

AYNHO VILLAGE

The time I remember best about the village was the later years, during World War I. All able bodied men were called up. Many did not return. Most of the men left worked on Robert Cartwright's estate. They had a large timber yard, cutting up trees from the estate into stakes, planks and other things to put on the railway for the front line battle fronts. Mr Jo and Tommy Humphris were the sawyers. Their father came out of retirement to sharpen the saws which was a skilled job. Two sons, Harry and Jo, joined them later.

The village is now called Apricot Village because of the apricot trees trained on the cottages. They belonged to the Squire. Mr Turner pruned them. Mr Scott kept the Cartwright Arms. He brewed his own beer, or rather his man did. Mr Fred Saunders did until he joined the Army. He was killed at the Dardanelles.

Mr Scott rode to hounds so he looked after two of the hounds. During the summer they roamed about. Once they stole a joint of meat from our house. Mr Scott paid for it. The dogs ears were full of fleas. They would stand very quiet while we picked them off. The butcher was Robert Oakey. They had a large family. Bob and Tom were in the Army, the others helped in the business. They killed their own animals, buying them from the sale yard at Aynho Station, then delivering the meat and bread round the villages with a horse and cart. Sid Major was the baker until called up. He didn't come back.

Fred Baughen was a wheelwright and carpenter. His shop was across the square opposite the pub. The doorway is now a large window. There were two shops. Mr and Mrs Chris Eaton kept one. Mrs Eaton was a nice person. She would throw handfuls of boiled sweets in the road for us to scramble for. The other shop was kept by Mrs Checkley. She served the customers through a tiny bob hole. It was an off-licence. Paraffin was sold. This was delivered by Pratts in a two horse tanker. The driver carried it in five gallon measures.

Mr John Howes was a baker. His flour and pig foods were delivered by Edmunds and Kench of Banbury in a Foden steam waggon. The blacksmith was Teddy Mobbs. He was always busy making shoes and putting them on the horses, mending farm implements. His shop was festooned with new horseshoes. I knew him better when he came to shoe the horses I worked with. Mr Jim Dunn was the carter on the estate. Mr Arthur Hawkins was the glazier and decorator. The farmers were Mr Bennett in the lower farm and Mr Jim Watts and three sons who lived opposite the church.

There was no motor traffic in those days. We could spin tops in the road. Some had hoops. I didn't go in for those things. I didn't have a very high gear, never won any races. I liked to dawdle along, whistling, hands in pockets. I did have a booster for emergencies I had to use sometimes to avoid a thick ear. In winter we made slides on the roads where the waggons had beaten the snow down, but the best slides we had were on the floods in the meadows and on the canal. The slides were sometimes over fifty yards long. We wore heavy nailed boots. They were the only ones we had. We had to polish them up for Sundays with a bar of spit on blacking.

The rector was the Rev Digby Cartwright. He came to school twice a week for scripture lessons. It was two or more of the best for any boy who misbehaved in his class. I managed to keep clear of that.

All of us in our family did the Aynho Paper round. They came on the 8.10 train from Oxford. Papers were half penny in new money. The same was charged for delivery. We were supposed to be in school by 10 am. I didn't make it very often. I didn't like school so I wasn't in a hurry to get there. I didn't do the round for very long. My younger brother Stanley took it on. He was 14 months younger. We were always together. So much for schooldays.