BANBURY

Living by the railway, we travelled to the town by train, six miles, fare 4½p return. Banbury Station was a very busy one, many porters, passengers, shunters, wheel tappers to test for cracked wheels on the coaches. When an express stopped, a youth in uniform would walk up and down the platform with a large flat basket strapped round his neck calling "Banbury cakes, chocolates, cigarettes". There were engine sheds, two signal boxes and a large goods marshelling yard.

The town was famous for its cross and cakes which were made by Browns in Parsons Street. It was very different shopping in those days with such old Banbury names as Pilsworth drapers, Brummitts with counters full of all sorts of small things. There were no traffic problems. Cattle were sold in the the streets, in Bridge Street where one or two buskers were always playing. The annual fair was different with the huge steam engines, steam organs, coconut shies, boxing booths; Mr Tuzzio with his barrel organ always smiling. Life seemed much more easy going. Woolworths came in the 1930s. Nothing was over 2½p. I fixed myself up with tools and still have some of them. There was a large pile of spectacles, no cases, and a chart to test them. Our neighbour had a pair of the pince nex style which pinched on the nose. He looked quite learned till the gold wore off. He said they were very good.

The cinemas were the Palace and the Grand. The pictures were silent. When The first talkies came they were squawky like a hen trying to talk. , The highest price seats were 12½p. Fish and chips were 2½p, with peas 4p. The market held each Thursday and Saturday was always a lively one with shouting of wares by the cheap jacks. I did a deal with one just to test them. I bought an open razor for 10p. I couldn't get it to shave me. It was interesting to watch them. They spared no effort or energy. There was an accident on the railway during World War 1 at Astrop which is a signal box controlling two loop lines between there and Banbury. It happened one foggy night when two light engines travelling along the up loop from Banbury missed the signal and crashed through the safety barrier at Astrop and plunged into the river. I am not sure what happened to the crew men.