

THE HISTORY OF the KILVE DISTRICT Part 1

History of The Hood Arms

Personal Recollections

March 1995

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THE LOCAL HISTORY OF THE KILVE DISTRICT

Following a meeting at Kilve Court on January 9th, 1995, such interest was shown in the local history of the Kilve district that it was decided to instigate a collection of information, perhaps as a preliminary to compiling a more formal history of Kilve. The collection of information is being pursued under four main headings: Oral History, Pictorial History, Documents and Geographical. However, it is realised that there will be overlap, sometimes considerable, under these headings.

As the collection of material proceeds, it is planned to print booklets from time to time. These booklets would not be possible without the interest, enthusiasm and contributions by the residents of the district.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE HOOD ARMS

by Vera Selwood

The earliest reference to an Inn on the present site is in 1736, when the alehouse Register shows a Mr Channon as the Landlord.

Of course there may have been an inn on this site for much longer; if the Inn only sold Gin and Cider then a licence was not required and as the Tithe map of 1841 shows, a very large apple orchard at the rear of the inn no doubt meant that they made their own cider.

In 1736 George II was King: the British were beginning to build an Empire and we still owned America which was divided up into Colonies. John Wesley was starting his career as a preacher at this time.

In 1744, the Landlord was a Mr. Stockman. He was still at the Inn in 1755 and many events had taken place in those eleven years. The Battle of Culloden when the Jacobites were finally defeated; the calendar had been changed to Gregorian and we had somehow lost eleven days to which some citizens objected. It would be interesting to know what the customers of the Inn thought of this change, if only one could go back in time and eavesdrop.

The property at this time belonged to the St. Aubyn family and from their rent roll it appears that the building which is now "The Hood Arms" was once three cottages, the middle one being the original Inn.

The next reference is on 1790, although there is an entry, now almost illegible, in 1770 which looks like the name 'Roy', which also appears earlier on in the At. Aubyn Rent Roll. However, by 1790 there is more information concerning the then licensee, John Bartholomew. He had purchased the Inn from the St. Aubyn Estate; he and his sons rented a great deal of land and buildings from the Estate - Alfoxton, Putsham Farm and other property at Stringston. Again the topics of conversation at the Inn must have been many and varied...

The British were exploring all over the Globe, a British Army had been formed, we were fighting the French all over Canada, the Peace Treaty was signed in 1763, when we acquired Tobago, Dominica, Granada, Senegal, Canada, Nova Scotia, Cape Breton and Florida. Not a bad haul. No doubt some sons of Kilve joined the now British Army.

By 1775 the battle for American Independence had begun, culminating in the Declaration of Independence on 4th July, 1776. One wonders if any people from Kilve emigrated to the New World.

An interesting fact emerged when I was reading a book entitled "Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset" by Berta Lawrence. It mentioned John Bartholomew as the St. Aubyn's family bailiff which would account for his name occurring so often in the Land Tax Rolls. He was renting Alfoxden as it was then known and signed an agreement in July 1797, subletting Alfoxden to William Wordsworth and his sister. According to Mrs Lawrence this agreement is still in the Somerset Record Office. The book is most interesting to anyone who is fascinated by the past history of Holford and Kilve and the people who lived there.

Anyway, to return to John Bartholomew. By 1806 he had gone and the licence was held by a Mr Edward Warren Boyes. I did wonder about this a little and had a hunch that perhaps he had married

into the family. I looked up the Parish Register, and sure enough an Elizabeth Bartholomew had married an Edward Boyes at Kilve Church in 1800, so presumably he purchased the Inn from his father-in-law or it could have been his dowry if they still went in for such things in 1800. I could have discovered this earlier had I obtained a copy of John Bartholomew's will. When I did obtain it I discovered a great deal of information.

John Bartholomew had a chapel built at the stable end of The Hood which jutted out into the road. This, according to his Will was for the worship of God by Protestant Dissenters'. A licence was issued by the Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1807, as was required by the law at this time. It eventually became a Congregational Chapel but was closed in 1888 and demolished in 1912 when it was rebuilt as a garage. This garage in turn was pulled down around 1950. I am sure that John Bartholomew would have been very sad at the Chapel's demise since in his will he wished it to be used for the worship of God' forever. John Bartholomew died in 1816 at Kilton.

Again a great deal had been going on since he took over the Inn- the French Revolution, with the French Republic being declared in 1792, the Anglo-French War in 1793, the Irish Rebellion in 1798 and Nelson's victory at Trafalgar on 21st October, 1805.

As I said, Mr E.W.Boyes took over in 1806. He and his wife had seven children - Marie, born 1801; John Sibley 1802; Edward 1803 who died aged five months; Ann Eliza 1804; Christina 1807; Elizabeth 1809 and another Edward in 1813 who survived.

The Inn was called "The Chough and Anchor" in 1822, being the Arms of the Hood family. It seems first to have been called the "Hood Arms' in 1832. Again customers must have had a lot to talk about since John Bartholomew's death. Convicts were being transported to Australia in the notorious Convict Ships. In 1807 slavery was abolished in the British Empire; in 1812 the U.S.A. declared war on Britain and invaded Canada; war again with France which ended at the Battle of Waterloo and one wonders if anyone fro Kilve fought in this battle.

I have indeed learned from Mr. Hurley of the West Somerset free Press that Col. Francis Luttrell, who lived at Kilve Court opposite the Hood, fought at Waterloo and was wounded in battle. Col. Luttrell later became the first Master of the West Somerset Foxhounds.

The Parish rate, according to the Churchwarden's accounts, was 1 penny for the Inn in 1822, but by 1832 the rate was 10 pence - perhaps inflation was with us even then, or perhaps the building now took in the adjoining cottages. Stables had been added for the growing coach trade along the Toll road. There was a Toll Cottage next to the present Bakery, but this was pulled down many years ago.

By 1839 coaches left Bridgwater for Minehead on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 11 o'clock. The Toll roads were not very popular in early days and Toll gates were torn down and riots ensued.

Edward Boyes died in 1847. I have a photocopy of his Will, but unlike that of John Bartholomew which was written in reasonably plain English, his is in legal terminology and it is difficult to make head or tail of. After Edward Boyes' death, it seems that his daughter-in-law, who had married John Sibley Boyes, took over the Inn. She was by this time a widow and according to the 1851 census was 31 years old.

The Census return reads as follows:

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD AGE BORN

Elizabeth Boyes 31 Innkeeper, Pewsey, Wills

Walter Escott Boyes 6 Bridgwater (Son)

Elisabeth Boyes 76 Retired Innkeeper, Kilve (Mother-in-law)

Betty Andrews 54 Servant, East Quantoxhead

Mary Ann Owens 17 Servant, Holford

James Huish 51 Ostler, Marlborough, Wilts

Richard Gibbons 41 Potboy, Wellington.

It would seem that the Inn was flourishing, no doubt due to the Coach Trade, to sustain such a large household. In the years between 1851 and 1854, the transportation of convicts to West Australia had begun. The great Exhibition had been held in the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park and gold had been discovered in Australia.

By 1854, Mrs Boyes had gone - one wonders why? Did she perhaps marry again or was she offered a good price for the Inn? Whatever happened, the new Landlord was a Mr. William Merry, a good name for an Innkeeper! The Census of 1871 shows that he and his wife, both aged 59, his son Charles listed as Assistant Innkeeper; Francis Hiscott, Ostler, and a Mary Forter, aged 14. Perhaps trade was not so brisk now, or Mary, as the sole female servant, must have had a great deal to do.

A lot had gone on in the world since the Merrys took over - the Crimean War (1854 to 1856), the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the Suez Canal begun and opened in 1869, the American Civil War in 1861 and the Franco-Prussian War (1870 to 1873), so there would have been plenty to talk about in the tap room during those years.

By 1875 the son, Charles Merry, had taken over and was still listed as being resident there in the local directory of 1883. Both families of Merry are buried in Kilve Churchyard and the inscriptions on their tombstones are still legible.

By 1895 a Mr Amos Wine appears (again a good name for a publican). By a very strange coincidence I was working behind the bar in the Hood when a very old lady came in and showed great interest in the place. She told me that she used to come here when a child, when her grandfather kept it. She was very surprised when I asked if that was a Mr. Wine?

"How did you know that?" she asked.

I told her of the research I had been doing and she was most interested.

In 1909 a Mr. Frank Stevens took over the Inn. By this time a horse bus was running daily to Bridgwater, owned by a Mr Aplin. This bus operated until after the First World War when Mr Aplin replaced it with a motor bus.

Since Mr. Wine took over there had been the Boer War and of course the expansion of the railways, although the nearest the railways came to Kilve was Bridgwater or Watchet.

From 1900 onwards times were peaceable and the Friendly Societies flourished. One of these used to meet at the Hood carrying brass-topped staves which bore the Hood Arms. These staves can still be seen in Taunton and Bridgwater Museums.

In an extract from the Free Press 18th June, 1881, it was noted that: "The Hood Arms Kilve Friendly Society presented an English lever watch to Mr. D. Thome in appreciation of his 28 years service as Secretary....."

These Friendly Societies were mostly disbanded around 1911 with the Trade unions becoming more and more powerful. The introduction of Lloyd George's scheme of National Insurance made the Societies unnecessary, there is still a Ladies' Branch in Nether Stowey who have flowers in bouquets rather than on the top of staves as before. In Margaret Fuller's book about the West Country Friendly Societies, there are two photographs of the Nether Stowey Women's Society, one taken in 1909 with everyone in their best hats, the other taken in 1920s showing the ladies in procession carrying their bouquets of flowers. This walk still goes on to this day.

The First World War came, the casualties hit every village and town in the country and Kilve lost four men. The village then must have been a sad place as indeed it must have been during the Second World War when Kilve lost another of its men.

People in and around Kilve have been very kind with their memories of these old days and have shown me old photographs and documents, especially Miss Aplin, whose father started the horse buses so long ago.

Vera Selwood

Note: The County History of Somerset says:

"There was an inn at Kilve in 1689 and another in 1736. Between 1822 and 1827 it was called the Chough and Anchor, and by 1841, the Hood Arms. There was second inn in 1851."

MEMORIES OF KILVE COURT

from Lady Gass

I have two main connections with Kilve Court Firstly, my great- great-grandfather, Sir Alexander Hood, M.P. for West Somerset, lived there for a period in the early nineteenth century, and his son, also Sir Alexander (and M.P. for West Somerset) married Isabel, the daughter of his great friend Sir Peregrine Acland of Fairfield. Their wedding took place in Stogursey church in 1849. The Hood Arms at Kilve, with our family crest of Chough and Anchor, was called after the Hood family. This crest was used for the brass clubhead of the Friendly Society of Kilve; there is an example in the County Museum at Taunton.

Secondly, we all knew Mrs Cooke-Hurle well when she lived at Kilve Court. We used to go to tea there, starting as very small children. She, who had been at Cambridge herself, encouraged me to go there

too. She was the first woman to be a member of Somerset County Council, and I think also the first Somerset woman magistrate. She was a Quaker and a member of the Fry family from Bristol.

Elizabeth Gass

from Phyllis Lemon

In February 1938, I went to Kilve Court, armed with a brown paper parcel containing my uniform, to take my place as a kitchen maid under Nancy Biffen, the cook. Hoping to learn cooking, I soon found out that this was not to be. Instead, I had to get up early each morning to tackle the big black stove in the kitchen with black lead and brushes, then to light it with twigs and get the kettle boiling for breakfast. Oh, so often with damp sticks it would not bum, so I started the day in trouble!

My next job was to clean the servants' sitting room fireplace and lay it ready for the afternoon. (Sitting room is now ladies cloak room).

Every other Sunday I would be in with the Parlourmaid, when I was allowed to cook a very easy supper for Mrs Cooke-Hurle, and warm up Kilva's (the dog's) meal. This had to be warmed on a very large steel plate rack above my friend, the black stove. Once again I was in trouble, this time for putting my finger into the dog's dinner to test how warm it was, and being told by Mrs Cooke Hurle that she hoped I did not do that to her meals!!

Mrs Cooke-Hurle kept 4 maids:- parlourmaid, housemaid, cook and kitchenmaid: a gardener and his son as boot-boy, and also Mr Knight as chauffeur. Mr Knight would also look after the engine house and generator which supplied electricity for the house together with seeing to the fire escapes which consisted of coils of webbing at the bedroom windows, so the sash windows were regularly tested to make sure they would open. A car hot-water bottle was used to keep feet warm when the car was taken out. This was made of metal covered with thin carpet, and it was filled from a kettle in the kitchen.

I think electricity was connected to the mains when 2 electricians came from London to rewire the house just before the war. They lodged at Mrs Adlam's in Court Cottages.

Each year, a big "Spring Clean" took place with all the servants working together. Plenty of "Monkey Brand" was used! - it was a kind of compressed Vim in blocks. The kitchen maid spent hours beating and dusting books and all the carpets were dragged up and down the lawn to freshen them up and remove all the dust.

As the maids left their jobs, one would be moved up until finally reaching the post of parlourmaid. When we went to a social or dance, we had to ask permission and if Nancy went, it was usually alright. But on arrival home, a bottle of quinine and cinnamon was left on the kitchen table by Mrs Cooke-Hurle and we had to take some before going to bed to prevent a cold!

The floor would be black with cockroaches before the light was put on. A new stove was put into the kitchen: very smart to look at after my friend, the black one. A cream-coloured Crittall, with steel top. Very hard to keep clean with paraffin and emery powder. When Grace came, she would have the pleasure of cleaning it, and I moved up to being housemaid. Soon after, Sam took Brian's place as he had gone into the R.A.F. Sam had to bring logs in for Mrs Cooke-Hurle's fire, and my word, he was so

quick with the two handled basket that when helping him, it was a run through the two doors and down through the hall

Each year the house would entertain many visitors, and each maid had many varied jobs.

A mine dropped just below Pardlestone Farm, and as I was in the house on my own for a reason I can't remember, I had a lady from the village for company. We were so scared and crouched in the broom cupboard under the maids' stairs. The mine left a crater in the field. After being parlourmaid for a short while, I left in 1942 to join the NAAFI.

The top of the house was full of mums and children (evacuees) from London for the first part of the war, but Kilve was too quiet for them and one by one each family went home.

Miss Agnes Fry lived with Mrs Cooke-Hurle before the war and often gave lantern slides in the Den. She also taught canvas work each week using the top, small bedroom. I came to the classes when I was about 12-13 years old and made a pin-cushion after many times picking out wrongly made stitches!

Phyllis Lemon

from Grace Thome

In September of 1940 I came to Kilve Court as a kitchen maid. I had to wear a blue dress with a white cap and apron for the mornings, and for the afternoons I changed into a black dress with a small cap and apron.

I was allowed one afternoon off a week, and every other Sunday afternoon; the alternate Sunday morning was when we went to Kilve Church. My wage was 15 shilling per month - that, of course, was with my keep.

After breakfast each morning we started our day with prayers in the dining room with Mrs Cooke-Hurle.

I can well remember all the fruit that had to be prepared for jams and bottling and oranges and grapefruit for marmalade. All the tomatoes were bottled, the mounds of runner beans that had to be sliced and put in salt in big earthenware pots, all the fresh eggs were put in water-glass to preserve them.

I stayed in the kitchen when Phyllis left to go into the NAAFI and then I took over the housemaid's duties, which was giving Mrs Cooke-Hurle an early morning call, and if we had visitors I had to carry a tray of tea for them (I did get the kettle boiled by the new kitchen maid). I started work at the top of the house with the blue room on the right and the-red room on the left and what we called the reunette room was the the small middle room which was used for sewing. Then the first landing: the yellow room was on the left, the dressing room in the middle and Mrs Cooke-Hurle's room on the right and that had a great big four-poster bed in it with green drapes.

Each night I had to close all the windows and shutters, turn down the bed covers and generally tidy the rooms, put away clothes etc, and take down all the shoes to be cleaned for the next day.

I went on to be parlourmaid which brought me downstairs again to work. I now had the library which was on the right of the front door, the drawing room was on the left. In this room was a beautiful grand piano which was always played when the family came to stay. Then I had the dining room which is now the bar.

Mrs Cooke-Hurle's secretary always worked in the dining room. The pantry was between the dining room and the kitchen and there I had to clean all the silver. Also I had to wait at the table and at night everyone used to dress for dinner.

There were some members of the family that used to spend some of their leave at Kilve Court: they were very smart in their dress uniforms. We did our bit for the war effort with the knitting parties. We went to different houses in the village where we knitted socks, gloves, mittens, balaclavas for the forces.

From parlourmaid, I moved on to do the cooking, which I did until the cook returned from the forces.

In 1960, after the death of Mrs Cooke-Hurle, the house was taken over by Colonel and Mrs Reg Cooke-Hurle. At that time I generally helped out in the mornings and when they entertained.

In 1961, the county Council bought the property, and in the beginning. I can remember the first course that came in, the kitchen Crittall was used with some Calor gas cookers.

All the bedrooms were full of camp beds.

Later the house was renovated and the Centre officially opened in 1964.

Grace Thome

MEMORIES OF KILVE

KILVE'S RESTORED DUCKPOND

(from Kilve News 14, February 1989)

Visitors to Sea Lane will have noticed that there is an attractive pond opposite Meadow House where once there was only an untidy patch with a small stream.

Meadow House, which now belongs to Lt.-Col and Mrs Samson, was formerly the Rectory and before that, the Parsonage of Kilve. The new owners were given a postcard dating from around 1925 of their pond as it then was and were determined to restore it to its former glory.

The pond, which is referred to on the Tithe map of the parish as being .131 of an acre, had apparently silted up and in part had been deliberately filled in. Embedded in the ground, however, was the stonework of a retaining wall which from letters seen in the Records Office at Taunton may well have been from an original wall built in 1814 by the Reverend John Matthews to enclose the pond and to separate the pond from the stream. The pond therefore certainly dates back to the 1700s.

The only part of the pond which cannot be reclaimed is immediately next to Sea Lane under which a new main sewer was placed 25 years ago. Adjoining the pond is also a garden, and it is said that local vicars vied with one another as to who had the most attractive water gardens. Whenever it was, it must have been before the first World War as Meadow House ceased to be the Rectory around 1913.

THE POND AND THE WATER WHEEL

(from Kilve News 15, March 1989)

What a delight it was to see the Pond at Meadow Hopes and now to see the Water Wheel working at the Old Mill - both happy memories of my childhood days. The village children used to have to fetch their parents' milk in cans before going to school (often under protest from mel) at 'The Mill' and the wheel used to fascinate me as I walked past the carthorses being harnessed for work on Mr Frampton's farm.

The force of water wasn't always so prolific especially during hot summers. I can remember Mr Frampton showing me sacks of corn being drawn up for grinding before World War II.

A big Thank You' to Lt.-Col and Mr Stevens for once again giving us pleasure in showing these beautiful preservations of the past. I'm wondering what our next treat will be for the village? A nice garden on the corner in the centre of the village? Maybe I am wishfully thinking!

Phyllis Lemon

SNOWDROPS IN PARDLESTONE LANE

(from Kilve News, April, 1994)

Every February, snowdrops in various places in Kilve make a lovely show, but on a bank in Pardlestone Lane there is a significant display which makes one wonder how they established themselves just there.

However, the answer has been provided by Audrey Prole, who tells us that when she was a girl she helped to plant them there for Miss Agnes Fry who at that time lived at Kilve Court.

THE VILLAGE OF KILVE IN THE 1920s.

by Steve Farmer

A well-known writer, Petronella O'Donnell, who was visiting the West Country, wrote an article in the Somerset Year Book that the cottages of Quantock Head are so famous for their strange beauty that it is not necessary to write of them. If there are such things as fairies, then fairies must have built them. Again the cottages of Kilve are I think even more beautiful, being isolated, not in a row. Here one sees the tallest of thatched roofs and gardens so massed with flowers that only the roof is visible seen through a wilderness of tall white lilies, roses, stocks, hollyhocks, spar, marigolds, columbines, candytuft and the like, while here and there some beehives. Often one of the lovely cottages will have a stream running round it and have to be crossed by a bridge; a stream full of luscious water cress which will run down past the church into the mist covered channel beyond.

A quote from the editor of the same journal added that Kilve Church had no weathercock not the beach no niggers, yet for those of simple taste who love nature in its varying moods, Kilve is a very charming little resort.

The School

The village school catered for pupils from both Kilve and East Quantoxhead from the age of five to the leaving age of fourteen.

The headmistress was a Mrs Knapman who lived in the School House with her son David and daughter Margery. Mr Knapman had business arrangements in Bristol. Mrs Knapman was assisted by Miss E Everard from Williton; later by Miss Aggie Raymer from Kingston, and Miss Gage from, Dunster giving relief when needed. The School governors appointed were: from East Quantoxhead Squire Luttrell, Reverend Aldworth and Mr Horace Wine, and from Kilve: Reverend James, Mrs Summerhayes and joined later by Mrs Cooke-Hurle.

The Rector

The Rector of Kilve was the Reverend Hartwell James; he was also the Rector of Stringston. He was a very dedicated man to his profession, a brilliant orator from the pulpit and a very strong disciplinarian as regards the behaviour of the children in the parish. He loved his sport; he was a good cricketer and a brilliant shot with a gun, but the love of his life was trout fishing. He rented a stretch of water in the River Exe in the Exe Valley where he spent as much time as his duties permitted him. For several years he represented the Parish on the Williton and District Council.

Mrs James organised the Sunday School.

Doctor

Dr Hallam was the local Doctor who served the village. He lived at Stogursey and cycled on his round to visit patients. In those days there were no phones and if, as it did happen, there was bad trouble in the home, dad or someone would have to cycle to Stogursey to knock the Doctor up.

Nurse

The District Nurse was Nurse Simmonds who lived at East Quantoxhead. She was a very hardworking and caring person who loved going to jumble sales where she would buy up articles which she thought someone less well-off on her rounds would find a use for. I well remember one of the items among some things she thought my family could find a use for was a pair of brown leather leggings which I took a fancy to. I spent quite a while cleaning and polishing them and took great pride in wearing them. Can you imagine a boy eleven years old wearing short trousers, hob nail boots and a pair of bright shiny leggings which came up to my knees. I can assure you the teacher of my class took a very dim view when I arrived at school. I think I should add here that one or two ladies of the village were also quite good midwives.

Police

The policeman was a local man, P.C. Holley, who ruled the village with very sharp eyes and keen ear, and if any of the village kids were unfortunate enough to be caught doing things which he did not approve of - such as climbing trees or tying a tin can on Grandma Radford's cat it would be a clip around the ears with a request that you tell your father what he had done. This was something we daren't do or else it would be more than a clip around the ear! On his retirement, Mr Holley was followed by P.C. Keevil.

Shops

General Store: Mrs Lock

Newsagent and Tuck: Mr and Mrs S Thome

Ladies Dress Shop: Mrs Barker

Post Office: Mrs Brooks

Tradesmen travelling to the village

Tailor: Mr Atkins, from Stogursey

Butchers: Langdon's, from Williton, and Hooper from Watchet

Groceries: Mr Dyer from Stogursey, every Friday evening.

All these deliveries were made by horse and cart or horse and van.

Guest Houses

Boarding House: Miss Withers

Aldenham House: Miss Brewer

The Priory: Miss M Gale

Hood Arms: Mr F and Mrs Stevens.

Some of the cottages also took short stay guests as did the farms. The first service bus seen in the village was a G.W.R. open top double decker.

Sport

The Cricket Club tried to make a pitch on the field known as Old field ko Moor, but quickly found that it would be far too wet, so by kind permission of Mr Summerhayes, a move to the adjoining field known as Hurdwells where a very good pitch was made. After a couple of seasons playing there a move was made to Blacklands Meadow near the school. Members of the team: S. Thome, L. Neathy, Rev James, L Summerhayes (capt), F. Stevens, W. Hurley, O.Treggol, Dr Archer, E. Browning, and joined later by V. Traylor, B.Jarvis, F. Thome, Jack and Ernest Quick and Frank Stevens (Sonny). The Hon., Sec. and Treasurer was S. Thome.

The first memory of Quantock Rangers Football Club was watching in the field called Sea Pool. Later, they also moved to Blacklands Meadow. Team M. Paul, E Council, F.Stevens (capt), F. Beasley, T. Tuckfield, George Sweet, R. Hobbs, H. Watts, Pomp Routley, B. Graddon, L. Knight, and later F. Thome and E. Fewins.

Societies

The British legion. With Lord St. Audries as President, Mr. D Inglis as Chairman, later to be joined by Mr H Knight as the hardworking Hon. Sec., the Branch began to go from strength to strength. Its membership was made up from ex-servicemen and women living in the parishes of East Quantoxhead, Holford, Stringston, Kilton and Lilstock. By the middle of the 1920s the membership was 100 percent. Each year the Branch would arrange an Annual Dinner for its members. The Armistice Day Parade would start from the village and march to the Church behind the Bridgwater Town Silver Band, where a wreath in memory of the fallen would be hung at the Lych Gate.

The Women's Institute, after a steady start began to gain strength under the Presidency of Mrs Traylor and, like the British Legion, was to take a big part in the life of the village.

Some years later, a Branch of the Y.P.U. was organised.

The Village - Main Road

I think at this stage it would be a good thing to find out about the villagers and where they lived.

Glen Cottage, a tied farm cottage. Mr and Mrs J Coles and family (3 girls and 1 boy). Occupation: Mr Coles, farm worker.

Moving down the road, we come to the home of Mr and Mrs John Aplin and family (3 girls and 4 boys). Occupation: Mr Aplin, smallholder.

On down to Higherland Cottages the first one, Mr and Mrs Jim Coles, retired: the second one, Mr and Mrs John Farmer (3 girls and 2 boys)

Going down the right hand side we reach the Rectory where resided the Reverend and Mrs James, and Mrs James' brother, known to all as Berty. Unfortunately, Berty was blind (I will come back to Berty later). Sarah Lockyer lived there as housekeeper.

Continuing on, we come to a long wooden shed with a pantile roof. This was Mr Frampton's workshop. Next to this building was a long deep pit with strong timber laid across. This was the saw pit, and here trees, after being felled, would be brought to be sawn into planks. The sawing was done by hand with a long crosscut saw which meant that one man had to work from the bottom of the pit.

Right next to this was a little paddock just under one acre in size, where Fosett's family travelling circus would pull in and set up a large tent and produce a nice little show for the villagers.

We must now cross back to the other side of the road where we have what is known as a straw rick barton. Behind this were other farm buildings such as the wagon house, stables, cowyard and byre, pigsties, etc. But the most outstanding building of them all was a granary barn built completely of stone. At the end of these buildings was an open yard where Mr Summerhayes would winter his store cattle. As the wall near the road was not very high, it was a pleasant sight to see half a dozen heads hanging over the wall watching the world go by.

To complete the row of buildings was a store for cattle feed and a two storey building known as the cider house and set back a bit from the farm house where Mr and Mrs Summerhayes had lived for a number of years.

Crossing back to the other side again we come to the Post office standing in a pleasant little garden. Mrs Brooks is the Post Mistress. Living with her is Mr Brooks, a very well known gamekeeper, and Mr Frank Foster, a son by a previous marriage.

Mr and Mrs Jim Chilcott occupied the next cottage; their family was two girls and 4 boys, and Grandfather Charlie lived with them. Mr Chilcott's occupation was a stone cracker.

Mr Radford, who lived next door, was a retired lady.

The Boarding House run by Miss Withers was very popular with summer guests.

The Hood Arms was run by Mr and Mrs F. Stevens. Living with them were a son and daughter and a niece, Miss May Watts.

Mr and Mrs Cridland occupied next door, living with their son. Mr Cridland's claim to fame was that he had been the coach driver of the coach which plied between Kilve and Bridgwater. He was also a chimney sweep and would charge two pence to cut young lads hair.

The tenants of the next house were Mr and Mrs S. Thorne who had two sons. They also ran the Newsagents shop with a sweet and tuck shop.

Mrs Smith lived with her son Harry in the next cottage. Mrs Smith was caretaker of the Village Hall and Harry a farmer worker employed by Mr Adams at East Quantoxhead. The front room was used by Dr. Hallam as his consulting room when he held a surgery at Kilve.

Mr and Mrs F. Barker lived next door; they had a son. Mrs Barker ran a ladies' dress shop. This was the last building on this side of the road.

We must now return to the centre of the village and cover that side. The three cottages together were part of the Kilve Court estate. By now, Mr and Mrs Cooke-Hurle had taken over at the Court having

moved from Brislington, near Bristol, bringing with them their chauffeur, Mr H. Knight and his family of 2 girls and 2 boys, and also Mr A. Adlam, the cowman, who had 1 son. Gardener Hurley who was gardener with his son at the Court already lived in one of the cottages, so all were occupied.

The Village Hall was next, and was really the most important building in the Village. Everything took place in the Hall: Whist drives, Social evenings and many kinds of different entertainments, and in the winter if the weather was really bad the Sunday evening Church service would be held at the Hall, and from September to March was used by the Men's Club.

The little Toll Cottage was the home of Mr and Mrs T. Hurley and their daughter Fanny, who was the school cleaner for a number of years.

The last house was the home of Mr and Mrs W. Crocker and next door was the blacksmith's forge.

The Village-Sea Lane

We will now take a trip down Sea Lane to see who lived there.

At St. Georges lived Mr and Mrs Barber (retired), and at Jasmine Cottage Mr Hodge.

The Cottage next door was occupied by Mr Black, his wife and two sons. Mr Black had moved down from Scotland to take charge of the oil project which had been started down near the beach.

In the top cottage of three in a row was the Coastguard, Mr Bagley, and his wife and 1 daughter. In the middle one called 'One Ash' was the retired policeman, Mr Holley, his wife and daughter. The General Store was run by Mrs Lock who had 3 sons, and living with her was Miss Bryant who delivered magazines in the district.

The little cottage known as The Nutshell opposite was owned by Mr Bryant from Bristol, who had it as a holiday cottage.

By now, 4 new cottages had been built by Messrs Pollard of Bridgwater for the Williton Council. Number 1 was occupied by Mr and Mrs W. Hurley who had one daughter. Mr Hurley's occupation was a steam-roller driver, his work taking him to many parts of the West Country, roadmaking. Many a morning he would be away from home before daylight so as to have his engine ready to start work with a head of steam.

Number 2. The tenants were Mr Palmer and his wife. They had two daughters. Mr Palmer's occupation was a quarry worker. Living with them was a relative, Bob Abel, known to all the young ones as 'Bob the devil'. He was a farmworker and worked for a farmer at Kilton. It meant he had to take the footpath to Kilton which took him over the high ground above the village. Somehow in his travels he managed to secure a bugle, and from the high ground on his way to work he would sound 'Reveille' and on the way home, sometimes quite late, he would blow 'Lights Out'.

Number 3. Mr and Mrs Ball who had 2 sons and 1 daughter. Number 4 was P.C. Keevil, his wife, 1 son and 1 daughter. When the above two houses became vacant, they were taken by Mr and Mrs Lyddon and Mr and Mrs Sully who had two daughters.

By now, Mr Frampton had moved to the mill to farm it as a small- holding.

The two little thatched cottages - one was rented by Mr Creech and his wife and the second was rented by a Mr Hill from Bristol.

At Aldenham House lived Mrs Nellie Brewer who ran a very successful Guest house. She was also an expert at making home-made wine which quite a few of the locals discovered.

We have now reached Parkhouse Farm where Mr J Fish and his wife lived. Mr Fish ran a very successful farm.

The Old Rectory at this time was rented by the Stuttaford family from London who spent long summer and Christmas holidays there.

The little cottage next was the home of George Sheppard and his daughter. Mr Sheppard was the village church sexton and grave digger.

Two more cottages together. One was the home of Mr W Greenslade, his wife and 1 son. Mr Greenslade was a farm worker at Parkhouse Farm. The second was the home of Mr H Gale and his wife. Mr Gale was herdsman at the same farm.

Finally, we come to the Priory, where Miss Mabel Gale was well- known for her hospitality in the Guest House she ran. Mabel married one of her regular guests - Charlie Pain from Bristol.

Personalities

I think now would be a good time to find out a few things about the personalities of the villagers.

Mr Crocker was the village blacksmith and farrier. His other duties were Overseer of the Parish, Vicar's Warden to which he had given nine years' service, Serving Postman for Kilve and East Quantoxhead for a great number of years. On his transfer to a less strenuous round, a presentation was made to him by the Rev. James. It was a cheque for 50 guineas which had been donated by the parishioners of the two parishes he had served for so long. Records showed that Mr Crocker had walked over 20,000 miles in the course of his duties. In spite of his many commitments, he would, when asked, make us an iron hoop with a guide to control the hoop. These hoops were all the rage at that time for the local boys.

Mr A Frampton, carpenter, wheelwright, coffin maker, undertaker (we could always tell when a coffin was being made because of the strong smell of boiling pitch wafting through the village). He also ran a small-holding. He would make wagons and putts to order for farmers over a big area. He was such a craftsman he was allowed to put his trade plate on the work he did. It read "Made by A Frampton of Kilve". He was a perfectionist in many ways.

Mr Aplin whose claim to fame was that he had been the proprietor of the coach and horse bus service running from Kilve to Bridgwater. A writer who was visiting Bridgwater to write a history of the town penned the following:-

And from some few years ago came day by day the famous two horse coach driven by Harry that took on the whole length of the straight broad road below, to end at Kilve by the sea.

Mr Aplin's daughter Cissy also took turns to drive the coach. Altogether three horses were used on this run so as one of the horses in turn could rest.

Mr Aplin also ran a small-holding, having about a dozen milking cows, and one could always buy milk and cream from him. One of his sons, the youngest, Billy, was a T.B. sufferer, and finally died from his illness.

Mr F Barker, a master builder and partner in the firm of Date & Barker at Watchet, was Band-Master of the East Quantoxhead Brass Band. A few years on, he took over the Post Office, and very often in the summer he could be seen travelling to the beach with his home-made ice-cream cart.

Mr Brooks was a game keeper of great renown, a real countryman. Leading up to Christmas he would have to organise and supervise pheasant shoots for members of the local nobility. This is where the local lads were called into action. All the shoots took place on a Saturday. Quite early on the big day he would gather the local boys and take them to where the shoot was going to take place may be Kilton Park or Wallacombe Brake - where they would be placed at intervals right round the particular wood. Their job was to find something to tap on a gate or a fence or over on a big stone. The object of this was to stop the birds from leaving the wood until the shoot began.

Sam Thorne ran the newsagent's shop and had quite a delivery round to Holford and East Quantoxhead, Sam's first love was cricket, both local and as a supporter of the County team. He was the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the village team. He had a great way of raising funds. On his journey delivering papers he would carry a little note-book and when dealing with the Gentry folk, he would produce it and tell them that if they were prepared to pay him 10/6 he would make them a vice-president of the Club. He did exceptionally well.

Much of Sam's time as summer approached would be spent on the cricket field starting to make pitches to play on when the season started.

Before living at Kilve, he lived at Stogumber where he worked as a shepherd for the White family. When he moved to Kilve he brought his great knowledge of sheep and shepherding with him and many a pound he must have saved local farmers in vet bills by giving help and advice when needed. I very well remember one occasion when I was going with him on his paper round to Holford, we came to a farm where the farmer was waiting with a very depressed look on his face. Sam said, "What's a matter to he, maister?" "I been waiting to see you because one of my best ewes is off her legs and I can't get her to eat anything. She's in the shed over there." Sam made his way to the shed, and knelt down beside the sheep, opened her mouth, had a good look in her eyes, and suddenly put his hand behind her left shoulder. He told me later that he had done this to get her heart rate. Sam got up and asked the farmer if there was any Ivy about. "On the garden wall, there's plenty," said the farmer. "Boy," says Sam, "go and get a good armful." This I did and when I returned with the ivy, Sam said put it down where she can reach it This I did and we went on our way. Later in the week, I enquired from Sam how the sheep was. "Fine," he said, "she's back with the flock now." Only Sam knew what that Ivy contained.

There were three large farms in the Parish.

1. Putsham Farm, Mr H. Summerhayes
2. Pardlestone Farm, Mr L. Summerhayes
3. Parkhouse Farm, Mr J. Fish.

There were three small-holdings

1. The Mill, Mr A Frampton
2. Higherlands, Mr Aplin
3. Hilltop, Mr E Porter.

It seems incredible, but every field on these farms had a name like Putsham Mead, Pond Meadow, Ratsclose, Furze Ground, etc., but the most popular would have to be Butchers Mead because in the early summer it would be covered with a mass of yellow oxslips and in the ditch around would be masses of cowslips and nearby in the field named Conygar one could find growing one of the prettiest of the wild flowers, the bee orchid. The animals would all have names, like the horses could be Prince, Captain, Flower, Madam, etc., and the milking cows could be Primrose, Buttercup, Daisy, etc.

To be a successful farmer he would need a carter for the horses, herdsman for the cattle, shepherd for the sheep and a fourth man who was hand enough to turn his hand to several jobs like rick building, making hedges, ditching, making reed and thatching.

The carter would be a man who had worked with and carted for horses most of his working life and took great pride in the way he would turn the horse out to work with highly groomed brasses and harness all a glitter. He took great pride in the work he did, not because he had to, but because he wanted to. One of the most pleasant sounds when strolling in the country where ploughing was taking place was to hear the ploughman whistling the tune of the day as he followed the plough and to hear his commands to his team of horses. It would be like this "Walk on" when he wanted the horses to go forward, "Come 'ere" to bear left, "Wogg off" to go right and "weigh" to stop. We must realise how important the horse was as he, more than any other animal, was involved in most of the jobs carried out on the farm.

The first of the major jobs to come would be the haymaking. Here the carter, in kindness to his horses, would start to mow the grass very early in the morning, so by the time the sun really got hot he would have nearly finished the field. The corn harvest would follow some time later. It was very fortunate for the farmer that the men and boys of the village would lend a hand in the harvesting of both crops. It was not unusual to see husband and wife working together in the fields, spiting thistles in the com, pulling weeds, picking up potatoes and doing many other chores.

Farm work was very hard, long hours in all kinds of weather for a very low wage - 27/6 a week.

I think the following little ode says it all.

*Dear creatures of our country soil
We who have seen you at your toil
Or in scanty, well-earned leisure
Filled with your simple forms of pleasure We have a debt
That can't be met
To you good souls of Somerset.
The years roll on, and with them, you
Become more frail, become more few.
And 'Alfie', John' and Jim"
Your backs grow bent, your eyes grow dim.
But don't forget
We love you yet
You characters of Somerset.*

Kilve was closely connected to East Quantoxhead for several services they offered, such as the cobbler, Mr E. Warren, who lived at Higher Street using the little house in his garden as his workshop where one could go and have repairs done to your boots or shoes while you waited, such repair as a rubber on your shoe or a steel cap on your boots. He was very adept at most repairs on footwear. He lived with his sister, Miss Warren. They had a very beautiful parrot who could say quite a lot and was a great favourite with the young ones who had reason to visit Mr Warren.

Still at Higher Street was a coal depot run by Mr J. Lockyer. He was assisted by Jack Griffiths who came up with his lorry from Dunster to help with the deliveries down in the village. At the Mill was the Bakery run by Mr Bob Wake assisted by his wife. The delivery for bread and cakes round the district by horse and cart was done by Chris Matravers, and when he made his delivery to Kilton, Lilstock and Honeybeare, he would take a couple of the village lads with him. He usually had a surplus of d buns which he passed around.

I would like to return to Mr Berty at the Rectory. As stated, he was blind, and because of his handicap at Easter, money would be raised for the blind institutions. Whist drive would be held at the village hall and the church collections were donated to the fund and on Good Friday a football match between the old crocks of the village and the school boys football team. The Old Crocks side would be Rev James, Keeper Brooks, J. Fish, L. Summerhayes, R. Adams, Fred and Herb Harris, F Stevens, B. Tremlett, J. Bailey, W. Parsons. These players would arrive to play in their everyday clothes, hob nail boots, leggings and knickerbocker breeches, quite a number of the boys were nearly trampled to death by very rough play from the crocks. The Rev Gentlemen was the worst of the one or two who did not like being beaten.

At the Rectory, where Berty lived, was quite a long open-ended shed where there was a pile of wood which had been delivered by Jack Payne from Holford, also a wooden saw-horse. This shed was about 30 yards from the back door of the house. Berty would make his own way to the shed by way of touch of wall or fence. Having reached the shed, he would select a pole from the pile and lay it on the sawing horse, measure the length he wanted to cut his first log and saw it off. With this log he continued to measure and cut off a good pile of the same size of logs.

Living in Kilve

With regards to the one phone at the Post Office, when telegrams arrived - and there were quite a number for people living in the district they would be accepted by Mrs Brooks who then had to find someone to deliver them. There was more often than not a lad with a bicycle around who would be delighted to deliver one. There was a going price for delivery:- Kilve 3d., East Quantoxhead 9d., Perry 1/., Holford 9d.,Stringston 1/=, Kilton 9d., and Lilstock 1/=.

One of the highlights of the summer was the wortleberry picking. An extract from the Royal English Dictionary of 1768 reads:

"The whortleberries growing on the Quantock Hills are as famous as the Hills on which they grow, the whorts of which the middling and ordinary people make pies or eat them with milk etc. They are as large as blackcurrants, being black when ripe, and having a pungent taste."

November 1924 and 156 years later, the wortleberries growing on these lovely hills are still for the middling and ordinary people, but not for making pies, etc., but to be gathered and sold for making a little money.

With this view in mind, several mothers banded together with a request for the summer school holiday to be changed to coincide with the whortleberry season. Asked to be given a good reason why this should be done, it was explained to the committee that the wortleberry picking was a short season and that it was the way that extra money could be earned to buy clothes for the winter. After much deliberation, it was agreed to grant the wish. This really upset the teacher at the school who had a standing time for her own holiday, and also parents who were not into wort picking.

When news came that the worts were ripe and fit for picking, whole families would make the long trek up on to the hills at the start of the season. Worts could be picked on the open hill, but as the season went on and, with continual picking and trampling around, the supply began to dry up on the open hill. A move would be made to the woods where the worts were a little later in ripening. This would add a couple of miles to the trip up the hill.

Worts were sold by the quart. Quite a few were sold to the Guest Houses, and orders were placed from as far away as Bristol. Any worts sold in this way would be picked over to remove odd bits of leaf or bracken and any green ones. For this the seller was entitled to charge an extra 2d. Mr H. Hobbs would travel around the villages each evening to collect any worts available. Travelling up from Kilve we were always made welcome by a dear old lady, Mrs Rowe, living at Beechanger. She would be waiting for us with a large jug of lemonade and when we returned in the evening there would be another drink waiting.

Between the wort season and blackberry picking, if one was prepared to rise very early, it would be possible to pick mushrooms which grew in a number of fields in the area and, provided there was an R

in the month, go to the beach and with a sharp knife prise some limpets off the rocks. When boiled out of their shells and fried with butter and some bacon a delightful meal could be had. And, when the neap tides came in September, parties would go glatting, fishing for conger eels which would be found under the rocks and in the pools.

Most of the older men who worked on the land liked a drop of cider. They would have either an earthenware little jar or a verkin. This was a small wooden cask shaped as a miniature barrel which they would carry to work with them and go to the cider house and draw them full of cider to take in the fields where they would be working, each of the utensils holding 2 pints.

In late autumn and early winter the cider making would take place in the cider house at Putsham Farm. The apples would have been gathered from the orchards around the village and taken to the top storey of the cider house, where they would be fed into a chute leading down below to a pulping machine where they would all be pulped into very small fragments of apples. The base of the cider press stood about two feet off the ground. It had a channel running around it. The system used by the cider maker was as follows.

A layer of clean straw would be placed on the base, then covered by a good layer of pulped apple. More straw would be placed to cover the pulp. This went on until the cheese, as it was called, reached the top plate of the press which would be wound down to put slight pressure on the stacked cheese when a sharp knife would be used to cut off the protruding ends of the straw. Then more pressure would be applied to the cheese and the juice would run down into the channel of the base, and from there into a large open vat. Each day the screw on the press would be turned putting quite a pressure on the cheese. This would be kept up until no more juice would run from the stacked cheese.

The cider in the big vat would be strained into barrels which would be stored for the cider to mature.

One of the winter's most popular pastimes enjoyed by many of us was a day's rabbiting. For this you would need a couple of good ferrets, a good little terrier, quite a few rabbit nets, a spade and a matt hook. On a good day the catch could be twenty rabbits or so, but if you had trouble baiting the rabbits, and what was known as laid up and had to dig the ferrets out, not so good. The rabbit either roasted or in a stew was a very popular dish for the working class folk.

At Christmas time one of the most enjoyable events would be a visit from Nether Stowey mummers which was a party of five or six men in fancy dress and with their faces blackened singing Christmas carols accompanied by an accordion, tin whistle and tambourine. They made a tour of the district and were very popular wherever they went.

As the twenties rolled by, things began to change, the headmistress changed at the school, Mrs Knapman replaced by Mrs Ferguson who was replaced by Mrs Brill. Mr Wedlake replaced Mr Keevil. Bus services began to be more often and more regular.

One thing I must not forget to mention was the eleven plus school exam which came into force in 1925. Although we had been educated very thoroughly, when we saw the exam papers it was frightening. Even the a couple of boys whose parents and teachers thought had a good chance of passing, like the rest of us, failed dismally. The Rev Aldworth was the gentleman who attended and supervised the exam was taken aback by some of the questions set!

Reflections

I think people of my generation have to agree how fortunate we have been to have lived through a period when so many changes have been made. To mention just a few, the motor car in 1920, Henry Ford's T Ford price £180. Today's Rolls and Bentleys selling at £40,000, and from the Gypsy Moth to the Concorde. The express train of the day travelling at 60 mph, to the Channel Tunnel express travelling at 200 mph, and many big changes have taken place in the last 70 years.

But to me personally the twenties will always be my favourite memory. Even now I can enjoy the memory of leaving school in 1927, getting a job, going to work and taking home my first week's wage of 7/6 made up to 10/= if I was prepared to work on a Sunday!

Steve Farmer

MEMORIES OF KILVE from 1930s

by Audrey Prole

My memories of Kilve start where Steve's (Farmer) left off - the early thirties.

East Quantohead & Kilve School.

Miss Alice Bonner, Head Teacher, loved by everyone. A little lady with a mop of pure white wavy hair. Her pupils came from many outlying villages Nether Stowey, Stogursey, Watchet, Holford and of course Kilve and East Quantoxhead.

Miss Walland, her companion. Organist at both Kilve and East Quantoxhead Churches beautiful alto voice. Sang at all the local concerts.

The school was heated by large stoves which were fuelled by coke. Old iron guards surrounded the stove on which hung all our wet coats when it poured with rain. We walked to school: the Sea Lane children and those from East Quantoxhead using the footpaths across the fields. We took sandwiches for lunch and were given mugs of hot cocoa. We didn't see many cars, but I was terrified of the steam waggons, and always climbed over the nearest gate when I heard one chugging up the hill. The fire man would stoke up and send clouds of smoke and sparks out of the waggon.

School meals were introduced about 1940. The cook then was Mrs Winnie Adlam. Fresh vegetables were supplied by Mr Horace Wine from East Quantohead. His four children would carry them to the school each morning. Later, Mrs Bessie Hurley, then Mrs Edie Harris cooked the lunches. A mini-bus was provided much later to transport the children to school. Miss Liddell was head teacher for a short while, followed by Miss Hughes and then Mrs Napper who was at the school when it closed in 1971 due to a fall in the number of pupils.

There were about thirty evacuees at the school during the war. Their teacher was a Mr Hogwood who, with the help of his pupils, dug up a large patch of the playing field to grow vegetables.

Kive Court

I remember going up to the dairy every morning with my sister to fetch the milk. We had a large can which was filled with rich creamy milk from the Jersey herd of cows kept at the Court. Mr Adlam was the cowman. It was a sad day when Mrs Cooke-Hurle decided to get rid of the cows. The bull had attacked Mr Adlam, and that was it!

Mr father, Mr Knight, known to everyone as Herbert, was chauffeur. He looked after the hens and the engine house when the electricity was generated for the Court. Occasionally I would go up to the Court in the evenings, always by the back door, not to be seen! It was usually when Mrs Cooke-Hurle was having dinner. I stood on the stool to grind the coffee in a little machine at the end of the dresser. My reward was home-made ice cream on my favourite fresh raspberries, with Rice Krispies and cream on peach trifle.

I remember the rows of bottled fruit on the shelves in the kitchen. There were dozens and dozens of jars of everything. Mrs Kate Adlam was called in to help Nancy the Cook at jam-making and bottling time. During my visits to the kitchen we would suddenly hear Mrs Cooke-Hurle coming in from the hall. I was quickly hidden behind the scullery door, not daring to move until Mrs Cooke-Hurle had given her

orders for the next day. Mrs Cooke-Hurle always wore long black skirts where she had a little pocket in the hem for her purse.

My two sisters and I all had Mrs Cooke-Hurle's step-daughters as our Godmothers. They took a great interest in our up-bringing, always remembering birthdays, attending confirmations, etc./ The whole family visited us and the other cottagers at Christmas and during holidays when all the family would be staying at the Court.

Mrs Cooke-Hurle had two companions. A Miss Agnes Fry, who was her cousin, and very deaf. She gave magic lantern shows in her 'den' and at the Village Hall. She also came to the school to tell stories, and hide Easter eggs in the playground for us to find.

Miss Underhill was the Bishop of Bath and Wells sister. She stayed quite some time. She had a large white dog called Michael. Mrs Cooke- Hurle also had two dogs - black spaniels called Bogey and Kilva.

My father drove two cars during his time at the Court. (He was with the family for forty years.) The first car I remember was a large Daimler, reg no: YC 10. The second was a very sleek black Humber Super Snipe. He drove Mrs Cooke-Hurle to meetings all over the County, visiting hospitals, nursing homes, County Hall, Schools, etc. They would leave around 9.30 am and very often not return until 6 pm. When my father died in 1953, Mrs Cooke-Hurle asked my brother Arthur to be her chauffeur. He then moved into No. 1, Kilve Court Collage and my mother and Alex and I moved to my brother's house in East Quantoxhead.

Kilve during the war

We were surrounded by army camps, both American and British. A large black American camp at Alfoxton Park, one at St Audries Bay, another at Kilton and Doniford. About 7 am every morning, the American band at Alfoxton would start up with the 'Stars and Stripes' which we could hear quite well down in the village. Their large tanks would rumble through the village on their way to exercises on North Hill and Exmoor. Each evening the children would gather by the Hood Arms for trips up and down Sea Lane in a jeep. Dances were held at all the local halls, the East Quantoxhead one being very popular. We either walked or cycled, always in a group. I remembered walking to a dance at East Quantoxhead and hearing German planes overhead.

When we came home at 1 am we could see the whole of the South Wales coast on fire. The Germans had bombed Cardiff and Swansea. We had danced all night and not heard a thing.

Two sea mines were jettisoned near Pardlestone Farm. One exploded demolishing a hay bar and taking the tiles off the farmhouse. The other landed in a field between Pardlestone Lane and Folley House Lane, but did not explode.

Organisations

There were several in the village. The British Legion which did very good work for ex-servicemen, organised the Flower Show, Whist Drives and Dances.

The Quantock Rangers Football Club or the Snowdrops as they were known. Their strip was green and white, but later changed to black and orange. We followed them everywhere. At Nether Stowey we were always pelted with mud by their supporters.

The Cricket Club also wore green. They played in the field next to the school, as did the Football Club.

The Drama Club was run by a Mrs Crowhall Ellis who lived at Hilltop. This was great fun. We met in the Village Hall twice a week. We put on a Concert and Pantomime every year. The latter was held at East Quantoxhead and ran for three nights and later we played at Nether stowey also. We made all our own costumes and props.

The Red Cross. We met in the Club room at the Hood Arms.

The Village Hall Club, Open every evening, 7-9.30 pm for table tennis, table skittles, billiards (men only), whist, darts, etc.

The Home Guard, Civil Defence met at the Hood Arms under Sergeant Brown who lived at Holford. He was chauffeur to a Miss Montgomery the Queen's Aunt and I think she lived in the Folley House at the Bottom of Hayman's Combe. The Rifle Club at Ge-Mare.

The Y.P.U. or Church Missionary Society met every Tuesday in the village hall - this was for all the children. We raised money to educate a little girl in India. This was run by a Miss Lovibond who was Mrs Cooke- Hurle's private secretary.

The Girls Training Corps met twice a week at Stogursey.

The Women's Institute met in the Village Hall. I remember collecting pennies every week around Kilve. This money went towards the memorial which stands above Holford.

Transport

Not many people had cars. We used the bus to go anywhere. The Lavender Blue bus ran from Watchet to Bridgwater, also National Buses. Later, Street's started a two-hourly bus service from Watchet to Bridgwater, the fare being 2/- return. These were very popular and always full, especially at weekends: Saturdays for shopping and Sundays for Pictures at the Odeon. Usually three buses were needed at one time, leaving Kilve at 3 pm and returning to Kilve at 9.45 pm. Three local girls were conductresses. Joan Sully, Edwina Hole and Stella Thome. Leslie Knight was one of the divers. Arthur Knight had a car hire business taking visitors on long trips, etc. This ran until he went into the R.A.F. Petrol was available from a pump outside the Hood Arms.

Tradespeople

There were three shops in the village and a Post Office, also a Weavers.

Mrs Barker had a dress shop and ladies wear. She also sold gents shirts and socks. Mr Barker made delicious home-made ice-cream which included strawberries when they were in season. On Sundays, he would push a little cart to the beach where he would sell soft drinks, sweets and ice-cream.

Mr and Mrs Sam Thome sold newspapers and sweets. They lived in the cottage next to Stella Sweet

Mrs Laura Lock had a grocery shop in Sea Lane. She sold everything imaginable, and even charged accumulators these were used to run radios.

At Putsham Farm we were able to buy milk, cream, eggs and butter. We would queue at the dairy door at about 4.30 pm, waiting for the cows to be milked.

Mrs Frampton also sold dairy produce at the Mill, and Miss Aplin sold delicious clotted cream at Higherlands Farm. At haymaking and harvesting, all the village would help. We were given rides in the waggons and on the carthorses, Flower and Blossom. The threshing machine was hired and would set up where Putsham Mead is now, spending two or three days here. A film, 'The Southern Maid', was filmed on the cliffs at Kilve. Several local lads were 'extras', riding horses. The star was Bette Davis.

As children, we played in the field where the bottom four Council Houses are now, and also in the field opposite where the bungalows are. We paddled in the brook, and watched the otters which were down by the 'Alders'. We played fox and hounds and paper chase, and ran for miles.

The field next to the Village Hall was always full of wild flowers:- cowslips, oxslips, shakey grass and bluebells. Our favourite game was to roll down the hill into the dew ponds, which has now been filled in. The Flower Show was held in this field, also next to the Old Mill

On Saturday mornings, we took milk to the 'Ridges'. We followed the stream all the way from the Rectory to Hunts Lane. The fields here were also filled with flowers of every description. At the bottom of the Glen near the Ridges was the last resting place of Mr Aplin's old bus - where we played.

Tradespeople visiting the village

There were two butchers - Bartlett's from Nether Stowey and Langdon's from Williton.

Two bakers Mr Hubbard from Nether Stowey and Mr Mullins from Stogumber. Later Mr Giles started his business in the village.

A fishmonger from Bridgwater. Also a van would arrive in the village during Oct - Nov ringing a bell, and bringing lovely fresh hemings from Minehead.

Mr Street brought cooked meats, bacon etc., and he also sold hot faggots and peas and fish and chips which his wife had cooked at their home in East Quantoxhead.

A lorry covered with everything imaginable, buckets, saucepans, mugs, brushes, etc., came from Dunster. Mr Mills from Bridgwater came on Mondays and took orders for beds, bedding, rugs etc. He also brought a large suitcase with haberdashery. Mr Sharman from Holford cut hair. Miss Dyer from Stogursey brought groceries, and also the buses from Bridgwater would bring groceries which had been ordered.

Gypsie Holland sold pegs, lace, cottons, etc.

Other Memories

No 1 Kilve Court Cottages was once a Police House - Mr Holley was the policeman - he later moved to One Ash.

The front door of No 1 faced directly at the Hood Arms. The keyhole was so large, it was said that Mr Holley watched the customers coming out of the pub through the keyhole.

I remember some Americans staying in the Hood in about 1933. They saw the blue lias flag stones coveting the floor of our cottage and wanted to buy them. They offered a sum of money, but of course, the cottage belonged to Mrs Cooke-Hurle. I wonder what the builders did with them when they demolished the cottage last year?

As many as nine hunting horses were stabled at the Hood. Phyllis and I helped to clean the tack and feed the horses after hunting. We even had rides on one called Sam.

Mr and Mrs Fish lived at Parkhouse Farm. They bred huge cattle which they would drive all the way to Washford for the Christmas market. Mrs Coles and Mrs Gale took in laundry - Mrs Coles washed for the Hood and Mrs Gale for Kilve Court.

St Mary's Church

I was christened, confirmed and married here. I went to Church every Sunday morning, Sunday School in the Village Hall in the afternoon and hymn singing, again in the Village Hall, in the evening. Finally, I have so many happy memories of Kilve - especially the villagers who were so friendly and helpful - everyone knowing everyone else. My schooldays were especially happy, first as a pupil under Miss Bonner for six years, then later as a supplementary teacher, again under Miss Bonner for eleven years.

As I was born in the village, I feel very proud to be a true "Kilveite".

The memories which will always stay with me are the wildflowers everywhere: the carpet of Bluebells in East Wood; Primroses and Marsh Marigolds in Crooked Acre; Bee Orchids and Cowslips on the cliffs and fields of cowslips and oxslips everywhere; the wild violets and periwinkles in Pardlestone Lane. Some are still growing there as they did, in the same place, almost seventy years ago. I am indeed privileged to have lived in such a beautiful part of England.

Audrey Prole