

Notes on late 19th century Deddington from:

SCHOOL ON THE GROUND FLOOR by J.H.BAKER (publ. 1969), born in Deddington 1881

Summer of 1881-2 one of worst on record. Snow ploughs drawn by carthorses tried to clear snow from streets; householders and shopkeepers shovelled out pathways for pedestrians 'to go about their business'.

Driver of a miller's wagon left D. late one afternoon hoping to reach Banbury by nightfall. After only a mile overcome by the cold, left his wagon for shelter of a barn in field. His frozen body found leaning against the wall the following day by local farmer. Had he covered himself with the empty flour ~~sacks~~ sacks he might have survived; horses in fact dragged the wagon to the town mill stables where they arrived late night.

Failure of food deliveries for days on end. Men floundered through the drifts to bring necessities of life to their starving families.

J.H.B born in one of the larger terraced cottages, a former farmhouse, in New Street. The first son in the family after three daughters, "a long looked for event in one of D.'s typical and most respectable families." the "customary slap of the old mid-wife. Elderly doctor beamed "Well you've got a boy, a very fine boy!"

Because of severe winter, christening delayed until the late Spring, when child named after grandfather.

Aged 4 JHB suffers severe whooping cough, sent to his aunt in Oxford for a change of air, one of his father's sisters who had married a north country basket maker from Lancs. Their home, not far from the Cowley road, had a bow window in which were displayed a few specimens of basket work. At bottom of garden large shed that served as workshop; uncle and his mate sat on raised boards at opposite ends of shed. Most nights at bed time his aunt reading aloud to his uncle, unlettered. Mostly reading Dickens; he acquired a remarkable knowledge of Dickensian characters.

"While in Oxford I got to like the flavour of Danish smoked bacon and enjoyed eating various fruits hitherto unknown to me, such as bananas, grapes and tomatoes."

After 3 weeks, JHB returns to D.

A building firm of considerable note based in D. at end of 19th c. D. the home of a small army of skilled craftsmen whose work can be seen in restored churches, colleges and manor houses in various parts of the county. "One could describe D.'s church as the countryman's cathedral"

Annual Horse Fair a lively event of his boyhood in the street at the 'top of the town'. Horse dealers trotted the horses and ponies up and down the road to show their paces to prospective buyers.

DEDDINGTON SCHOOL

Playground divided to separate Boys school from Girls and infants. JHB's sister a pupil teacher at the school. Writing on a wooden framed slate

Moved to boys school in due course; communal classes in the w e hall but new boy "soon began to think school a wonderful place".

Headmaster a tall handsome rather stout impressive figure. Eled Eldest daght daughter helped by accompanying songs on the harmonium. Loutish boys and bullies got a good thrashing when they deserved it. Some puritanically minded parishoners objected to way HM joined in drinking club "the Twelve Chairs" club held in the back room of the Unicorn.

School master stood surety to a friend and then had to meet his obligations. His furniture displayed for auction in front of the master's house. However dealer's shouldered out of the way and friends bid for goods at low price and they were returned to the master's house.

Read weekly mags and went in for the competitions in The Golden Penny and Tit-Bits, this a mild form of gambling which he enjoyed.

Young master Hillinghame started a library and raised funds with entertainments etc.

Deddington Boys School staffed by the HMs three daughters, male student-teacher and a novice or 'monit~~or~~'

Games.

Hoop bowling round deddington streets. Top-spinning.

Local lads dress up in best clothes, print suits and sailor jackets, to act as ball boys. "At the tea interval we were always regailed with a tray of cakes by one of the young ladies." The romance of the Deddington squire and the rector of a neighbouring village - the rector got the gal but he his wife and kids regular visitors at the squires house

Ball boys paid at a shilling an hour. At the end of the day's play the squire would lift the boys up to pick ripe peaches, apricots and pears from his fruit trees.

Squire makes frequent excursions to London and Oxford and walked to Aynho station when the ~~whetker~~ weather was fine taking the short cut through the stile to the Aynho road.

Truancy for Special Occasions.

NB. the Yeomanry parade that took place outside the Squires house in - jingling accoutrements and colourful uniforms Daring truants even attempted journey to banbury fair a shilling return in the carters van.

The Archery Competitions in the Castle Grounds - in the right hand corner of the grounds stood a pavilion; boys got a free view by climbing the banks and watching from their tops. When PC took over pavilion pulled down,

The Pudding Pie Fair; fair long since defunct then, but P.Ps made by a local baker and exposed for sale in the bow window of his shop in the high street till the beginning of the 20th c. Pies made in cartons about the size of a saucer and one inch in depth. They were made of a mixture of flour, currants sugar and spice. They tasted very much like cold plum pudding and 'could not be considered much of a delicacy'.

JHB born in large double fronted house in New Street, at what was called the "Bottom of the Town". Some of the houses were thatched and some were slated with the old Stonesfield slates.

Here follows fine description of High street. "... the Plough Inn, with its flight of steps and high ceilinged tap-room and its ancient cellars and vaults." "Deddington House, the squires residence". Opposite the vet's house, above this the doctor's white fronted 'residence'; further up the High Street, the baker's shop and two inns one called the "Volunteer"

The diminutive town hall "now consisting of a a room above a motor garage."

D. at time of his boyhood known for three things; Religious fervour - four places of Worship, C.E., Wesleyan Chapel, Congregational chapel and Salvation Army Citadel, each more or less indifferent to the activities of the others. Sunday evening the S.A. band played, led by the town shoemaker, a tall and ardent Crimean War veteran drummer. After Sunday morning service, some of the men could be seen making tracks for the bakery in the Thure and afterwards walking home with trays bearing their roast joints and yorkshire puddings for the family mid-day meal.

Second main feature - addiction to sport; D. lads noted for their prowess at football and cricket, played in the old castle grounds. On Sat. afternoons the place became very much alive when home matches were played during the football and cricket seasons.

Flora Thompson in Lark Rise to Candleford records a snatch composed by a resident homesick Deddingtonian of Lark Rise -

"Where be Deddington Boo-boys,
Where be they now?
They be at Deddington at the 'Plough',
If they be-ent, they be at home.
And this x is the Wagon and Horses."

Third main feature; number of pubs - old legend of sealing the town bells current in his time.

Earliest recollection being bathed as a child in a hip ~~bat~~ bath on the hearth of the cottage living room. Recalls how little 'bouncing' Dr Bashan extracted one of his milk teeth.

Old Dr MacNeil, with heart complaint, gained reputation for being haughty because of slow gait and pompous indifference to passers by. On his death part of the practice bought by young

Doctor fresh from hospital - clever surgeon anxious to advance his career lived in the doctor's house presided over by the handsome and younger widow of Dr. MacNeil, "still a very attractive and gracious lady." An annex to the house was converted as a surgery ward where Dr Rix could treat his patients. Romance between Dr ~~and~~ Rix and Mrs MacNeil leads to marriage but she dies soon afterwards and he erects memorial window in Church to her.

Year or two later widow with charming daughter came to the town Rix falls for daughter happy match but again short lived. The story of taking his wife to the Church to show her the memorial window to his first wife; 2nd asks if he would give her a window if she died; apprehension. They go home and she sings songs to banish sad thoughts - few ~~ix~~ years later she dies.

Rix's fame as a rugeon spreads, ihe engages an assistant. Modern methods did not meet with approval of older patients who had dread of serious operations - some refered to him as 'the butcher'.

Rix first travelled in a gig but this too slow and he took to riding horseback, criticised for this - some women patients thought that ridigng garb unsuitable for sick room visiting.

He had a 2nd memorial window placed in church for his second wife. This story, the author notes, told him by Eric Dodwell's mother.

D. referred to as a "hill town".

~~Baker~~ Baker family had for generations attended the C.of E. but in his boyhood they were going to the Wesleyan chapel because his g'father, John Baker had quarrelled with the vicar who "was also squire of the parish". Rev Millard Holford a keen adherent of the Oxford Movement - so high church at D.

JHB confirmed by Bishop of Stubbs (he had decided to opt for Cof E after being brought up in C of E school. In later years his parents retired to the W. of England and returned to the C of E.

Puzzling estrangement between his mother and maternal g'mother Jones. He allowed to visit her only once a year; she lived in a tiny cottage near the vicarage, opposite the Church. She an indulgent hostess to the little boy. G mother had come down from London to D. by coach to marry g'father who had settled in D. as blacksmith and iron founder. "The nature of his work amidst the heat of the forged induced him to take to beer drinking, sometimes to excess. On these occasions he suffered serious ill effects from over drinking and would often come to my mother, his favourtie and most sympathetic duaghter, for a drink of brandy to counteract the effects of his prefious indulgence, before proceeding home." He lived into his 60s but grannyinto her 90s.

JHB's father had been cut out of the inerritance of the family building business.