

## DEDDINGTON Early 1920s

Deddington is a large village with a large square, the Town Hall standing in the middle. It is very old, going back to the Middle Ages. There was a castle. As a boy I used to think "Why did those buildings sink into the ground"? Did anyone notice they were sinking, or did it happen in the night, and when would our house sink?" The village is on the busy A423 road. I first knew it when as a boy my brother Stanley and myself took the paper round money to the newsagent, Mr John Whetton. His shop was where the new shop is today. Last century the village was known as Drunken Deddington when there was an axle factory where the British Legion now is. The axles for the Royal Coaches were made there. The axles were modular made on anvils and open forged so it would be a very thirsty job. There were eight public houses.

Back to my first knowledge of the village. I remember the last few pudden pie fairs where horses were sold near the Kings Arms pub which was kept by my cousin Harry Davis. The Unicorn was kept by Bob Kersey who had a T Ford 20 seater bus. He carried the local football team to their matches. Returning from one match, coming up the hill into Deddington, the team were singing so Bob could not hear the engine when to change gear, so it stalled. The team had to push it to the top of the hill. The Volunteer (now the Russell Hotel) was kept by Herbert Mason and his son Spencer. They had a horse wagonette taking and bringing people from the railway. He had a contract to take the mail to the station in a smart box placed across the seat. One very stormy night when he was going over the canal bridge the wind blew the box in the canal. Spencer was a real horseman. The horse and wagonette were very smart. We tied the wheel of it one day as it waited for a train. He quizzed us afterwards but we were very good fibbers, keeping a bland face.

One of the doctors, Dr Jones, was our doctor. He came round the villages the same as tradesmen, three times a week. He was a good doctor, rather strict but a good sense of humour. He drove the first car bought in 1905. It was a long low red one with the hood folded back like the old prams. One could hear it coming, it sounded like a dumper and smoked a lot. Dr Hodges was his partner. The surgery was in his house, the one on the left in the narrow entrance to the village from Clifton. Dr Turner lived in Chapman's Lane. It was a father and son partnership. One man went to Dr Turner Snr with toothache and he told the man "Of course they will ache, you never think of giving them a rest". Another time one of the doctors looked over the wall at the canal coal wharf and saw the coal merchant throwing water on the coal to keep the dust down. He said "How much for the water, Mr Hiatt"? "I don't know", he said, "you would be the best judge of that". What Mr Hiatt was referring to was mixing medicine (no tablets in those days). One inch of medicine filled up with water was 25p a bottle - a day's pay in those days. We paid 2d. old money to a Radcliffe Hospital fund. It was voluntary. A few did not join. When one of them needed hospital treatment they paid some months back. Contributions then became regulated.

Mr Harry Wells kept the drapers shop in the Market Place. He was a good salesman. One had only to half mention what was wanted and he would say "I have just what you want". When he was on his rounds we looked at a cupboard he had on show on the pavement. We didn't see anyone but when we arrived home the cupboard was stood by our door. It is still as much used today (1988).

Next door was Mr Joe Freeman's hair cutting shop. The best night was Friday when the village sages assembled for their weekly shave and to put everything in the world in order. Something of the Jasper Carrott style, Joe was a small man. Like many of that time he liked a pinch of snuff. The room was parted by a screen. At intervals he would pop behind it to take a pinch.

Then the gas lamp would flicker so he would go again to put a penny in the slot. He would get advice from the sages but he was a quiet man. He just smiled. There was a column in one local paper ('Heard in the barber's chair'.) I remember one of their sayings of what so and so did - 'He took a loaf back to the shop as it had a hole in it which weighed a pound'. The shop was well fumigated with strong tobacco smoke. It was later taken over by Mr Jimmy Hayward. Tuckers Stores was owned by Mr Tucker Snr and his son Robert, Mr Will Clark assisting and driving the half ton T Ford van. The Post Office was there. I had my first savings bank book in 1919. When we were married in 1938 I had saved £119 but we managed. My late wife Hilda was a good manager. The postmen were John Vincent, Tom Cawcutt, Will Tustain and a telegram boy. My brother Stanley was the last one 1920-22. He delivered them in a three mile radius. He wore a smart blue uniform, a French style hat with leather belt and pouch. All deliveries were made on heavy red cycles. Telecom men had green ones, later motor cycles and side cars. They climbed poles with leg irons fitted with hooks to stick on the poles.

Mr Horace Tibbetts was the blacksmith where Len Plumbe's garage is now. His assistant was Mr George Hancox. They were kept busy as horses on the roads wore their shoes out so soon on the metal roads, no tarmac at that time. Mr Tibbetts was leader of the bible class and organised a coach trip each year. Having spare seats I went on several of them. The best ones I enjoyed. Not much traffic. This was the early thirties and a cooked midday meal was always booked and sometimes tea at another stop. They were very enjoyable. The buses were South Midland. One year it was a brand new one. The driver proudly told us it cost £3000. We were travelling near Chipping Norton where we passed the pub called the Quiet Woman. Mr George Dancer dryly remarked she was the first one he had heard of. We had a whip round for the driver. There were no traffic jams in those days.

The vicar was Rev Thomas Boniface, followed by Rev Frost in 1928. He took the services at Clifton and Hempton with the help of his curate Rev Tyrell Green who was in the first war. He was severely wounded and very disfigured. The church had a good choir. I knew one of the men, Mr Fred Parrish. He sang bass solo sometimes. He was a skilled carpenter and sign writer. He put the names on grave stones, chipping out the letters then hammering lead into it and smoothing it off. He received 5p a letter. I am not sure if this happened at Deddington. It was said the organist and the organ blower could not agree on one of the hymns. After a lot of talking the blower said "Well you play what you like, I shall blow for While Shepherds".

The bakers were Mr Dodwell, now Mr Wallin, Mr Will Course and the Coop all delivered to other villages. The chimney sweeps were Mr Alf Yerbury and his son Jimmy. There was plenty of work for them as every house had coal fires. The cheap coal was very smokey called Pooily Hall, 9p a hundredweight. The sweeps only worked in the early part of the day. No one wanted them in the afternoon. The soot was used for the garden after maturing for a time. Dad used bags of it. We were not allowed to spread it for obvious reasons.

The farmers were Mr Coles near the crossroads, lower down the street Mr Joe Clark; Mr Sam Tustin and sons, Earls Lane; Mr Charles Gardner, Clifton Road; Mr Charlie Bliss and Mr Maurice French, Council Street. He used to drive his large herd of milkers down to his fields on the Clifton Road.

Gas was produced at Deddington up to the turn of the century. The house still stands, called the Gas House, at the junction of Earls Lane and Clifton Road.

Mr Tom and Fred Deely and son Fred were coal merchants, hauling it from the railway with horses and trolley. Later with T Ford one ton lorries. Also coal merchants were Robert and son Jack Callow. Jack had a carrier business to Banbury Thursdays and Saturdays and Tom Deely had one too. I wonder what would happen today if they left their vans in Banbury with lots of parcels while they collected some more. The butchers were Mr Bolton in the High Street and Mr Spencer Hopcroft in Chapel Square. He killed pigs for the Smithfield market, putting them in a special van on the railway. His first vehicle was an ex-army Crossley ambulance. It had oil side and rear lights. The headlights were carbine gas.

The Labour Exchange was in the High Street. The Manager was Mr John Lewis. Men had to sign on three days a week for 80p a week. Some had to walk four miles from the village of Souldern. The roadmen were Charlie Deely, David Skidmore, Fred Gregory and Ralf Gibbes. He wore a soft straw hat all the year round. Each man had a certain length of road to look after. It was scraping mud off the road in winter. Tarmac had not arrived. The builders were Alfred Hopcraft and Son and John Baker who built the first council houses. Electricity came in the late 20s. The Wessex company would instal three lights and a five amp plug free to encourage people to have it. Many were wary of it but one man it was said was quite pleased with it. He pulled his blinds down, put the light on saying electric was cheaper than daylight.

There were a lot of tramps walking the roads. Many had regular rounds. After we married we had two regulars. One was well educated. He always wanted yesterday's paper. He would put the country in shape while we cut his sandwiches and made his tea. I didn't get involved with him but he was very polite. The other one was quite different. He always came to the back door. One day he came my khaki working shirt was on the washing line. He casually remarked that his shirt was in shreds, so that was one time I really did lose my shirt, but it gave us as much pleasure as it did him to see him go off happy. We had others in between. The regulars would come about four times a year. They all disappeared after the war.