbehaved when Charlie returned, or us boys, if we called in on our way home from school. If we interfered with his fire, lighting our newspaper fags, many times Charlie chased us out of the shop with a red hot shoe in his fingers threatening to hang it round our necks. There was an apple tree behind the shop, and sometimes he would allow us to go out and pick up some of the fallers. Another time when he was distracted, someone would creep through the door, but woe betide him if Charlie noticed he was missing. Everyone scattered and ran for safety. Dave Northwood was the undertaker and had a long shed behind his dwelling. He lived in Ampthill Road next to Juff Fisher. There was a roadway which led round the back yard. It was the entrance to the pathway called Shorts which led to Moor Lane. The coffins looked really lovely, seemed such a pity to bury them, and the smell of the wood was so intense. The hearse was hand drawn, four wheels and a pillar at each corner which supported a roof with toggles hanging around the rim. The coffin was loaded from the rear, and then the rail which ran around the floor was put back in place. The undertaker preceded the hearse, the bearers walked each side of the hearse so that they were in position to pull or push when necessary. The followers would walk behind. Anyone who met the funeral they would stop and men remove their

hats. To tell the village when someone died the churchman would toll a bell, three for a man, two for a female, and one for a child.

One Summer Holiday

This was the year of the terrible trio, Herbie Inskip, Joe Bandee and myself. We spent all the summer holiday together. We wandered everywhere. One day we decided we would visit Wilstead Wood. We were not even sure where it was, but we set off, a bottle of water and some slices of bread, down Green End to 'Trilley', and on to the old A6. Heading up the road to Deadmans Hill we saw a tramp come out of the wood. On seeing us he dived back into the wood. This looked ominous to us three lads and we decided to abandon our expeditions at once. We were always hungry. We would go across the allotments and help ourselves to a carrot or a turnip, perhaps a few peas. I don't think they were missed. We capped it all at the end of the holiday. It was hot and dry but we decided to have a fire on the sandpit. We thought it would be safe if we dug a hole in the bank but the flames licked up the bank and set light to the grass. We were trying to put it out when someone came. We took off down 'Wainwrights' and hid in a field of growing corn, and we stayed there until it was nearly dark. Having ginger hair, everyone saw me and recognised who it was, so I was always the one the police came to see. We crawled through holes in the ridge to scrump some apples on the ground. Mr Wren had a tree of bullies hung over the brook so he could see all around above ground. We would walk under the arch and up the brook to gather some as we did not like him. They thought they were above our station, but later on I did find out his daughter had pinched some money at school. The boy who to worked in the shop happened to say she had bought some sweets. I knew her parents were too mean to give her any money.

We were going through Maulden Wood for a stroll when we spied smoke curling up through the trees in Limbersey Wood. Being nosy we went to investigate. It was a gypsy caravan parked in the siding with a boy and girl about our ages. The caravan fascinated me, just the kind of life I desired. I asked if their parents would take me with them when they moved on. Yes was the answer. As my two mates left me there and went home, we were playing quite happily together until we went into the caravan. During our playing the clock got knocked over, and when we picked it up it had stopped. We shook it but it made no difference to the clock. I was of cause accused of being the one who knocked it over, and what their parents would not do to me when they returned did not bear thinking about. All thought of being a travelling person went clean out of my mind. I was on my way as fast as my legs would carry me, and a sharp lookout was kept for any gypsies going through the village for the next few days. I am confident that type of life would have suited me.

Another event in this time was an escapade on the water. There was a stream running under New Road from the Running Waters at Flitwick, and was known to us as 'Fan Furlong'. It skirted Dick Coles land and in two places, it spread out into small lakes with bulrushes in the middle in which moorhens had built nests which we could see from the bank had eggs in them. As none of us could swim we decided to build a raft, with four gallon cans with pieces of wood lashed on top with string. We pushed off from the shore quite confident, but suddenly realised the raft was tilting and rowed for the shore slowly but surely sinking. The last effort was a despairing row. Landed in the drink, but near enough to touch the bottom and reach the bank.

Working life

When I was about 10 and a bit I had been helping Gramp on his allotment down 'Armbrose', opposite the Post Office. We were walking up the roadway, cart ruts and all. Everything was transported either by wheelbarrow or horse and cart. His brother Alfred Summerfield who was a Market Gardener, due to the fact the Rev. Bromley by whom he was employed as a Osler and gardener left him his horse on his death. He was looking over some runner beans he was growing on his piece of ground when out of the blue a question from Gramp. Can't you find a job for the boy after school, keep him out of mischief? I was shown how to crop the beans. They were ground in those days and runners had to be pinched back. I had to report for duty after school the next evening. That was not a very happy period of my life as I was actually afraid of him, and he was always keeping his eye on me. Really it was a learning period and I had not been used to obeying instructions. The next season 'summertime' I would be there 7am till 8am before school an hour, at lunchtime 12 till 1pm and again after school. At the end of the summer the little jobs I had been doing ceased to exist so I was free once more, but Mum or someone had other ideas and found me a Saturday job with Isaac Stokes.

He went round Bedford hawking vegetables at the big houses. My job was to go round to the back door and take the order from the cook then deliver them and receive payment. It meant me getting up at 4am and walking across 'Shorts' to have some buttered toast, it tasted like nectar. Mrs Stokes would be doing the toast by holding it on a long handled fork in front of the bars of the fire. Mr Stokes would be out in the stable grooming and feeding the horse. It pulled a four wheel trolley with metal rims on the wheels. You could hear them crushing the gravel by the roadside. Mr Stokes and I sat perched high up on a seat at the front, and had candle lamps on each side of the trolley, cast flickered rays of light all around. We had a rug around our knees, and if it rained or snowed an umbrella big enough to cover both of us. No need to see where we were going, the horse knew the way. Half way across 'Shorts' stood a very large Elm tree. In the dark it looked very forbidding, and when the wind blew it creaked and groaned. When I got past it I could see Stokes's light like a beacon beckoning, that's when I dare run. We would leave the Moor about 5am so that we arrived at the shop on the corner of St Cuthbert's at about 7am. It was owned by Mr Drumwell. I understood his son played Rugby for Bedford Town. We then proceeded along Castle Road into Rothsay Gardens where I started to call on the houses. From there into Bushmead Avenue, and worked our way round to De Parys Avenue. At around 2pm we put in at the Coach and Horses in Prebend Street where the horse would be fed and watered and given a rest. We would go into a back room of the Pub, Stokes was a teetotaller, where we would have a sandwich and a mineral water. Two incidents come to mind.

One frosty icy morning we got to the 'Darklings' side of Hazelwood Lane Dell and the horse kept slipping back and nearly going down, so Isaac got down. The horse was wearing special shoes for the winter. On the back hoofs there was a threaded hole in the back of each shoe, and he had some frost which to screw into the holes, and away we went. A not so pleasant experience was on a very frosty morning, it was perishing. Isaac decided to get down and have a walk to get some life back into his feet, leaving me on the seat with the reins. Nothing to it until we were passing over

Ampthill Road Bridge. An engine was doing some shunting on the railway below. She would normally ignore noises 'the mare' but suddenly it blew a huge cloud of smoke up one side, and as it passed under another came up the other side that proved too much for her. She took off, hoofs clattering on the road, me standing up hanging on to the reins nearly being pulled onto her back. As would have it Isaac had got a bit in front, and managed to run and grab her bridle before she got past where we should have been.

The next winter I had a new job nearer home. A Mr Garner 'George' who lived in the Knoll near us, kept his horse in what we called the 'Granary' at the back of the houses. It had stabling, and an open part to keep the trolley under. It also had a loft with a window looking out over George Street. Originally I should say it was for putting the produce in the loft from the road. We went to Luton, and our route started at Crawley Green Road on the right just under the Railway Bridge. It was different from the Bedford, instead of going to take an order you knocked on the door and a lady came out. That road stood out for me because three parts of the way up was a bakers shop owned by Redrup and Starkings, and Mr Barnes would go and get a couple of doughnuts. They were hot just out of the pan, you could warm your hands as well as your belly. We could not get up that street quick enough for me. We made our way down to Bury Park. There was a real old crone lived in a house on the corner of that road. She had a very large bird on a stand in the middle of the kitchen with a strap on its leg so it could not get away. I thought at the time it was a very large parrot, but I think now it was a Macaw. Looked real wicked and I found out it was when I passed to near one day and it attacked me. She blamed me, but I did not go round there again.

We then proceeded along Dunstable Road and up 'Maiden Hair', something like that. It led up past the front of Luton Town Football and then into Dallow Road, where there was a football ground. How I longed to be there instead of running round houses. Straight opposite this ground there lived a couple of dear old ladies, I think they were sisters. It came Xmas, and when I went to take vegetables to them they were both there and gave me a sixpence. I went to put it in my bag but they said had I got anywhere to keep it apart from my masters' money. I said no so one went away and found me a small purse to put it in, very touching. Little did they know that's all I got to keep separate. That evening did not turn out very well at all. It was a brilliant moon and it was freezing, so I got underneath the cart cloth which covered the trolley. I was fast asleep when suddenly there was a bang, and the sound of an engine racing near by. Peeking from under the sheet I could see a three wheeled Morgan car in the ditch, its exhaust smoke rising in the frosty air. Apparently it had clipped the corner of our trolley and set us on skew, the trolley was going along slightly sideways. We managed to get to the Speed the Plough where they sorted out who was at fault. Our lamps were in order. A new order was that cart lamps had to have a red glass at the back, but as it was a bend the car hadn't seen us. The trouble was the trolley was askew, and we had to borrow a red bicycle lamp, and I had to sit on the corner of the trolley holding it all the way to Maulden. I was frozen stiff by the time we arrived and Mr Garner told me to go straight home instead.

My next escapade capped all previous events in life. I went to Bedford cattle market on a Saturday with a drover in his donkey cart. The pubs were open all day and all business was carried out in the pub, so if you wanted work you had to visit the bar

regularly. Chaos has never been like it since the cattle and sheep were sold in one yard on the left hand side. Straight opposite the pigs were sold if they were going a long way they would be taken off to Commercial Road into the Rail Yard at the top. Can you imagine half a dozen cattle with a score of sheep? Then someone comes out with ten pigs to join in from across the way. A drover with each lot plus their boys, and some had dogs. Then half way up the street the Smiths would be galloping their horses in front of prospective buyers. One of our longest journeys was to take a cow and its calf to a farm at Clifton. I think it was a late buy, and none of the other drovers wanted the job at that time of day. Must have been 4pm when we took the job. We put the young calf in the back of our trap. Jack was sure the cow would follow so we rode and the cow followed until we got the other side of Cardington when she took off into a field. "Fetch her back boy" came the order, and the boy quickly obeyed. He had a whip and a stick and the way he used them on the donkey I did not wish to feel them. We arrived at the farm in Clifton at around 9.30pm and it was decided we stay the night and come home on Sunday. The farmer's wife gave us some bread and cheese and some cocoa and we slept in the hay loft. I certainly slept very well. Jack entered his moke in the donkey races in the area. I was to ride it being a light weight. There was a sudden change of plan. Jack had the idea of riding it with a sack under him. He said if he got in front he would drop the sack and the other donkeys would not pass. It did not work much to the delight of the other competitors, and the crowd. When he tried to pull the sack from under him he fell off.

At fourteen I leave school, and of course I have to go to Alf Summerfield's. A firm from Woburn Sands used to collect our vegetables to take to market. They were named Jackson Bros., and they came twice a week, Monday and Thursdays. They were load days. Everything had to be transported into the shed mostly by wheelbarrow, and we had loads on Bury Hill, Town Close, Church Lane and some allotments. During the winter months he would loan me out to someone else to save paying my measly wages. I started at 12 shillings a week of which I gave my mother 10 shillings, keeping the 2 for myself. I had the chance of buying an old second-hand bicycle for 14 shillings. It took me months to save up for it. We worked seven days a week from 7am until 5pm and 7am to 1pm on a Saturday. This was quite a problem when I started to play football as in deep winter they kicked off at 2pm. I worked for him until I was 18 years when he made the mistake of letting me out for the winter to a very good employer, Andrew Sinfield, and when it came springtime I decided to stay with him. That was a shock for Alfred, but I really enjoyed my few years with him, and it enabled him and his wife to take their very first holiday with me in charge of the firm. I stuck with Andrew until I broke my leg at football, and as it was early spring, the busy time, he had to employ someone else, and my leg took so long to heal I thought it unfair to sack the other person just to allow me to come back.

My next job was at the brickworks. They had just formed a new football team to play in the 2nd division of the South Midlands League, way above any league I had played in. The bricklayers' foreman was in charge of the team, and he had reunited quite a few good players from up Northeast. I received a message from one of the employees in the village that there was a labourer's job available providing I signed on to play football for them. Naturally I accepted. I worked there until 1939 when there was a scare about the war starting and certain men were sacked. I was one of them, so I returned to the land for a few months working for Mr Stanford up Kings Farm. When we were gathering Brussels during the winter I would take my ferret with me and

catch a few rabbits to help with our rations. Early in 1940 bricks were required for bomb shelters and bats and rubble for the base airdrome runways. Jack Roberts at the bottom of the Brache worked down at Eastwoods, Kempston Hardwick. They were looking for brick drawers, the job I finished with at London Brick, so I returned to that job until I was called up for the forces.

On my discharge after the war I returned to Eastwoods until I had passed middle age, and I found I was getting very tired and no longer enjoying my work, and I heard of a job going at Bert Inskip's dealing in fruit and vegetables. He promised to teach me to drive a lorry as that was part of the job. I stuck at it for about six years, the drawback of the job was it involved a lot of evening work, so when I heard a milk rounds man was required at Maulden Dairies I applied and was accepted. What appealed about this job was you were your own boss. It meant early mornings and a midday finish with plenty of spare time I worked there for the rest of my active life. When I was about 64½ I had a replacement hip operation from which it took me sometime to recover. But later on I was approached about going part time for the Dairy doing the outlying parts which involved more riding than walking. I really enjoyed my time on the milk, and like to feel I had a good relationship with my customers who still greet and converse when we meet only occasionally.

Football

I was football crazy all my active life, nothing else mattered. I was content with my life, football and a few pints with male company, not the least interested in girls until two scheming women trapped me, but I still continued with my sport. I used to go down Godfreys' field in Silsoe Road to watch my first matches, and can still remember most of the team. Nev Taylor in goal, Poker Sharp right back, and Blanche King left back. Wally Lobby from Clophill, later married Ruben Stamford's daughter, and Albert Sadler emigrated to Australia. The centre forward was a school

master from Bedford, he always played in a little school cap. I don't know if he was bald, I don't think he liked to head the ball very much. Whilst they played down there no boys were allowed on the pitch at kick in before they started. The only time we touched the ball was when it passed the goal. In time they moved up to the recreation ground, and when I was about fourteen I was allowed out front at kick in, and I used to give my Uncle Art who was at the end of his career the run around with the ball, and did he swear at me.

The football season started in September, and I played my first league game for Maulden Reserves when I was 14 years 5 months. I suppose it was because they were a man short, it was on the left wing being I was only a right footer player at the time. I corrected that later. The next season I was approached by someone from Millbrook football club to sign on for them, they played in the Luton League. I shall never forget that first match we played in a field adjoining Warren Farm. I cycled over to there in pouring rain, changing under a cart hovel, and I played my heart out that first match; I chased anybody or everybody to get that ball. I realised afterwards how raw and crude I was, tons of energy but mostly wasted. When the next season started Clophill invited me to go and play in a pre season friendly versus Haynes. Three Maulden men already played for Haynes, Stilla Northwood a cousin of mine, John Devonshire and Cyril Stanbridge 'Stonna'. They all went up on motorbikes and I was asked to sign on for Haynes. Stonna had a Velocette, a beautiful bike and he rode it lovely. Admitted he was sometimes three parts in the wind but we always arrived home. After home matches we always returned to Mrs Mayes house nearly opposite the 'Greyhound'. Her son Stan Mayes played right half in the team, a very neat player, was talk that Bedford Town were interested in him. We sat down to Ham and Salad teas with all eyes on the clock, six o'clock over to the Greyhound for starters, later on across to Deadmans Cross. I think now the landlady was the attraction, quite a lively lass who joined them in games of darts. Being only 16 ½ I had to sit in the corner out of the way, but I did save Stilla's life one night. He went outside to make water near a fence which had upright slats pointed at the top. He seemed some time coming back so I went out to see where he had got to, and found him slumped against the fence with his head between two of these slats, and that was what was supporting him. I did think he would have choked as he was no longer able to stand. We got him back to Mrs Mayes and he laid on her couch for a few hours. I think we arrived home about 2.30am. He rode home on the back of Devonshire. Stonna pulled up at the top of the Knoll, left his engine running whilst I got off. There were quite a few comments next morning about noisy motorbikes, and people coming at all hours.

I started next season with Haynes, but after a few games someone asked me if I would join Ampthill Rovers. They had a lovely pitch in the Park. A level surface and when the beech leaves fell on the pitch, perfect for sliding under an opposing winger. We won the 3rd division of the Beds League that season. Our final match, the decider for the league, was versus Wilstead at Wilstead on Easter Monday morning. I had played left back all season, but our centre half was injured so I switched to his position and an old player named Fred Jolly took over from me. It was a wet heavy pitch, but we eventually ran out winners by a goal to nil. That was the biggest crowd I ever saw at a local match, the estimate was two thousand. The next season the team started to break up so I returned to play centre forward for the village team, and soon found I was left to carry the can for everything. I attended the Parish Council meeting to try and obtain a good pitch to play on. During my time with Maulden we played in the

Recreation Ground straight across from the gate. It was not a full size pitch and the right hand corner flag was up a slope, difficult to take a corner from that side. Some idea of the state of the pitch, we had been playing ten minutes when a rabbit suddenly shot out of a burrow and belted up the hill into a hole. We played in the field up at Old Farm for a while, and another we played in Devonshire's field, North Limbersey farm, all just ordinary pastures with cow muck and all.

I had been gathering brussels all week for Jimmy Lockey and about six o'clock Friday evening a message was received at Charlie Kirby's shop. He had a small club at the back with a billiard table. Could he contact me to see if I could turn out for Luton Town reserves in the London Combination versus Leicester City reserves. Would I, I was over the moon, didn't stop to think. I had to ask Eustace Atkins a mate to come with me. I suddenly realised I did not know my way to the ground. We arrived in plenty of time, a bit apprehensive, not made any better when Tommy Fait the regular centre forward wanted to know who the hell was this S Jones put in his place? He was playing but at inside forward. When I saw these professionals getting ready I wondered if we were going into battle, rolls of cotton wool around the ankles on the instep, and around the shins under their guards. I was advised by the trainer to do the same. I did not think it necessary but when I came off that pitch I knew it was. It was the roughest game I ever played in. They had a big centre half and he soon let me know this wasn't going to be any joy ride. A long ball from the back, and I beat him to it but as I went to trap it and turn he belted the back of my leg and the ball went back the way it came. When the second half started Tait said to me change places, I'll sort him out. It was not long before Tait had him over the railings fighting like hell. On another occasion, a long ball out to the left. I got there first and as the back came across to tackle me I put the ball one side of him and went to go the other. He didn't bother about the ball, just mowed my legs from under me. I did manage to get the ball into the net with a glancing header, just beating the goalie to it, but the linesman flagged for out of play before the centre came in. The evening paper was all about weak referee and the record number of fouls. I survived a lot of them.

When I stepped off the bus at Clophill Road my legs just gave way. It took some time for all the bruising to come out. They were interested in me as they asked me to sign London Combination forms before I left, and they laughed when I only asked for my bus fare as expenses. Biggleswade was being used as a nursery side for Luton at the time, and the next season I had a visit from a Mr Hill who was Chairman of Biggleswade, and two of their committee asked would I sign on for them in Northants League. I agreed and the first game was versus Stanford away. I cycled to Biggleswade railway station to meet the rest of the team, never seen any of them before, but there was a little chap who was ugly, a kind of distorted face but he turned out to be a very good footballer. He was also very friendly, and quickly made me feel comfortable. They asked me if there was anyone else I could recommend, so that they could send transport for me. We had a friendly with Letchworth over the holiday so I took Benny Billington. He was good on the right wing for Maulden, a strong shot and a good player. His biggest failing was his mouth, but the occasion proved too much for him, he played a stinker. I tried to give him the ball as much as possible, but he made a hash of every move.

The next season the calamity happened with the breaking of my leg. We were playing Kettering at home, and most of these players were semi pro's, worked all week but

were paid a small sum for playing, went down as expenses. Some of them had played two or three different clubs in this league as they knew a lot of other players and their habits. They warned me before the match watch their right half Neal, he's a dirty B. He got me, I went to meet a long ball from a goal kick, it went well over his head, but as I put my leg out to trap it he stamped straight on my shin. They told me afterwards you could hear the crack all around the ground, they knew it was broken. We had to wait, seemed like hours, for a police ambulance to arrive. I am sure that had no springs; I felt every bump in that road to Bedford Hospital, the Brittania Road entrance. They sat me on a table with my leg hanging down, me trying to support it while they wrapped plaster of paris around it. At that time it was bandages impregnated with some which were soaked and then wrapped around your leg, and I had to sit and wait until it set. A nurse noticed I was near to fainting so she held my leg up for me until they finished. I think I got home to Clophill Road about 9.30pm, quite a surprise for Mum when she answered the front door and found me being carried in on a stretcher as no one had let her know. After a couple of sleepless nights due to intensive pain the doctor was called out.

Dr Parry, his surgery was in Dunstable Street where the Council Offices are now, previously Dr Garner's surgery. I can visualise it even now, normal residence, the living room was the waiting room. You had to remember how many were there before you so that you took your turn, no appointments. The lounge was where the Doctor saw you, and what was the kitchen previously was the Dispensary, usually a bottle of medicine. All he could prescribe for me was a couple of sleeping tablets. They gave me a few hours but the pain was just as intense during the day so he was called out again. By now the leg was ballooning both above and below the plaster of paris, and he decided to send me back to hospital. More suffering when they tried to cut off the plaster of paris. They took all the skin and blood blister which had formed on the bruising all the way down the skin. When they decided to put it back in plaster they could only put a strip down each side, leaving the back and front of the leg exposed so that it could be dressed, just a band around the knee and ankle. On removing the plaster I had to put up with them breaking every hair on my leg which had stuck to the plaster when first put on. I made sure that the second lot would not have hair attached when the time came to remove it. As the swelling gradually subsided, I moved it up and down, gradually breaking the hair. I spent my 21st birthday in bed with a broken leg.

I attended outpatients at Bedford Hospital and of course every time saw a different Doctor, and after about 2 months it was decided the time had come to remove the plaster. I told them the leg still pained me, but the Doctor said in time it should be healing. I gradually started to use the leg but it never felt right. I got around to hop about the Tennis Court in the afternoon, in fact I partnered a girl in a mixed doubles match versus Westoning. After about another 3 months my Doctor informed me he was going to sign me off the National Insurance otherwise he would be in trouble with the authorities. I told him I was not fit for work and would return to the hospital. He said they would not see me without a letter from him, and when I got down there I began to think he was right. I caught a bus from Ampthill at 10am and fell in the queue at the outpatients and took my turn to see the Doctor. He held his hand out for the Doctor's letter and when I said I did not have one he refused to deal with me, and Sister told me to wait outside until they were finished. I did as was told, and when they came out she promised to see someone would see me. Hours passed but I stuck

it out, nothing to eat or drink, but I wouldn't shift. Eventually she was passing that way again, and realised I would not be put off. She obtained permission for an X ray to be taken, and it found that the break was still in position, but no healing was taking place. I was told to go home and return next day to see a bone specialist, a Mr Storey. It was now 4pm when I caught my bus home.

The next morning I met Mr Storey. He came to the conclusion my bones were dry and no calcium was running which would heal the break, and it was put back in plaster and I had to go on a diet, plenty of milk and eggs. The next football season had started and I still was not fit to play, so one hot Saturday afternoon, Shefford were playing Stewartby Works team, and we decided to cycle over to Shefford to watch. The Stewartby coach passed us at Beadlow and apparently their manager was sitting in the back seat, and he must have heard about me because on the Monday after, Joe Billing, who worked at Stewartby, came to our house with a message from Bob Denton, bricklayers foreman and in charge of football, wanted to know if I was interested in signing on for them at football and a job as a labourer down the yard. Would I. I had been living on charity for 9 months, Biggleswade insurance had only lasted part of the time. The girls who were in my last class at school held a dance in the Church Hall for me, and presented me with Ten Pounds, a magnificent effort for which I was very grateful. Although not fit I turned out for their 2nd eleven versus Wootton, a local derby. I scored the only goal of the game, not with my gammy leg, but squatting to head it in.

The next week I was in the first eleven, not at centre forward but at left back. It was in the second division of the newly formed South Midlands league. We only had 11 goals scored against us that season, remained unbeaten and only one drawn game. That was when I scored an own goal, I really got a ribbing about that. The next season had started, and I was inside the belfry at the Church, a practise ringing, when three gentlemen from Bedford Town turned up. Mr Baker, the secretary, wished to know if I would sign on for them in the Northants League. At that time, providing they were different leagues, you did not need to obtain a transfer. I signed on and in the first match way to Corby, they were the steel works team mostly older pros from Scotland. The pitch was new, bumpy and very wet. They were near the top of the league, Bedford one from bottom. We beat them 5-2. I scored 2 of those and the first one is still very clear in my memory. I noticed their two backs were very fond of passing across the pitch to each other. They did it once too often. I was fairly fast at that time, and when the right back passed across once two often, I beat the right back to the ball, and as soon as I saw the goalkeeper leaving his line I planted a firm right foot shot into his left hand corner of the net, and we were away. I scored seven goals in seven games and they included two local derbies against Biggleswade over the Xmas period. I scored with a glancing header beating the goalkeeper to the rear post, but Mr Bowles stuck his knees into my thigh muscle so that I did not do much more in that game. I got my own back at Biggleswade. They had a new left back who had been on trial with Tottenham Hotspur, a long ball down the wing he was quite casual but arrived at the same time, took the ball off him, came inside the right backs challenge round the goalie and walked it into an empty net. Mr Hill came to me after that and told me he had begged his committee to sign me again when my leg had mended.

Luton Town were playing West Ham in the Cup. Some of my mates were going so I informed Bedford early in the week I should not be available. The new centre forward scored in my place. The next week I had no communication from Bedford, not even selected for the reserves, so I quit. I did not think that was fair treatment after the fuss they had made of me previously. I returned and played for Maulden. We managed to win the 3rd division of the Beds League, and at the outbreak of war we had a very young side in which I played at centre half. Unfortunately at the outbreak of war football in the Leagues was abandoned. Some of the larger clubs carried on in cup competitions, and I guested for Marston Shelton, also for the Territorial Army team who played mainly friendly games. When I was called up we played trials for the training camp and I was selected. We played against some of the best teams in that area. We held our own quite well. I played in teams at Chatham, always mid week games. On joining the ship, the Captain in his speech of greeting informed us he wanted our ship to be a sporting ship, as that would make it a happy ship. I could only agree. That's how it turned out to be. I was a member of all the ships teams, including the small bore shooting team. The climax was to be selected for the Royal Navy team versus Tommy Walkers 'Scottish International' touring team of professionals in Trincomalee. I played left back and we only lost 2–1 in the last few minutes. The ships team won the Trincomalee Shield which was open to all ships and their bases in the area of Ceylon, and our Mess Team won.

Marriage on 11th December 1937

When I first met Anne it was never a case of love at first sight. I was quite happy with my pint of beer and my football. I had resisted all the village girls whom I had walked out with, but Anne was something different. She spoke so much better than me, but we had conversation when I called at The Chequers as she would some times be helping Cis behind the bar. After a while Cis called me on one side and suggested I take Anne to the pictures in Bedford one evening as she didn't know anyone else, and Cis knew she could trust me, although I was no picture man, but I agreed and took her. I can't even remember which cinema we went to, but in the winter months I found myself cycling to the 'Chequers' for a pint as opposed to walking down the 'George', and eventually asked her home to tea at our house up Clophill Road. I did not use buses much so I said we would walk. It was a lovely afternoon, and I could see nothing wrong when we reached the top of Snow Hill. Anne asked how much farther. I pointed to Clophill Road and said only to the top of the next hill, not realising what a long way it was for her. I mean I had been chasing a cockney sparrow all week down the brick yard. When Anne had recovered enough to return home to London we corresponded for a while, then I arranged with Mum to have Anne down for the weekend. Her job entailed her working Saturday all day so she could only come Saturday evening and return on Sunday. I would meet her in Luton 'Park Square' off the Green Line bus and we would have fish and chips, and then walk down Mill Street to get a bus for Maulden or Clopill.

After some time it was a bit of a drag all that travelling for just Sunday together, so we decided it was better for Anne to get another job when she could finish on Friday evening and come straight from work, which she managed to do. I can still remember the first time I visited her home. We agreed that I would ring her office on arrival at St Pancras. Precise instructions had been given to me about the phone. I had never used one before. I rang the office and someone answered, and I hesitated whether to say anything or not because it did not sound anything like Anne's voice. But I chanced it, and she came from work and met me so that I got on the right bus. It was a real eye opener for me. I think the only time I had been to London was by coach 'charabanc' to the Wembley Exhibition on a school outing. It was just as well Anne met me. We crossed the road outside St Pancras and buses kept pulling up all with different numbers on, and destination boards which did not mean a thing to me, but with four more in front of it Anne said this is ours coming.

After the initial journey I did not need assistance to find my way and I had no fear of meeting her family as by now I think we had decided we would suit one another, but I always had the feeling of being shut in their upstairs flat. Even London seemed oppressive, it was all hurry and scurry and nobody seemed to be going anywhere. Ted Grey, Lil's husband, Anne's older sister, took me for a drink Sunday dinner up the 'Junction Arms' near the bridge but I could not enjoy a pint in those surroundings, sawdust still on the floor, and London beer was dark and woody, nothing like my local brew which I was used to. We wrote to one another occasionally and began to wish to spend more time together. Things were getting pretty desperate at home, the family had increased a lot after Henry Webb moved in with Mum, and it was like there being two men in the house, a position I had occupied for sometime. This caused disputes on numerous occasions, especially one Sunday teatime when one of his children had left the table but then wanted to return for a second helping. I said

no, he said yes. I picked up the loaf and defied him to do anything about it. Not fair on Mum, but that was the way I felt.

I suppose I was beginning to think about a home of my own by now. I sat at home in the winter nights instead of walking down the 'George' for a pint. I made a ready cut wool rug to occupy my time. It turned out lovely, a 'Red Letter' on a Green background. It lasted a few years but in our second we set the kettle on to boil, but it boiled over and spoilt part of the rug. We discussed marriage and I started to save for it. Anne was unable to help as she earned very little and needed nice clothes. Also her mother was a widow so she was always helping her as much as possible. I obtained a savings box from the bank at Ampthill in the shape of a book. At the end it had a slot for coins and a circular hole for notes, which one rolled up and poked in the hole, ten shillings, or pound coins of any valuation from a penny to a half-crown. When it had quite a lot in it I would take it up to Ampthill to be emptied and recorded in my book. When I was getting married I went to withdraw all of it, I felt so rich. I went across to the 'Kings Arms' for a pint and I felt really rich with Seventy Pounds in my pocket. We had already bought our three piece suit in London from 'Perrings' so we only had odds and ends and the wedding to pay for.

Mum helped us a lot to obtain our first cottage, it was No 50 The Brache, one up, one down, a cellar, and an alcove part way up the stairs, a large barn beside the horse, and galvanised toilet across the yard. The garden stretched about 100 yards down to the 'Jitty' so called, and three large Elms stood on the edge of it. The wedding is very clear in my mind; I felt so proud standing in Church waiting for Anne. I just could not believe my luck. Her brother Jim gave her away, and Sam Daniels was my best man. We got there so early and were sitting waiting when his sister Mabel turned up with another pair of shoes. He had the wrong shoes on, and after that we had to nip out of Church and go down the 'Stoke Hole' steps to make water. The reception was held at home in Mum's front room. Anne's mother had come down from London. I remember I had gone down the 'George' for a pint the last time as a single man, and Anne's Mum kept on whittling that I would be late, but I was home in plenty of time. That was one event I had no intention of missing. We returned to 64 Clophill Road afterwards for the reception in Mum's front room. In the evening the menfolk went down to the 'Dog and Badger' for a drink, but stayed too long for the women I was informed on later occasions by my wife.

We walked home at the end of the evening, calling at Mrs Herman's in George Street where Anne had slept the previous evening. Walking through the 'Jitty' to our cottage it pelted down with rain and Anne must have dropped her nightdress from under her arm, as Bennie Peck found it when he walked through there on Sunday morning. It was a lovely cosy cottage, the grate being about the largest part of it, so in winter we had some good fires. Only one room up and one down with alcove, with a small window where the electric cooker stood, there was also a cellar. Originally I should say both cottages were one farm house. It must have seemed strange to Anne when I got up at 4.45am to leave for work, and left her in such a strange environment after living all her life in London.

When Gramp bought another litter or part of one at six or eight weeks old, he sometimes threw a hand full of small coal in the barn. It busied them and also I understood was good for their teeth. The manure was either heaped up the garden, or

wheeled in a barrow on Saturday afternoon to a piece of allotments on Maulden Moor. Mostly every piece of ground would be occupied on Saturday afternoon in winter digging away and they had all most likely been at work until one o'clock, something to eat and away before it got dark. On one occasion there was such a row going on in the house, Philip was getting a real roasting from Martha. He had been to Everett's to draw the pig money which was to pay the rates, but on the way home he had called at the 'White Hart' and got drunk on some of it. He was definitely in the dog-house for a long time.

Market Gardening

The complete industry in our village was Market Gardening, all small individual firms, from Badger Hill through the village starting at Water End. On the left were the Sharp Bros, Cecil and Bernard, and across the way in the Mill Farm Owen Kealey whose land reached the top of the hill. On the Badger Hill side was a Mr Gordon's, whose land reached all the way up to 'Trilly', the wood, and he planted all of it with fruit trees, mainly apples. A Mr Goodall was in charge of the orchards. At the time I thought it was very clever to know how to prune and when to lime wash. If we could find a small hole in the wire it was a very tasty apple which was selected. I think Mr Gordon was a solicitor in Ampthill, and I understand he was the first owner of a motor car in the village. On the left at the top of the hill Ted Fisher owned about one acre. Then came grass fields which went with Brightmans Farm in Water End as far as Green End. On the right hand side the land was cultivated by John Garner who lived in the big house near the Woodside. Alec Palmer and his dad had land around their dwelling, also up near the nursery near the round house. This was all poor sandy land, about all it was fit for was early potatoes and late sprouting broccoli. From Green End as far as the carriage drive was Robinson Old Farm which included the 'Water Meadow' and also reached up to the 'Woodside'. On the left from Green End was a piece of land which was known as 'Furzen Hill' as it only grew Broom. Then came Red Hill which belonged to the County Council as it was known then, and was let out to tenants in 1 acre lots, and this reached to the 'Gault Pits' and as far as Silsoe Road.

Both sides of the road after that belonged to Whiteman Bros, Ern and John, who lived in the first cottages on the left down Silsoe Road, and their farm buildings were on the corner of Church Lane. The land was called 'Wheatlands', and eventually they had two homes built in Clophill Road and named them Wheatlands. I presume they named them as it was very heavy land that side of the road, and only fit for growing corn. Opposite the School was 'Armbrose' allotments. They were kept immaculate as all the men were proud of their work, and of course were in competition with their neighbours. The next roadway was known as 'The Green', and ran down beside Alf Summerfield's where I was employed until I was about 18 years. Then came a grass field belonging to George (Duke) Fisher in which he kept a heavy horse and a pony. The horse interested us boys as it had been castrated, but they did not do a very good job. The horse was a piebald and so was his one testicle. Past the School and on the same side was Taylors, Juff and Charlie. Charlie walked very bad, his toes turned up. I understand he was injured working down the pits. He worked all the land each side of the Church Path as far as the Church Wall, also behind 'The George' as far as Woodcocks.

The ‘George’ had a large garden at the back, with pigsties at the top of the yard. My guvnor cultivated it for a few years when one landlord lived there who did not want land. One incident I well remember, Ray Sharp and myself went to bunch some carrots that were growing up there, and a thunderstorm came on so we propped the wheelbarrows to rest until it stopped raining. The trouble was we fell asleep. When we awoke that was the fastest ten dozen carrots were bunched in Maulden, because when you went to do a job he would know near enough how long it would take you. Adjoining the ‘George’ garden was George ‘Poo’ Peat whose garden ran up beside Woodcocks Path as far as the Church, and beyond Woodcocks was Town Close behind Magpie Row, and reached as far as the ‘Devils Jump’. This was also County Council land let out in one acre plots, and farther up towards the ‘Baulk’ was ‘Bury Hill’. My guvnor had the first piece in Town Close on the left, and on the right in Bury Hills he grew strawberries on top of the hill, and I had to be up there before 6am to keep the birds off before going to school. When he dug some early potatoes Mum would ask if we could go and pick up what the called the Chats. Too small to market they were put in a bucket with some water and stirred with a brush stail to get most of the skin off as they were too small to scrape. Of course all the houses had fairly large gardens, and everyone grew vegetables either for themselves or to earn a few shillings.

We come to Sleaford End and John Kirby’s garden, not more than half acre I would think, but how productive. It sloped to the South and East and had a bank and a hedge to keep the cold North winds away. A border 4 or 5 yards wide ran round the North side, and on this were grown the first early radishes and always long red ones, and when bunched they would have ten or a dozen in each bunch. This was a specialist job usually done by women. They would be pulled by men when ready, washed in a tub of water carried into a washhouse or some such place, then scattered on a table from which the women would pick them up. The bunch always had to be in the shape of a fan. They looked a picture when packed carefully in a bushel skip all laid flat so they came out as they were bunched. They were usually sown as soon as there was a suitable day early in January. The radishes were sown broadcast, and then carrots or lettuce were drilled between them. They were then covered with straw until they germinated. When they appeared above the soil the straw would be lifted off, and the biggest problem was to keep the birds off, especially chaffinches, of which there were many at that time. Through the season he would grow Spring Onions, Runner Beans, (ground beans) Beetroot and Lettuce (upright and flat), and finish off with Celery.

Adjoining his land, but the other side of the brook, was another productive piece of land owned by Charles Sinfield which reached up to the path which we knew as the ‘Jitty’. He employed a little man known as Billy Boy to do his work as he was employed full time by Pecks of Ampthill. He rode one of the first motor cycles in the village, or a small Royal Enfield if I remember right. It had about two gears on top of the petrol tank. Martha Kilby bought the other side of the ‘Jitty’ and products were always bought by Luton Co-op who would come and collect it. On the left hand side of Browns Hill was a piece of land known as the ‘Brick Kiln’. It sloped from all sides to a pond in the middle, and was worked by Ted Fisher who went to Bedford to sell his produce. Next came Lockeys estate (Jimmy), he went in for everything in a very big way. Directly after the war he bought part of the wood known as ‘Maulden Quarter’ and had the trees felled and transported up to his yard at the top of Browns Hill by a steam wagon. The tree consisted of one long pole between two sets of

wheels. When on holiday if it came along unloaded we ran in between the sets of wheels and jumped on the pole and had a ride. That is until we had a boy named Tom Austin staying with us, and the lot slipped and a wheel went over his leg. That was the end of that adventure.

They used to haul the trees up a drive into the Church Fields, and when it was wet it was a real mess if we walked down there. We had to walk on the land either side as the ruts were so deep. Mum and me used to take a sack and go up the wood when the men had finished for the day and collect the chips of wood around the huts which had been thrown out by the axes. I think some of the men were Canadians. Next Lockey had a large number of pigsties built and kept a lot of pigs. Alf Summerfield had apparently at sometime been taught butchery, so when Lockey had some pigs ready to be killed he would go up there and kill some. My job was to scrape the hair off their backs after they were killed. They were dumped into a tub (half a whisky barrel) of boiling water and I used a scraper on them. The boiling water made the hair easier to remove. Later on he went in for Poultry. He had two large hen houses built in a field called The Meadows, but that did not last long. He sold my Uncle Wal half an acre of it to build a bungalow on it. That has now been knocked down and two chalet type bungalows are built on it next to 64 The Brache.

I shall always remember one of his first lorries. It was a chain drive Commer, well remembered because his son Maurice used to bring ball bearings out of the back axle to play marbles with, so much heavier than our bossers. At the bottom of Browns Hill, nearly opposite the 'White Hart', was a Mr Emberton who had a large garden and also cultivated some land reaching from Silsoe Road up to the 'Gault Pits' near Red Hill. Back onto Ampthill Road and we have George (Duke) Fishers yard. His garden reached up beside (Stokey) allotments as far as the Moor allotments. His son Reg (Windy) Fisher took his produce to Luton Market. He was the first owner of a commercial vehicle, a grey Ford which would carry around a ton or thirty hundred weight. On Saturday afternoons it also transported the Football and Cricket teams to away matches. A form was placed along each side of the lorry and away they went, quite happy to be exposed to the elements, not having to use pedal power as even I had to when I first started playing. Two cottages came next, then we find Blackaby's yard at the back of the cottages. His land reached down to Teddy Stokes land on the Moor, and his produce was conveyed to Bedford by his son Wally by horse and trolley. The next two cottages, these are all on the left hand side of the road, the first occupied by Dave Northwood, carpenter and undertaker, who had two very good looking daughters. And next was Juff Fisher, father of Bert Fisher who became quite a large Market Gardener later on and land also reached down to Stokes land. The next of the land, as far as the cottage near the White Hart was grazing which belonged to Chestnut Tree Farm. At that time owned by Charles Brightman, also land on the opposite side of the road, and some up Snow Hill, as well as the field in Flitwick Road.

At the top of the Knoll Lane lived Harold Taylor, who cultivated part of the 'Brick Kiln' and he also took his produce to Bedford. Down Moor Lane was the 'Feast Field' which went with Chestnut Tree Farm, then two dwellings occupied by the Woodcrafts with land at the back reaching up to the 'White Hart' border. All pubs had large gardens at that period. His goods went to Bedford, and adjoining was Frank Summerfield who also went to Bedford. I remember Frank always grew some

Artichokes as he had some customers who were very fond of them. At the top of Moor Lane lived Teddy Stokes in a thatched cottage. I understand his father was a horse slaughterer, and that his sisters were made to skin the carcases when they were dead. They were certainly made to work hard by Teddy. Opposite was Ike (Isaac) Stokes who had my assistant. He was a gentleman and his wife a lady, no children. He was teetotal, whereas most of the others would be drinking in Bedford and then call at the 'Black Hat' at Wilstead to top up on the way home. Of course they always had the excuse the horse needed a rest. In a thatched cottage at the end of Duck End Lane lived Snifter Taylor who also had a large garden, and he went to Luton Market. Reg Brown lived opposite. He had been a member of the Canadian Mounted Police but was wounded, and had either a wooden leg or a stiff leg, but he managed to do his large garden, and as he was related to Frank Summerfield sold most of his produce to him.

The rest of Flitwick Road was classed as farms. Cherry's was the first, they kept milking cows, but Hill Farm was owned by Wilshers and later by a Mr Street. Wilshers moved out to the other side of Bedford, Stagden I think. Water End and New Road were mostly small holdings let out by the Duke of Bedford. The first three were there originally, Sharp Bros, Bernard and Cecil. The Mill was occupied by the Kealey Brothers, Owen and Bert. Charles Brightman came next, his land reached to the top of Badger Hill. Bogey Cole had a large garden cultivated by him, then came the first of the Duke's tenants Mr Humphries. He stood about five feet nothing, but he could work. Archie Taylor came next; he always was showing and winning prizes, especially at Flitwick Flower Show. Sid Woodward worked the next parcel of land in Water End, and also facing Silsoe Road up to Red Hill. In New Road Mr Burton lived in the first dwelling, he also farmed Great Farm (now Mallets). Then came Kilbys, Woodwards, Hills, Brunts, and Coles, all in Market Gardening. Cole used to send produce to Covent Garden Market in London daily. Reilly Farm on Flitwick Road was farmed by Phil Joy, whose son was the Mayor of Bedford, Sergeant or something in an official capacity, and played Rugby Union for the Blues Bedford R.U.F.C. He owned quite a few horses and carts. Alf King was his horseman and went out and did contract ploughing for other gardeners. They also carted London Dung from off the rail at Flitwick Railway Station, usually early morning, and if Gramp heard that anyone was having a delivery the next day, I had to be down Flitwick Road early with my truck to pick up any the horses dropped or any falling off the carts.

Red Hill was up Clophill Road also. This was behind the 'Gault Pits' as we knew it. I wondered if they had dug clay from there at sometime to make 'Dew Pond' with it. It had a large pond in the middle, and the banks were quite steep with a lot of trees growing on them. Red Hill was another holding let in acre plots to tenants and reached to Silsoe Road. The allotments all had names. Near Silsoe Road was known as 'Armbrose', next was 'The Green', then came 'Stoky'. The Moor was further over, named I presume because it was all boggy ground and needed a lot of drains and ditches so that it could be cultivated. I helped Granddad dig a trench about a yard deep, the length of his Twenty Pole, which we proceeded to fill with branches and bushes to act as drains. Incidentally I rented this piece of land after he finished with it, marvellous for growing Celery on.

Maulden Celery was renowned over a very wide area. It used to be so crisp and sweet, no Sunday Tea was complete without some Celery and Bread and Butter. 'Winrights' came next. Wainwrights I would think was its proper name after someone who owned it previously. This reached down to what we knew as 'Fan Furlong'. This was quite a large stream that came from the 'Running Waters' at Flitwick, and passed under New Road. So much water passed down it at one time, a man made dyke was dug to carry some of the water to the Mill at Great Farm, but it was completely dry in my time, the dyke not the river. 'Furzen Hill' was across what was known as 'Backway Fields', obviously because it was an alternative route to Ampthill, and you did come in the back way up 'Grimmers Yard' beside the 'Kings Arms', and across the road was the Market Square. 'Furzen Hill' was of course covered in Gorse Bushes which surprisingly managed to ignite on November 5th if not before. There would be clouds of Butterflies of every size and colour. Small Blues, Browns and Yellows, Red Admirals and Peacocks rose in front of every step, impossible not to tread on flowers. It was sacrilege to plough it up during the last war. Of course only a very rich farmer would keep a pasture like that, but they got good hay from it which the cows must have enjoyed. I have a photo in my possession of a football team taken against the top hedge pre 1914, as one of the players was killed very early in the war. Treffy Summerfield, Uncle Alf's son! There is a level platform along the top near the hedge that made a good football pitch for that time of day.

Bury Hill joined this field moving nearer to the village, and the Church Fields ran along the top with Pond in it. Also a 'Dollow' which gave the impression some gravel had been removed at some period. We knew it as 'Hoof and Dollow'. During my youth Bury Hill was let out into plots of 1 acre size by the council, as at one time Kings Farm owned the lot. Town Close was the next piece and reached down to gardens in George Street. This was also rented out in acre plots. Herbie Burgoine told me he had played football in there when it was grassland. We move over to Church Lane. The Church fields reach right down to this, and alongside Clophill Road is a field called 'Wheatlands'. Apparently the clay soil was too heavy to grow anything else; it would be ploughed up in the autumn and allowed to lay fallow until the spring so that the frosts could break it down. 'Cobby' was land behind the Rectory where I was caught for purloining some of the Rectors holly. Anyway he had plenty, but we only had to go and apologise.

Names of Fields or Arable Plots

Kings Farm

'Stony Field' was on the far side of the Spinney, which we knew as 'Artfuls Spinney', maybe because this field was split into sections. Between returning service men returning from the 1914-1918 war, and Artful Sharp, they worked the piece of land in line with the Spinney. My Mum told me that when Mr Butt owned Kings Farm, children were paid a pittance to pick stones off this field. Later on the farm became a council holding. A Mr Philips was the first farmer, I remember living there. Adjoining this field was one known as 'Plum Pudding Hill' which must have been named entirely due to its shape, like a round Christmas pudding in half. 'Spring Hill' was towards Limbersey, and it sloped down towards the farm, and in my youth had a spring right on the bank at the top of the slope, dried up now without a doubt. Next to

‘Spring Hill’ came ‘Bankee Field’ as at its far end was ‘Bankee Pond’, which in the winter would overflow and run down the hollow in the field until it reached the ditch on the edge of the now non existent brook. ‘Seven Acres’ came next, the ‘Cowslip Field’, it was an absolute mass of yellow flowers. I myself have been and gathered armfuls for Grandma to make wine with. ‘Highland Field’ came next, there was a moat surrounded an Island which was plenty deep enough for us boys to bath in. It was also about the highest point on the farm.

Crossing Limbersey Lane we come to a triangular field which had a spinney running along the bottom with a lot of boggy patches near the brook which ran along the edge of the wood, always a possibility of finding either a Moorhens nest or a Ducks. At the far end was a double row of large Elm trees, and this was known as ‘Cow Close’. ‘Devils Jump’ comes next, with a very large block of stone or rock which protruded from the bank, and some trees and shrubs had grown around it. A fallacy us children had passed on to us, if you round it ten times holding your breath the devil would appear. At least you would no longer be alive.

‘Middle Woods’ was the field beyond the Spinney, our children called it ‘Bluebell Spinney’. Quite a lot grew in it; it stretched up to within one field of Maulden Wood. This was another field split into sections for ex-servicemen to throw their time and money and effort away on, no one succeeded it was terrible land. I understand a previous farmer grew some corn on it which was sent to Flitwick Mill to be ground, but there were wild onions growing in this field and these contaminated the stores in the Mill. The ‘Baulk’ joined ‘Middle Woods’ divided by a hedge and ditch, no longer there. This field was an absolute delight to us children; nearly every wild flower in existence grew in this field. Dog Daisies, Buttercups, Bee Orchids, and numerous others, it had about ten different grasses as well including Quaker Grass with knobbles on the end of thin arms that danced when the wind blew. Another one we would pull the head off and throw at each other and it would stick in your jersey or coat. At the right time of the year you walked in that meadow.

Something I must write about is the great change in agriculture since I started work. All transport was by wheelbarrow or horse and cart. Some were four wheeled trolleys; some were two wheeled carts, of which a few were capable of tipping their load in a heap or where it was wanted. All land was ploughed or dug with a fork or spade. One winter when he was unable to farm me out for long, I dug half an acre of ground in Town Close just off George Street. All land once cultivated was either hoed with a long tailed hoe or in the case of seedlings with a small hand hoe. Anything about 2 feet from hoe to hoe would be horse hoed between the rows then hand hoed around the plants. The horse hoe consisted of a V shaped blade at the front, and two elongated blades at the rear so that all the surface between the rows was disturbed, and all weeds were cut off and died. No sprays were used. All weeds died where they were and the worms returned them to the soil. If a piece of land had been ploughed in the Autumn, and a lot of weeds had grown in the Spring, rather than ploughing again and letting in the dry weather they would use what was called a scuffle consisting of five upright tongs which stirred the soil up near the surface. That was where the boy came in because the driver needed someone to lead the horse so that he could concentrate on handling the instrument, and make sure all the ground was moved. About the only fertilizer in use at that time was Nitrate of Soda which

was sowed on Winter Onions placed near Winter Lettuce and Spring Cabbage. Some used a potato fertilizer but as we only grew earlies we did not use it.

Incidentally on one occasion before I left school, I was sent to put some Nitrate of Soda on some Winter Lettuce down 'Armbrose'. I thought I did a good job, a handful to every two plants. I made sure they would get the benefit and dropped right near the lettuce in the dibber hole made when they were planted. After about a week instead of growing faster some of them began to go off. Uncle Alf was puzzled and questioned me if I had given it to them. After discussing it with other gardeners he queried where I had put it. I told him, and then what had happened being so near to the plant it had burned the roots, one lesson learned. I think one of the worst things to happen with work on the land was piece work, when all they thought about was how much ground they could cover in as little time as possible. No interest in how well the job was done, just get it done. When I started to grow up I was proud of a job well done. Digging the allotments each side would be kitted out with a line to make sure it was straight, and each out side split would be turned inwards, it looked a picture. When banking up the Celery, if anyone had the slightest deviation in row they would go back and take it out. Otherwise it would be the talk of the pub, and everyone who passed by would stop to look at it. Summer time was best, we rented the Church Fields, also the next one the 'Baulk' and one was always kept for hay. Of course the weather had to be favourable. The first year I was only allowed to take empty carts back to be filled again. Real farm work was when I was allowed on the Hay Rick to help build it. That was until I slid my pitch fork down the end of the stack with the tongs pointing inwards, supposed to have been a cardinal sin. I could see no difference if it was going to stick into anyone which way the tongs were pointing.

More Memories

Another memory is of going up to the 'George' pub for some pig food for Gramp. Ted Atkins was the landlord; he had two pigsties of his own. I understand he also ran a bakery at the back of the pub, but during my time his son had taken over and was running it from his home in Sleaford End. The thing that I remember so clearly is the smell on entering the large thatched barn where the food was kept in a row of large metal bins along one side of the barn, each with a large heavy lid to keep the mice and rats out. Along the far side of the barn were trusses of straw, each one tied with twisted straw. No string used at that time. Gramp always kept a few pigs in a barn near the house and an outdoor toilet adjoining it that went together. The pigs always smelt, so did the bucket. Gran would say go up the 'George' and get a bottle of 'Dan'. A bottle was half a peck. I suppose that's all they could afford at the time. The first 'Dan' would contain Barley Mead, ground barley. This was given when the pigs were being fattened. Then there would be 'Dan', Bran, crushed oats, wheat for chickens. He would dig the measure into the 'Dan' or whatever, then rub his hand across the top to take off any surplus. He had wooden measures with brass bands around them for a bottle, peck or bushel. If someone wanted a hundred weight he got two bushels. When Gramp had any pigs ready for sale he would visit Mr Everett, the butcher in Ampthill, and agree a price which would most likely include Gramp having its bowels, chitlings, and the liver and fry, perhaps a large lump of pork. It would be pork dripping on our bread for a few days after that. Gran did not waste anything.

Nicknames, of which most had one of in our village

Feasy or Flacker Smith
Swank Northwood
Tipper Clark
Maff Summerfield (one of my uncle's)
Blowie Summerfield (one of my uncle's)
Quilla Summerfield (one of my uncle's)
Spilsey Arnold
Bad Lad Arnold (his father)
Drewy Sinfield (Andrew)
Shrimp Summerfield
Kylo Bandee
Poacher Northwood
Rusty Squires (Red Hair)
Stepper Squires (Tall)
Bogie Cole
Sheddy Cole
Duke Fisher
Windy Fisher (son)
Juff Fisher
Stump Richardson (Club Foot)
Joe Bottles (brother)
Snifter Taylor
Poker Sharp
Blanche King
Sparrow King (brother)
Shirty Summerfield
Billy Boy Sinfield
Cunning Summerfield
Terror Arnold
Stilla Northwood
Snoggle Northwood
Codger Northwood
Scabby Billington
Zeeba Eddy
Sinnia Short
Shay Sharp (Ray)
Whiff Northwood
Muscle Reilly
Punch Burgoine
Hobbs Taylor
Zad Sadler
Stonna Stanbridge
Dusty Parker
Soddy Fisher
Tint Northwood
Wag Bandee
Tabby Stanford
Beaver (Tish and Ships)

Loddenham
Nutty Northwood
Doughy Sharp
Puster Brown
Brab Hill
Blosa Wilmer
Wag Bandee (brother)
Bran Bandee (brother)
Pussy Stanford
Toby Inskip
Juffy Taylor
Nobby Clarke
Jimbo Smith
Knuckle Northwood
Thorough Northwood
Artful Sharp
Claggy Higgins
Boob Palmer
Jonjo Ward (John Joseph Harry Albert Edward Ward)
Pudger Sharp
Punch Smith
Ab Burgoine (Albert)
Musa Burgoine (brother)