

## THE UNDERTAKER'S SON

The story of my childhood will, no doubt, include many references to the village in which I was born - Tibberton, Gloucestershire.

As I begin to set down my recollections, September, 1999, I have the doubtful pleasure of being the oldest surviving Tibbertonian, born and still living in the village.

Like my ancestors, I have not moved very far from my birthplace - only some 150 yards.

My father, Albert Henry, was born in the house next door to where I now live, as were his sisters, Kate and Edith. My father's eldest sister, Alice and her two brothers, Charlie and Bill (William Emmanuel) were born some half a mile away at Moorfields Cottage, now a semi-derelict cottage in the adjoining parish of Taynton.

My grandfather, Charles Henry Davis, was born in a cottage at The Grove, Taynton and my great grandfather, great, great grandfather and great, great, great-grandfather were all born in Newent and the immediate vicinity, only three miles away. Relatives on my father's side of the family have been traced back to 1752.

The pattern of life, particularly in Tibberton revolved around the local "squire". The Price family lived at Tibberton Court. My grandfather Davis was the estate carpenter and my father, after leaving school, worked in the greenhouses at the Court. My maternal grandmother, (Helen Emily Prichard) who came from as far way as Tutshill, near Chepstow, was in service there before she married my grandfather and my mother also was in service at the Court.

My father and mother were at Tibberton School together at the same time as Fred Rickards, my wife, Barbara's, father. My maternal grandfather, William Surrell, was also born in Tibberton, in the cottages at the rear of Elms Farm. He married and lived at Whitehall Lane, Rudford, but did not work for the squire. He was apprenticed to a mason in Gloucester and was an accomplished bricklayer and mason.

Enough of ancestry - for the time being anyway.

I was born on 28 October, 1929 at "Woodcroft", Tibberton, a wooden bungalow built by my father and mother with Grampy Surrell building the brick chimneys. They built it in 1927 - 1928. After their marriage in Rudford Church on 1st June, 1925 they lived for a time in a rented cottage now known as "White Gates", where the boarding kennels now are. It was previously known as "Elmlea".

Charles Henry Davis, my grandfather, was apprenticed to Robert Fishpool of Taynton as a carpenter and wheelwright on 12th December 1878. The apprenticeship lasted for four years and he was paid sixpence a week. Some time after his apprenticeship ended he worked as a carpenter at Tibberton Court. Here is a copy of the indentures:

### **COPY OF INDENTURE - 12 DECEMBER, 1878**

#### **CHARLES DAVIES AND ROBERT FISHPOOL**

#### **APPRENTICESHIP AS A CARPENTER AND WHEELWRIGHT**

*This Indenture made the Twelfth day of December in the year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Seventy Eight Witnesseth that Charles Davies Son of Emanuel Davies of the Parish of Taynton in the County of Gloucester with his said Father's consent and being in his Fifteenth year doth bind himself Apprentice to Robert Fishpool of the aforesaid parish of Taynton Carpenter and Wheelwright from this day*

*until the Twelfth day of December One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Two.  
(Four years)*

*And the said Robert Fishpool in consideration of the sum of Five Pounds of lawful money of Great Britain paid to him by the Trustees of a Charitable bequest made by the late William Guilding and the late Revd. Wm Charles Holder for placing out as apprentice poor Boys of the Parish of Taynton (the receipt of which he doth hereby acknowledge) and Five pounds to be paid to him at the end of one year from the date hereof doth bind himself to teach the said Charles Davies the Trade or Trades of Carpenter and Wheelwright finding and providing for him during the term of his apprenticeship all such Tools and implements as shall be necessary to learn the Trade or Trades and also sufficient Board and Lodging "except Sundays" and in lieu of Sunday maintenance to allow the said Charles Davies sixpence per week during the term of his apprenticeship and in addition to the aforesaid sixpence per week to pay to the said apprentice during the second year of his apprenticeship sixpence per week during the Third year of his Apprenticeship One Shilling per week and during the Fourth and last year Two Shillings per week.*

*The said Emanuel Davies doth engage to provide for his said son the Apprentice before-mentioned wearing apparel and to wash and mend the same for him.*

*The aforesaid Charles Davies the apprentice doth hereby bind himself to conduct and demean himself orderly and respectfully towards the said Robert Fishpool his master and all his family not in any way injuring him in his business or absenting himself without leave or by any disorderly conduct.*

*The condition of this Indenture to be in full force and binding on all parties until the Twelfth Day of December One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Two in testimony of which we have severally and respectively set our hands and seals to this Indenture on the day and date before mentioned*

<i>Charles Davies</i>	<i>O</i>
<i>Robert Fishpool</i>	<i>O</i>
<i>Emanuel Davies</i>	<i>O</i>
<i>James Smith</i>	)
<i>A.D. Bagshawe</i>	) Witnesses
<i>Thos. Wintle</i>	)
<i>Daniel John Ford</i>	)

*December 12th 1878*

*Received of the Trustees of the said Charities the sum of Five Pounds in pt payment of the sum of Ten Pounds as agreed above.*

*Signed over a penny stamp "Received R. Fishpool, 5..0..0"*

It appears that the family surname has been changed over the years. I believe that the family name could have been Davies because I remember seeing a family bible with the names of my father's brothers and sisters in it with the letter 'e' struck out. I wonder where that bible went to?

A distant cousin of mine did some research on the family but he came up with Davis without the 'e', maybe further investigation is necessary.

In 1909, Granddad Davis built a carpenter's workshop on estate land not far from the Nurses Cottage - a boarded timber framed building with a corrugated iron roof which was still standing in 2000 but has now been demolished. After he returned from the Great War in 1919 he started

working for his father and the business became the local builders' and undertaker's business. Most of the work in the early days was for the Tibberton Court Estate.

My father bought the land from the estate and built the bungalow in which I was born. I can't remember very much of my very early days, its a long time ago now, but I was told one or two stories about my early life. My grandma said that when I was born, my face was not straight and she had to massage it for hours to get it to go in the usual shape for a face. This was probably due to some heavy handed work by Dr Johnstone from Newent who attended at my birth. When I was about eight years old, Granny Taylor, who lived next to the School, told me that her husband would not have died when he did if I hadn't been born on that day. Apparently the Doctor attended to my mother first and then went to see Mr Taylor who had died or died shortly afterwards. I told her that she really couldn't blame me for this. Other episodes included me defying my mother's orders and going in to the dog's kennel - it was a kennel with a timber enclosure around it - and getting bitten by the dog called Victor. I don't remember this and I don't appear to have any marks to show. As my Granddad worked in the carpenters shop at the bottom of our garden, I quite often went down to the workshop to see him. He used to go home to "bait" ("elevenses" in to-days language) in mid morning and I used to go down the road with him, pedalling my little trike by the side of him. I think he took quite an interest in me and I in him. I was told that on one occasion at Taynton Church, where he sang in the choir for 62 years, I saw him walking down the aisle and I jumped out of my seat after he had passed saying "Wait for me Granddad", he didn't of course.

When I was just over five years old, my mother came to the School one afternoon and asked the teacher, Miss Preece, if I could go home early. On the way home my mother told me that I had to go and see Granddad. I remember climbing up the stairs and being told to be less noisy as Granddad was dying. I went into the bedroom and kissed him goodbye on his tobacco-stained moustache. He died later that day - 20th March, 1935 aged 70.

.When I was old enough to ride a bike, I suppose I was about five or six, I used to go to my Grandma's at Rudford. Mother and father always went to see them on Saturday afternoons and my mother went there several other times during the week as well. After School on most Fridays, mother and I biked to Rudford and I was left with Grandma and Grampy Surrell. I thought he was rather strict but Grandma was really good to me and probably spoilt me - after all, I was her first grandson. Usually forgotten were my pyjamas and Grandma often said that it would be alright, I could have "one of her little arrangements". These were a pair of her bloomers and a vest so that I could be warm in bed. I wonder what I looked like! Grampy didn't usually say much to me, he was always busy in the garden or the shed, (more of the shed later) when he wasn't at work, but I well remember being shouted at for not closing behind me the door into the living room. Grandma played games with me - Halma - a kind of Chinese Chequers on a board or Lexicon, a card game using letters of the alphabet or a game called Sorry.

Some Saturday afternoons when I was there, the wireless would be switched on by Grandma so that she could listen to rugby matches. She didn't know much, if anything, about the game but always got as excited as the commentator - especially if Wales were winning. This was probably because Grandma's brother Bill and his son Tom who lived in Blaina were Welsh rugby enthusiasts.

Now, about the shed. This is something I didn't know about at the time but found out later. Grampy liked a drop of cider and so did my father so when mother and father came to fetch me on Saturday evenings, mother, grandma and me went into the house but father and Grampy went into the shed. They sat on old wooden boxes and drank (and drank) cider – home made, of course. This local cider was quite strong and certainly loosens the tongue as I was later to find out. One of the jobs I was given at Grandma's in the Spring was cutting up rhubarb with a knife, into squares ready for cooking or perhaps for making rhubarb wine. Grandma used to provide me with one of her aprons, a bowl and a knife and I used to sit outside by the rhubarb which was on the right hand side of the path to the lavatory. I remember that the garden was always very tidy so I didn't have to make a mess on the path or Grampy would have words with me.

I had quite a few toys when I was young, but particularly I remember a pedal car that my father had made or adapted. I used to race round the garden paths and it was at this time when I was about seven that we had a new dog called John. I recall he was a bit like Fozzy in the Muppets - a curly haired sheepdog - mongrel, of course. He was a lovely dog and gentle, not like the previous Jack Russell which had bitten me. Unfortunately, John would come into the house and

sit by the fire staring into it and he eventually went blind and had to be taken to the dog's home in Gloucester.

It must have been around 1936 when my mother and every one she met seemed to be talking in whispers about that awful Mrs Simpson. I didn't know what it was all about; I thought she was some woman in the village who had upset the Women's Institute or something. Later I found out that the man who was going to be King wasn't going to be King after all, and the Mrs Simpson who caused all the local gossip, didn't live in Tibberton anyway.

Our garden was mostly of vegetables but there were grass paths and we had a Qualcast push mower which would be used on occasions. I don't know what the association was, but when father was mowing the grass my mother used to come out with slabs of jelly for him to eat which she used for cooking and we used to call it "mowing jelly".

In the spring of 1937, I had whooping cough and can remember coughing and coughing for what seemed like days on end. It was apparently quite a serious illness to get and I was away from school for about 8 weeks. My mother, ever keen on my education, went to the School and asked if I could have some sums to work on while I was away so that I wouldn't get behind with my schooling. Someone also found an old arithmetic book which I had a go at. This included adding up long columns of pounds, shillings and pence. When I went back to school I was in front of the others in arithmetic.

To celebrate the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, a party was held at the Village Hall (it was quite a new building then). My father had put up across the top of our gate two pieces of timber and had nailed a large Union Jack to them. I remember standing at the gate watching and talking to the children as they went to the party. I had to stay at home, still whooping, but I got my Coronation mug the next day.

It must have been when I had whooping cough that one day, being left on my own, I answered the front door and a man asked me why I wasn't at school. I said I didn't know and later found out that the visitor was Mr Barrett, the school attendance inspector. The inspectors used to go round to see the children who were absent to see if they had a good enough excuse. I'm sure my mother explained to the teacher why I wasn't at School.

At this time, before the War, my mother was a keen member of the Women's Institute or WI as we now have to call it. Every Christmas time, usually the week after Christmas, before we went back to School, the WI arranged a party for I think the children of the village whose mothers were members, but some others may have been invited as well. We had tea and games and then Father Christmas arrived and we each got a very nice present. I believe that Father Christmas was really Mr M. P. Price and he was well dressed up complete with red cloak moustache and beard.

At the end of September, 1937, my mother, father and me were in the workshop, my father having taken over the business after Granddad died, when we had a visitor.

"Hello, Fred" they said, "haven't seen you for years. What are you doing in Tibberton?"

The visitor was Fred Rickards who went to school with my mother and father and at that time lived at Highleadon. Although two or three miles away by road, the children from Highleadon used to walk across the fields to school - about a mile - in summer. When the fields were flooded, which used to happen quite often, and still does, they had to walk all the way to Tibberton Corner and back up the main road to Highleadon.

"I've come to get a job at The Grove" he said. M.P.Price had moved from Tibberton Court and now farmed at The Grove, the farm where my grandfather was born, as well as being the Member of Parliament for the Forest of Dean. They had a chat about old times and he said he was living and working at Randwick, near Stroud but he would rather be back in this area. He said that he was married and had three children, a boy of my age, a girl a bit younger "just about suit your lad" were his words and a baby daughter. The girl "a bit younger", Barbara, was to be my wife some eighteen years later. They came to live three doors away about two weeks later and we all went to school together.

I previously mentioned our dog, John who went blind, and, as my father always needed a dog, he got in touch with a cousin of his, Fred Bowkett who lived in Adelaide Street in Gloucester. They kept a shop and Fred had an old motor bike and sidecar. One day he brought Dad another dog. This was a crossbred whippet like animal and no good at all for catching rats and mice that were always around the yard. He chained the dog to a workbench and set off back to Gloucester on his motor bike. The dog decided that it didn't want to be left out in the country so it broke loose and chased after and caught Fred on his motor bike. It was duly brought back and for some time afterwards was securely chained up in case it wanted to return to the city again.

A word here about the bungalow and garden. The bungalow had four rooms off the main passage, a pantry and a lean-to scullery. As I have said, it was built in 1927-28 and was constructed by my father and mother of a timber frame (2" x4" (50 x 100mm)) and clad externally with ship-lap boarding. The inside was lined with a sheet material called Essex board and each joint in the sheeting was covered with a timber strip.

There were open fireplaces in the front rooms and each bedroom and a range in the kitchen. The roof was of asbestos slates and the boarding on the back wall, the side where the most rain came from, was lined with felt tiles to protect the woodwork from the rain. My bedroom faced south west across the fields with a view of May Hill. (My father always said when he went away, which was very rarely, that if you could see May Hill you weren't very far away from home).

There was a bucket lavatory, later we went a bit posh and had an Elsan closet in which you were supposed to put disinfectant, and we rarely did. When the bucket was full, a hole had to be dug in the garden and the contents poured in. We used the usual type of toilet paper in those days, cut up copies of the Daily Mirror or The Citizen!

The lavatory was across the yard between the bike shed and the coal shed. The bike shed was where we also kept the corn for the fowls and later the pig meal for the pig which was kept by most country people especially during the war. We had lots of hens, free range of course, and also for a time some gleanys which were a type of fowl which made a noise if a stranger approached, they were better than a watchdog. We used to keep the fowls in pens at the top of the garden next to Wynford House (later renamed Tantivy House).

Beyond the garden towards the brook were the builder's yard and the sheds. Granddad's original shed was the largest and added to it were the engine house, then the new shop which was probably built for the additional carpenters who worked there and the paint shop. The paint shop was the latest addition because it was built where the cider press used to be. At the back of Granddad's original shop, a cider mill had been constructed I don't know whether my father or my grandfather built it and they used to make cider in there.

The engine house was where the Petter engine was stationed to drive the circular saw and cement and plaster were also kept in there. In front of the new shop stood the grindstone where I was obliged to spend many hours turning the stone so that the chisels, plane blades, scythes, etc could be sharpened. That was hard work when I was little. Later additions to the buildings were a stable and pigsty at the back.

At the side of the yard away from the road stood a large cob nut tree and in August my Granddad and later my father picked and ate the nuts having opened them with a carpenter's hammer.

My father built the stable when he bought a pony to pull the trolley which carried all the building materials to building sites, repair jobs, etc in the surrounding villages. Previously, my granddad had to take all the materials around on a hand cart. I spent a lot of time playing in and around the shed, climbing on roofs and making large models of cars, ships, etc in the heap of building sand which was always tipped by the gate. Sand on the left hand side facing the road and gravel on the right hand side.

Just before the 1939/45 war as many as twelve men were at one time employed by my father and they were all local people. Some I can remember were –

Frank Haile from Taynton. He could cope with all types of work, carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing, drainage, the lot - I think he came from a family of builders.

Frank Gough who lived at Bramley Cottage was a staunch Methodist and life long supporter of the nearby Wesleyan Chapel. He was the painter and decorator and an avid tea drinker and talker - not much profit was made from his work, he took too long to do the jobs.

Uncle Bill - father's eldest brother. He lived at Poole Farm Lane with Auntie Lucy. He didn't seem to mind that my father had taken over the business although my father was the youngest son. Uncle Bill was a first class labourer and was quite a character.

He smoked twist in his pipe which he used to fill before getting on his bike. He couldn't cock his leg over the crossbar but got on at the back on the step iron fixed to the back wheel. And could he drink cider? Some of the cider which was made was not fit for anyone to drink - but Uncle Bill could drink it. They always used to leave the "wronk" stuff in the bottom of the barrel, "Bill will drink it" they said, and invariably he did.

Once when my father had Uncle Bill relay the concrete path round the bungalow it turned out to be a pale brown colour. I didn't know that sand could change the colour of concrete so I asked why it was brown and Dad said that Uncle Bill had spit out his twist in the concrete when mixing it.

Dan Kent came to work for my father as a carpenter before the war but he didn't stay long as he was called up into the army. Incidentally, at the time of writing, he lives in Whitehall Lane, Rudford, in my Grandma and Grampy's old house.

Harold Hawkins came to work as an apprentice when I was quite young and I remember helping my father construct a workbench at which Harold could work. Harold stayed in the building trade all his life and helped build the extension to our house which was completed in the mid 1980's.

Bob Craddock worked for my father for a short time as did Grampy Surrell. Others were employed for short periods. Beyond the shop was a small orchard with a deep ditch running through it and this used to flood after heavy rain - it still does. There were several apple trees- Reynolds, Newton Wonder on the right hand side and Charles Ross, Annie Elizabeth and two Bramley trees. There were also two pear trees - a large one near the shop, a Burgamy or similar name and a green eating pear further down.

I mentioned the cider mill and the cider press and I used to watch the apple pulp being squeezed through hessian "cheeses". The pure apple juice used to run out into a stone trough. My father had always said to me "Don't drink that juice because it is 'once round and out'. I didn't understand what he meant at the time but I soon found out!

I got a cup and drank some sitting on the floor of the workshop in the wood shavings. I found suddenly that I should be nearer the house as I had stomach ache and had dirtied my trousers. I knew what 'once round and out' meant then. Although we had a dog, we often had rats in the shop and we used to set a trap for them. The traps was a wire cage with a spring door, the rats were caught alive and then killed with a pitch fork. This was cruel but it got rid of the rats.

In 1937, Grampy Surrell was working in Gloucester building a brick wall round the prison in Barbican Alley. He fell off the scaffolding and fractured his pelvis. In those days it was more serious than it is today because of the advances made in medical science. He never fully recovered and died in January 1938. I didn't go to the funeral, I remember it was a snowy day and I went and stayed with David Bradley at Lower Farm. I don't know whether my grandmother got any compensation but she always used to talk about 'Dad's accident'.

Later in 1938, mother's sister Norah got married. She had been away in service on the Cotswolds and wanted to marry Bill Ryder. He was a widower who lived at Arlingham, I think he had been a butler in the same big house as Auntie Norah. Anyway, he was much older than Norah and there was a lot of opposition to the marriage from Grandma. They got married in Rudford Church and had a reception at Holders in Whitehall Lane. I was instructed to greet them on their return from the Church by saying "Hello, Auntie Norah and Uncle Bill", but I got the Auntie Norah bit right but said Mr Ryder, I was told off by my mother who had specially asked me to get it right.

My Grandma used to take me on holiday with her. She went most years for a holiday at the seaside with her sister Edie and her husband Ted. Auntie Edie and Uncle Ted lived at

Peterston-super-Ely near Cardiff. Uncle Ted worked for the Great Western Railway as a signalman at the signal box there and he got free passes for travel. They probably helped my Grandma with the train fares. I went with them to Weston-super-Mare and to Weymouth. Mother and father never went on holiday but when I went with Grandma they used to come down to the seaside for a day during that week, probably to see if I was behaving myself.

At the boarding house in Weymouth, we had boiled eggs for breakfast one day and two of the eggs were brown. At home our eggs were white so I asked the landlady if she had put them out in the sun to get sunburnt.

Another of our trips was to London and I recall we were somewhere near a park and Grandma suggested we catch a bus - to where I didn't know. She saw a policeman and asked him which number bus we should catch. The policeman said "Are you up from the country for the day?" Grandma said we were and he told us to catch a number 13 bus. Either he didn't know much about London buses or he was having fun at our expense because we never saw a number 13 bus all day. I wondered at the time why he asked us where we came from.

As I mentioned earlier Grandma Surrell gave me a lot of encouragement to learn, both in taking me on holiday and in the educational, games she taught me to play.

It seems quite remarkable that people like my Grandma who must have had little education herself was quite knowledgeable about most things.

Her mother died when she was about nine years old and as she was the eldest child had to look after her brothers and sister - Uncle Jim, Auntie Edie and Uncle Bill. She didn't get much help from her father who I understand was a patron of the local brewery or brew.

My mother and father were always busy and mother used to help father quite often.

Every May my father had a contract to saw up the timber belonging to M. P. Price which had been felled in Bulley Wood and pulled out in the winter to the timberyard at Kites Nest Farm at Bulley. The circular saw was driven by a tractor fitted with a pulley and belt and the trees had to be lifted up on to trolleys running on rails. It was a big saw and very noisy and I was too young to help but went with them when I wasn't at School. The tenants of Kites Nest Farm were Mr and Mrs White. Ernest White was the estate bailiff - nicknamed Cocker - and was a severe looking man to me. Mrs White was a lovely gentle person.

The school was built in 1848 by the Price family and was called Tibberton British School. Enos Webb was the first headmaster, he was there for about 49 years and was followed by Mr Greenwood. Mr Greenwood only taught there for 35 years and Mrs Groves who came there in 1931 and carried on until the early 1950's created a record in that there were only three head teachers in the first 100 years of the School.

There were two teachers. The infant's class was taught by Miss Edith Preece who lived at cottages on the main road towards Highleadon, just past Barbers Bridge Station. She cycled to school every day. She went to school with my father and mother and got her teacher's certificate at Cheltenham College returning to teach at Tibberton. She started teaching when she was about 20 and she taught there for nearly 40 years.

Mrs Groves taught in the big room, as it was called; she lived in the School House. There were about 40 or fifty children at the school. There was no electric light and a tortoise heating stove which burnt coke. We had flush toilets because the school was on mains water which was not the case at home or at many of the other houses in the village.

We walked to school in the mornings and everyone got there by nine o'clock, there were rarely any late comers. Then home to lunch and back again in the afternoon then walked home after school. Some children walked across the fields from Highleadon except when the meadows were flooded, then they had to walk all the way round by Tibberton Corner.

We were not normally allowed to play in the field but between the School wall and the field was a narrow area of laurel bushes. We played in there and had some fun. Quite often this area became out of bounds, probably because of some misdemeanour with the older girls!

When we were allowed to play cricket in the field, we couldn't play on the proper pitch but had to make our own. John Brown was a good cricketer and batsman and one day he hit a ball at George Oakey. Poor George's head seemed to crack like a hard boiled egg does when hit with a spoon. I don't know whether he was hit with the bat or with the ball, it was a nasty blow anyway and he had to be rushed off to hospital. We weren't allowed to play cricket in the field for a long time afterwards.

In the shed at the back of the School there was a horizontal ladder which ran from end to end and this had been used for many years, as gymnastic equipment. We used to jump up and go hand over hand all the way along. If you were strong enough you could go through the ladder and sit on top. Sometimes there were accidents, I remember Edith Lerigo fell off and was quite badly shook up. When this happened, the ladder became out of bounds as well.

One September, we all got the cane because someone had thrown a conker or something at Mr Stephens' blue van when he was passing. He came in and complained and, as no one would own up, we were all caned. Our teacher in the big room was Mrs Groves, she was quite strict and sometimes lost her temper when caning the boys for misbehaviour.

To practice joined up writing, we used to write joined up letters on the top line of our exercise books, then turn the books upside down and write the line again and fill in the spaces with coloured ink. Sometimes it looked quite good. After we had had the usual arithmetic, English etc. in the morning, after the afternoon break, she would read the classics to us from about 2.30 to 3.30. She read parts of: Tales of Troy and Greece, A Christmas Carol - not usually beyond the Ghost of Christmas Present, Pilgrims Progress - as far as the Slough of Despond. The books she read in full included: The Last of the Mohicans, Coriolanus, Julius Caesar, Silas Marner and presumably because she was a fan of Sir Walter Scott - Rob Roy, The Talisman, Ivanhoe and Guy Mannering. In my last year at Tibberton School, while she was reading, we - yes, boys and girls - knitted balaclava helmets for sailors who were serving in the cold sea areas.

It must have been in 1938 that Mrs Price presented to the School a large new wall map of the world. This map must have been about ten feet long and six feet high but it upset my knowledge of the world as I knew it then. All the maps of the world I had seen had the Atlantic Ocean just left of middle, but this new map had the Pacific Ocean in the middle so for sometime I was disorientated.

Mrs Groves' husband, John, who didn't seem to have a permanent job, took us for cricket practice and we played on the field next to the School. There was a cricket club in Tibberton before the war and John ran the village team as well. Mother took me to watch Tibberton home matches and I think she helped with the tea and cucumber sandwiches. I had my own proper cricket score book and kept the score ball by ball.

One winter we made a slide in the front yard, it was very frosty and we got some water from the toilets and poured it on the yard until we had a lovely slide. One day, I fell backwards and hit my head on the ice, I must have been concussed because I didn't make it into school until long after the bell went and someone was sent out to look for me. I only knew two teachers at the School.

As I got older at about nine years old, I was given jobs to do to help in father's business. The yard was always full of wagons and carts to mend and one of my tasks was to help lift the wheels off the ground by putting an old oil drum under the axles. I was then told to undo all the nuts and bolts from the parts requiring mending so that it could be taken out and a new matching piece made.

My father repaired many cart and wagon wheels and used to cut the new spokes or valleys as we called them - I think felloes is the correct name - and then put new metal bands on. When the wheel was mended it was necessary to run a 'traveller' around the outside of the wheel and mark it. The traveller was then run round the inside of the band and the difference in size was noted. It was necessary for the band to be about half an inch less in circumference than the wheel so father used to take it to Joe Gough the blacksmith for it to be 'cut and shut' to the correct size.

The band, together with bands from other wheels were then placed on bricks in the yard covered with shavings and old wood and a fire was lit to get them hot. When they were hot enough they were taken out of the fire with big pliers - fire dogs we called them and placed on the repaired



wheel which was lying flat on a circular concrete slab with a hole in the middle for the hub. After the band was on, the wheel was quickly lifted, an iron bar put through the hub and the wheel was placed in a water pit specially built for cooling the band quickly. When I was older I used to help lift the wheel and often burned by arms on the hot iron bands. At an early age, my job was to keep the pit filled with water.

Back to Grandma at Rudford. Grampy had died and she was lonely living on her own down there so it was decided that father should sell part of our top garden to her so that she could build a house and be near us. This was built in 1938/9 by Granville Haile, Frank Haile's brother. At one time, Granville lived in Tibberton at Hill Cottage but had then moved to Oakle Street. There was no mains water, so a well had to be sunk. Someone came and divined the site of the well with a hazel twig and water was found at about 17 feet down. Our well at home was only 12 feet deep but had about four feet of water in it, except in very dry weather. Grandma sold Holders in Whitehall Lane to Mr Kent who was the station master at Barbers Bridge but retired at about that time.

We didn't have electricity in the village until the 1950's so when the butcher brought the meat on a Saturday, during the summer it had to be kept cool. We had a meat safe with a perforated zinc door to keep the flies out but if the weather was really hot we used to tie a rope round the Sunday joint and lower it down the well until Sunday morning. I wonder how many joints slipped off the rope! When the weather was very dry in summer and the water level fell, the water which we used to drink had all sorts of bugs in it and these had to be strained off before we drank it. It didn't seem to harm us though. We pumped the water up into the scullery with a semi-rotary pump. This sometimes went wrong and had to be taken to pieces and primed before we could have a drink. If we had a severe frost the pump would freeze and had to be thawed out with a blowlamp.

One of father's jobs which had to take priority, second of course to undertaking, was the repair of the leather washers on drinking water pumps. These were the type of pump one sees nowadays for sale in garden centres as relics of the past. Most cottages had a pump of this sort. They stood about five feet off the ground, were usually boxed in and lagged and had a long handle to lift and draw the water from the well. They usually discharged over a stone trough. The leather washer was a tight fit in the piston of the pump to form the suction which allowed the water to come up the pipe. When the leather became worn there was no suction and consequently no water. Previous to modern pumps such as these, water was drawn from the well with a bucket and windlass. The top of the well was boarded over and had a hinged section, the lid was lifted and the bucket lowered down to the water, filled and wound up on the windlass. My grandma had a well like this and I was often shouted at if I went too near when I was small.

The mention of wells with a bucket reminds me of one occasion when my father was asked to clean out a well at Kites Nest Farm at Bulley. He went to see the job and found that the well was 90 feet deep. We didn't have a ladder that long and no one wanted to go down that far. Eventually, Fred Holford, whose nickname was 'Bandy' (I wonder why?) said he would do the job - he wanted a fat fee and said he would need plenty of cider first. Apparently he got tanked up with cider; he was lowered down the 90 feet in the bucket on the chain and did the job. I don't suppose the Health and Safety people would approve of this practice nowadays!

Bandy Holford was quite a character and was something of a trick cyclist especially when he was returning from the Traveller's Rest or other similar place of refreshment.

I have seen him veer from side to side of the road on his bike, ride into the ditch, along the ditch and back out again without falling off. He was also seen on occasions in the ditch with his bike on top of him, fast asleep.

I spent many hours going with my father on the pony and trolley to various jobs in the area. This was quite a treat as usually I didn't go very far away from home and seldom went to Gloucester or Newent. The farthest we went on the pony and trolley was Kites Nest at Bulley or, in the other direction, to Okle Clifford Farm which was not far from the Traveller's Rest at Malswick. We never went past the Traveller's Rest, father always had to call in if they were open and he usually timed his journeys to make sure they coincided with opening times. Father would have a pint of beer and I would take a pint out to the pony. When we went to Bully, my father always called on the way back to see his friend Bill Bullock for a chat and some cider. I had to stay in the road and mind the pony. It seemed that he was in there for hours on end and when I was older, after perhaps one tot too many, I was handed the reins for the journey home.

My father loved his cider and would often get quite merry. Mother and I knew whether or not the limit had been reached by the number of times he repeated the same story at tea time.

He was a six day a week drinker as he would not have any cider on Sundays because it was church and he had to play the organ. He had learned to play the organ when he was quite young being taught by Miss Lillian Stephens from the shop/bakery nearby. I think he had more lessons from someone in Newent. He became organist at Taynton Church in 1914 when he was 14 years old and played there for 50 years until just before he died in 1964.

He missed one year when he was called up to serve in the 1914-18 war from February 1918 - Feb 1919. He didn't get any injuries but when some bullets came a bit close and he was shaving, he dropped the razor on his foot and cut it quite badly. They used 'cut throat' razors in those days.

Just below our bungalow was the Nurses Cottage where the District Nurse, Nurse Wright lived. My father was doing some work in the newly built village hall in the store cupboard above the entrance door. The ladder slipped on the polished floor and he slid down a sash cord suspended from the door. He took all the skin off his fingers and rushed to Nurse Wright. She bandaged his fingers with sticking plaster and I remember when he went back to have the plasters removed she ripped them off and he nearly hit the roof in pain. Ever since then, we make sure that anyone who uses a ladder in the hall stands the feet on a rubber mat to stop it sliding. Between the Nurses Cottage and the Village Hall is a stream which we called Wynford Brook - it seems to be called Red Brook now. My father and I used to go fishing there. We didn't have any fancy fishing rods, just a kidney bean stick, some string with a fish hook on the end. We used to catch eels mainly, but sometimes we caught trout.

Back to Sundays. Throughout the time I spent at home, Sundays always followed the same pattern. Father went into the garden or the greenhouse until 9.30am. In the house for a wash and a shave, occasionally supplemented by a foot washing session in a bowl on the kitchen floor. 10.30 - toilet, at 10.35 on his bike to Taynton Church to play the organ. Home at 12.15, lunch at 12.45, roast mutton, pork or beef, usually followed by apple tart and custard. We only had pork if there was an 'R' in the month, so no pork from May to August. This was an old adage because without refrigeration, pork was more likely to 'go off' in hot weather. About 1.30 father would help clear away the dishes and would even wipe up if he felt like helping. 2.p.m into the front room, coffee, pipe of tobacco and a read of the gardening books, a snooze and at 4.15, tea and scones and fancy cakes, baked by mother while he was at church. 5 p.m, a walk round the garden, 5.45. toilet and at 6 p.m we all biked up to Taynton Church for evensong. From the time I was eight until twelve or thirteen I also biked up to Taynton Church for Sunday school at 2.30.

In 1939, I joined the choir at Taynton with Monty Folley and Bern Stocker. The rector was Henry Herrick, an Irishman educated at Trinity College, Dublin, who had by then alienated most of the church people away from the church. For more details of his attitude towards villagers, please read the story of Taynton and Tibberton Village Hall.

He must have had quite a lot of money; he had a gardener, Bill Parker who also used to keep the churchyard mown and very tidy all at Henry Herrick's expense. The congregation usually numbered 7 - the rector, my father playing the organ, me either blowing the organ or in the choir, Uncle Bill in the choir and, in the congregation, my mother, Mrs Herrick and Connie Fishpool. Occasionally, other people turned up and in winter, we had evensong at 2.30. I used to be very pleased when I was younger to hear after the prayers "We will conclude our service by singing hymn number so and so". That meant no sermon to try and listen to, and he used to preach long sermons.

Back to the choir and Sunday school. Every Sunday, about ten of us sat in the front left hand pews of the church and Mr Herrick would tell us a story, usually from the Gospels and we were given a stamp to stick in our Sunday school attendance books. At Christmas he would appear with a basket out of which he gave us all a Christmas present. They were good presents too, usually a topical book.

When we joined the choir, he said that he would make a deal with us - he would pay us every six weeks. We would get threepence for every Sunday we attended but if we didn't go, we had to pay him threepence. So, going every Sunday meant one shilling and sixpence every six weeks.

Attendance on five Sundays resulted in us getting a shilling and for four Sundays we would get sixpence. Three Sundays or less meant we got nothing.

My father and mother were some of the very few who got on with Canon Herrick as he was later to become. He schooled me for confirmation when I was about twelve and I remember him saying "I will pick you up at seven minutes to two on Thursday next and take you to the Cathedral". He was, as always, precisely on time. I can't remember the make of his car but the registration number was AFH 49.

I remember the number because from when I was quite young, one of the things I used to do was to record the numbers of the cars as they went by. A kind of personal census. This would be very difficult to do nowadays, not only because of the increase in traffic but because of the speed at which they travel.

Mr and Mrs Rickards and family had moved in to Pear Tree Cottage in October 1937 and their son Bryan was nearly the same age as me. I used to play with him in the road. We made trolleys out of old pram wheels with a piece of board attached. His was a faster trolley than mine but mine had a better turning circle. We would race up and down the road. We also had hoops and bowled these along the road as well. There was very little traffic on the road in those days. We also used to play on the roofs of the carpenters shop.

My other playmate was David Bradley from Lower Farm. After Charlie Bradley died, his son Cyril, wife and two children came to live there. I used to go to the farm every morning on my bike and fetch the milk in quart cans. I also took milk to Grandma and to Wynford House. Cyril Bradley was a chain smoker and would leave lighted cigarettes all over the dairy and the cowshed. We weren't allowed to go into the cowshed when we went for the milk but had to wait in the doorway until Cyril saw us and sometimes this seemed a very long time.

The milk came from the cows into a bucket then through the water cooler and into the churns. The water for the farm was supplied from a ram pump in the brook and piped across the fields. David and I used to float chunks of wood from Wynford Bridge down the stream sometimes nearly as far as Barbers Bridge. At one time David's father had a boat which we used to row upstream from the ram as far as the bridge.

There was a terrible tragedy at Lower Farm in the early 1940's. David and Joan's mother was taken very ill, with what I do not know, but one cold and frosty morning she walked out of the house and into the pond and drowned.

When we were about ten or eleven David used to pinch handfuls of cigarettes from the house. His father didn't miss them - he smoked about 300 cigarettes a week- and we used to smoke them when playing along the brook. One sort I didn't like very much was Balkan Sobranie - Turkish cigarettes - not round but oval shaped.

Not long after David and Joan's mother died, the family used to spend nights away at relatives at Highleadon and I used to go each night at dusk and shut the fowls up.

In 1938 Grandma's house was built and we had lost some of our top garden. No more trips to Rudford for the weekend. The house at Rudford was sold to Mr Kent, the retiring stationmaster at Barbers Bridge and his son, Dan, previously mentioned, still lives there. 1939 was quite an eventful year, one way or another. Mother went to Coalville in Leicestershire to be with Aunt Marjorie - her younger sister, when her baby was born.

Ian Andrew was born on April 15 and mother rang to say that everything was alright. Grandma was looking after me and we had just had the phone put in - Tibberton 43.

When my mother rang, neither Grandma or I knew what to do, but eventually I got Grandma to speak through the right end of the telephone.

Just before this happy event, my father went on his one and only holiday and stayed with Aunt Marjorie and Uncle Jock at Coalville. He went on a Monday, by train I suppose, and came back on the Friday. He was never away at weekends because he had to play the organ at Church on Sundays.

Grandma was now well established in her house and her brother Bill and his son Tom used to come and stay with her. They used to go fishing in the River Leadon at Rudford but also in the brook where my father and I used to go.

As 1939 progressed, I had heard the news on our wireless and saw it in the paper - my father was a Daily Mirror reader then - and I also used to read the cartoon strips - Pip, Squeak and Wilfred was one - that we would quite likely have a war with Germany. It was about a little man with a moustache - his picture was in all the papers - called Adolf Hitler and another tallish man whose picture was also in the paper who carried a rolled up umbrella - I think he had a moustache too - and said that there wasn't going to be a war. I was nearly ten at the time and I was a bit scared of what was going to happen.

In July/August, Mr Basil Stephens from the shop came round the village counting all the available bedroom space in the houses. If war broke out, evacuees would be billeted on those people having spare accommodation. The papers were at this time full of the threats of war.

During the Cheltenham Cricket Festival in August, my father took me to see the West Indians play Gloucestershire. I can't remember the members of the teams but I think the West Indies captain was George Headley and Gloucestershire had Wally Hammond, Tom Goddard and Barnett. Frank Haile came with us and we had a good day out.

I remember most clearly Friday 1st September, 1939. It was the last day of the school holidays; father was constructing a septic tank at a farm in Bulley. Mr Palmer was the farmer, Les Palmer was his son and Jim Selwyn worked there as well. In the afternoon I was with them and the Citizen came saying that the evacuees were being put on trains for the rural parts of the country. I can recall being down at the bottom of the newly built septic tank and seeing the plastered walls of the tank. I couldn't have been much help to the men, being only nearly ten at the time and I probably was a nuisance. On the way home on the pony and trolley I felt that something serious was about to happen.

Shortly after we got home, the village was full of activity with all those children from the Lozells area of Birmingham arrived. Mr Stephens arranged for them to stay with the families with which he had registered as having spare rooms. I didn't think about it at the time but it must have been frightening for those children, some were quite small to have left their Mums and Dads for the country where there were animals such as cows and sheep that they had probably not seen before. As well as that, there was no electricity in the village, no street lights etc - they must have been scared.

Sunday 3rd September, father as usual had gone to Church and mother and I listened to the wireless for the special announcement promised for 11.a.m. Mr. Chamberlain, he with the umbrella previously mentioned, said that Hitler had invaded Poland and the government had said that he had been given an ultimatum to withdraw immediately otherwise we would be at war. 11 .a.m. was the stipulated time at which to be notified of his withdrawal. He said "No reply has been received and therefore we are at war with Germany". Mother was very upset and I wondered what was going to happen.

The evacuees, there were a lot of them, went to School at the Village Hall as Tibberton School wasn't big enough to accommodate them all. I remember during that autumn telling them that they could pick up and eat all the apples that had fallen in the hedgerow and at the side of the road. They started to pick them from the tree and I regret to say I put the dog on them - the dog wouldn't bite anybody, but at least the evacuees left the apples on the trees and ran away.

At about this time Mrs Groves had sent a salesman to see mother about buying a set of encyclopaedias. He said there were 26 volumes. There were but they were contained in only 10 books, but he didn't make this clear. They were ordered but when they arrived there was a considerable argument between mother and Mrs Groves. An early case of sales misrepresentation, I'm sure. However, the Children's Encyclopaedia, edited by Arthur Mee were very good books indeed and helped me through my schooldays. Eventually my father read all ten volumes from cover to cover. I still have them and often refer to them particularly for answers to crosswords. Arthur Mee was also the editor of the Children's Newspaper a weekly publication which some of the better off children had regularly. I didn't, I had Sunny Stories by Enid Blyton and also Radio Fun with the occasional Adventure, Champion or Hotspur thrown in as well.

My mother read quite a lot, her favourite author was Ethel M Dell, a writer of romantic novels. Father also read, not as much as Mother but when he started a book he would stay up late at night and read. He liked detective novels and the occasional Western. They got their books from the library which was a travelling library operated from the shop by the Stephens family. Now that the war had started, school lessons took on a different pattern. Mrs Groves was obsessed with the war and we learned all about the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line. For those of you not old enough to remember these were the defensive fortifications constructed by the French and Germans respectively. They were supposed to stop any opposition from passing them. They must have cost millions of pounds but they were in the end of no use whatsoever. We even knew exactly where they were from the new map on the wall which showed France and Germany.

We had a similar map on the wall at home and I would put flags in to show where the armies were fighting. The winter of 1939/1940 was very severe, probably the coldest I can remember. The Severn froze over at Minsterworth and a policeman from Minsterworth walked across it. I already had a stamp album and I was given a Stanley Gibbons stamp catalogue for Christmas. I recall sitting close to the range in the kitchen with my stamps on a card table cataloguing and valuing the few stamps I had accumulated. It was a very cold winter.

In March, 1940, I took the 11 plus examination but was only 10 plus at the time. Roseanne Watkins, Paddy Pittman and I had to sit in the small spare classroom to take it. Mrs Groves gave out the examination papers and we had to write an essay, do some English Grammar followed by an arithmetic test. Mother had insisted that I had a cup of Bournvita the night before so that I would sleep well and be ready for the exam. Mrs Groves had given us some homework a few weeks before. I don't remember how long it was before the results came through but eventually I was told that I had got a free place at Newent Grammar School. This meant that bus fares would be paid by the Education Authority and there would be no other fees to pay. At that time if you did not do so well in the 11 plus but had achieved a reasonable standard you could go to the Grammar School but parents had to make a contribution towards the child's education.

At school we had to listen to Mrs Groves rambling on about the war and where the Germans had got to. They had by then overrun Denmark and Norway and had come through Belgium and reached the English Channel. Dunkirk evacuation had happened and the troops were back in Britain.

I was only at Tibberton School for the first nine months or so of the war, but I understand that Mrs Groves told many gruesome tales about what had happened in the war and what could happen if the Germans came that many children were really frightened. At some stage in this story I should include something about the village and its characters at the beginning of the war. Joe Gough was the blacksmith and always seemed to be busy. As kids we would go and see him and help blow the bellows, he had many horses to shoe and that seemed to be hard work. Particularly hard was the shoeing of the large cart horses. He had to lift up the horse's legs, one at a time of course and take the old shoes off. Then he had to make new shoes and fit them back on again. They were hot when he put them on but it didn't hurt the horses unless he touched the inside of the hoof with the hot metal. This resulted in the horse kicking and Mr. Gough being thrown off balance.

He used to 'cut and shut' the bands from the wheels that my father repaired. 'Cut and shut' meant that he had to cut the band and make it smaller so that it would fit the newly repaired wheel by taking out a short length and then fixing it back together again. He smoked cigarettes and, later when I started to smoke, we would give him a Woodbine and light it for him. He would puff and puff at it so that it only lasted a minute or two.

Rollo Bradley was the butcher and he lived at Drivers. You had to walk up several external steps to get to his shop. There was a slaughterhouse in his yard and several outbuildings where he used to do the butchering. He also had a delivery round and travelled as far as Newent, Redmarley and Upleadon.

Mrs Dawe was the "Citizen" lady and she lived at Wisteria Cottage. She rode a tricycle and collected the papers from Tibberton Corner every afternoon. Several of us worked for her delivering the papers - I did the houses up our road - I think it was about 15 papers - I got fourpence a week.

The Misses Bourne ran the post office at New Cottages and lived there with their father and mother. Dorothy Bourne was the sister who was usually in the Post Office and she could be quite sharp with us kids when we went there for stamps or to bank the national savings for school. It was no wonder that she sometimes appeared to be cross.

Ever since telephones came to the village in the 1920's Dorothy Bourne manned the telephone switchboard. 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anyone who wanted a number other than on the Tibberton Exchange had to dial 'O' and wait for Dorothy Bourne to answer. She then had to dial the number one wanted and when the phone call was answered, she plugged you in across the manual switchboard.

It was a bit inhibiting, having a phone for two reasons - one - if the call was late at night you knew Miss Bourne was probably in bed and had to get up to put the call through and secondly - one wonders if she sometimes listened to the conversations!

John Bourne, their father, was quite old when I remember him and he got on quite well with my father. Father told me once that they were talking about religion and John's impression of some people in the village was "They puts thur beligion away with thur Zunday 'ats".

Charlie Teague lived at Newhall and had a coal business, a building business and was an undertaker as well. Why my father started up a rival undertaker's business, I will never know. Mr Teague was a staunch Methodist and perhaps my father thought that there should be a C of E undertaker as well. There weren't many people in the village and they didn't die that often so undertaking was not a thriving trade to be in.

The Stephens family kept the village bakery and general store at Lowlands. Arthur Stephens did the baking on the premises and Lillian and Basil served in the shop. Mrs Stephens, Basil's wife sometimes helped as well. Basil had a van - a little blue one - and delivered bread and groceries in the locality. They also sold paraffin. It was nearby so we were always popping in for sweets. One of my favourites was a triangular packet of sherbet with a stick of liquorice to suck it through. They cost one halfpenny a packet. Lillian Stephens played the organ at Tibberton Church. Arthur didn't go out much. He was always in white - white overalls, white hair and covered with white flour. The allotments were behind the Stephens' house and earlier he used to teach gardening to the boys from Tibberton School. As mentioned, he was also the billeting officer for the evacuees.

Oswald Ellis farmed at Court Farm - he was a very tidy farmer and could often be seen scything nettles and docks in the fields, he often wore a wing collar even when working in the fields.

Reverend and Mrs Goyne lived in the rectory. He was a much liked parson, a complete contrast to Rev. Herrick at Taynton. We didn't know him that well because we always went to Taynton Church, never to Tibberton.

Harold Phelps lived at The Elms farm - he was a real English country gentleman to everyone he met, especially the ladies. He was a farmer but I don't think he was very well off. He was also a fruit farmer and had several orchards - including Orchard Rise where he produced champagne cider and won many prizes for its quality at shows throughout the county. He was a member of the Gloucestershire Root, Fruit and Grain Society. Just after the war started, he had to sell the farm and went to live at Elmlea, now known as White Gates, where the boarding kennels now are. His wife, Lydia, was a very posh speaking lady and their cottage was a typical English country garden with masses of flowers including a lot of roses. Although he had sold the farm, he still retained the fruit orchards and continued to sell the fruit. He employed several ladies from the village to pick the fruit which he took to Gloucester market to sell. Windfalls were also gathered and collected by cider manufacturers. He nearly always wore a bowler hat which he would doff when a lady approached.

Another person who won many prizes at shows throughout the county and further afield was Charlie Bradley who lived at Lower Farm. His prize exhibits were fowls which he used to breed for show. The dairy at Lower Farm was littered with prize cards which he had won for his White Wyandottes, Favorels and other breeds. He used to drive an old Austin car very erratically and in later life was a bit of a menace. I remember he was out shooting in the field opposite the bungalow and put several holes in a washing up bowl which was out in our garden. When he died, his son Cyril took over the farm.

So, in August, 1940, I went to Newent Grammar School on the bus. My first day was somewhat of a disaster - no one had told me that we Tibberton children had to leave early to catch the service bus. (The Grammar School children used the service bus but the Picklenash children had a separate bus). So there I was outside the school, no bus and a long walk home. Luckily, my mother noticed that I hadn't arrived on the bus and she rode two bikes to meet me. Perhaps I should explain that in those days it was quite usual to see people not actually riding two bikes but riding one and pushing the other. I made sure I didn't miss the bus again. I always felt that we were cheated out of school holidays that year - Tibberton School broke up on August 2nd and Newent Grammar started on 15th August.

Newent Grammar School was also used by evacuees from, I think, Wanstead High School in London. Those children started school at about 6.30.a.m then went home at nine and came back again after we had finished. They weren't there long as many returned to London having seen and probably disliked the country.

During the first year at Newent School the first form had to do housecraft for six lessons. This included how to clean shoes and other mundane jobs about the house. The last lesson was a cookery lesson and we had to make a rice pudding. As I had to leave early to catch the bus, of course my rice pudding wasn't cooked and was a bit sloppy. I wrapped it up as well as I could and caught the bus. Unfortunately, this was the day after a large bomb had exploded at Taynton and the buses were diverted through Kent's Green. The lane wasn't as wide as it is now but the bus had good brakes and met another vehicle on a corner. The bus stopped but the rice pudding didn't... All my books and my satchel were saturated in uncooked pudding. What a mess! Luckily some of the dishful survived so I cooked it at home.

In this area, we didn't see much of the war although nights were disturbed when the phone rang at all hours. Father was a special constable - he had joined during the General Strike of 1926 - and was notified of all air raid warnings. The phone would ring with the message "Air raid warning red". Whatever time of night he had then to report to Huntley Police Station, some three miles away. He never had a car, so out with his bike and pedal all the way to Huntley. On many occasions when he got there, the "all clear" message had arrived so he had cycled there and back for nothing.

I never knew why he had to report to Huntley and I don't think he knew why either, it was just his orders.

He always instilled in me that we never knew what would happen when we were in bed and if we had to get up suddenly it would be better to know where your clothes were. So before getting in to bed, clothes had to be set out in the right order so that we could dress in the dark.

We were also issued with gas masks which we had to take to school with us, I don't think we had to do this for very long and many people got a bit slapdash about carrying them about.

Bombs were dropped in Tibberton in the field at the rear of the Blacksmith's; the only damage was to the roof of the smithy. A land mine fell in Taynton, not far from The Stalls and this created a big hole near the Kents Green brook. It was said by Mrs Weddup who lived at The Stalls that the force of the explosion knocked the pots and pans off their shelf.

There was a searchlight battery at Kents Green opposite the turning to Taynton Court Farm and this was a target for the German bombers. On another occasion a bomb was dropped near the Taynton road, this was the one which caused the buses to make a detour - see earlier story about the rice pudding.

In Gloucester they had barrage balloons. These went up to quite a height and there were lots of them. They were supposed to prevent low level attacks by German planes. They could be seen from the road outside the bungalow and on one occasion I counted 104 of them. In 1942/43 American sailors were stationed at Highnam Court, thousands of them, and they often passed through Tibberton on a route march. They were also a target for the German bombers and once an oil bomb was dropped not far away from them in Highnam Woods. It didn't catch fire but made an oily mess in the woods. We used to find out where bombs had been dropped and go and see. If possible we would collect bits of shrapnel. A fighter plane, one of ours, crashed in the fields between The Grove and Huntley and we went to see this as well.

People were killed in Gloucester by a bomb which dropped in Millbrook Street, off Barton Street. We saw the damage which was caused because we used to collect the radio accumulator from a firm called ARBS in the same street. Perhaps I should explain. Radios (wirelesses they were called) in those days were powered by two batteries - a 120 volt high tension battery which used to last for up to six months and a wet, low tension, battery. The latter were originally made of glass so that you could see the metal plates and the liquid inside. Later they were covered with bakelite. These had to be changed every two weeks and at one time they were delivered. Petrol rationing put a stop to that so we had to walk down nearly to the end of Millbrook Street every fortnight to get the accumulator changed.

Back to Newent Grammar School. The teacher in the first year was Miss Spencer - she was quite a pleasant person and we had 45 pupils in our class for the first term. Some pupils had stayed for a second year in the first form and I was sent there early so some must have been quite a bit older than me. We had end of term exams, I'd never had anything like this before but I came first at the end of that term, second at Easter and third at the end of the next term. The only reason that I came top was that Margaret Townsend; the brainy one of our form had been away ill.

My positions in class for the first five years were: 1.2.3: 7.2.1: 2.2.3: 2.3.3: 2.2.2.

At the end of each term when the results were known, each class had to parade into the headmaster's study and he had the exam results in front of him. The time I came seventh I had a severe ticking off from the Headmaster, Mr Peacock, because my results showed that I was going downhill. I was told to pull my socks up and I would be watched to see that I improved. Someone in the class, I can't remember who it was now, had moved up from about thirty third to twenty sixth and he got praised for his efforts. I didn't think at the time that that was fair. I suppose it was for my own good. I also got a strict telling off from my mother for letting the side down. Homework in those days had to be done as soon as I got home from School and in the winter the only light was a paraffin lamp. It had a green shade and didn't give out much light. Lighting improved a year or so later when we had an Aladdin lamp with a mantle which gave an incandescent light.

Starting in about 1939 and for many years afterwards, my mother worked for the GPO and delivered letters each day from the Post office in the middle of the village as far as the house beyond Caerwents at Kents Green. She left home at 6.30.a.m. and returned about 9.30.a.m. Hetty Craddock did Taynton ,Winnie Wetson did Rudford and Edna Bourne did Tibberton.

One Christmas morning, yes, they delivered letters on Christmas morning in those days, mother got as far as Moorfield Cottage and then came home saying that the floods were out and she couldn't get through. We went and caught the pony, harnessed it to the trolley and drove her through. The post had to get through, even on a Christmas morning.

When I was little, Mr. Young used to deliver the morning papers on his motor bike and sidecar, he gave up the business and for a time we had no morning papers. The round was taken over by a Miss Richardson from Hasfield who used to bike into Gloucester from Hasfield each morning early and deliver newspapers through Rudford and Tibberton and then bike back to Hasfield. I used to help her sometimes by doing our end of the village. This was during the war when many things were in short supply and it was through her that I was allowed to buy a new bike. It was a utility model which didn't have rubber pedals - just metal with serrated edges. Sometimes I biked to Newent Grammar School instead of going on the bus.

For some years father kept a pig in the sty at the back of the workshop, this would be killed by Bert Churchill who worked for Rollo Bradley and cured and hung up on the kitchen wall. We used to eat all the pig. The pigmeat would be shared with others who kept a pig and when they killed theirs we had some of their pigmeat. There was always some difficulty in making sure the hams were cured properly and salt petre was used to rub into the meat to cure it. There was no refrigeration in those days in Tibberton and there were occasions when we had to throw away a large part of the ham. We had lard, faggots, chitterlings, brains, brawn, trotters, the lot, there certainly was no waste with a pig. There was a pig club in most villages, we had one in Tibberton and through the Pig club one could purchase the meal with which to feed the pigs.

Our bread was delivered from Greens bakery in Huntley, Percy Open was the chap who brought the bread and he came in a horse and bakers dray. We also had bread from the Co-op at Newent but that came in a motor van. Bill Haile drove this and he called on Tuesdays and Saturdays. On Tuesdays he would take the grocery order and on Saturday he would deliver the groceries. During



the war the order would just say bacon, cheese, butter, sugar etc, with no quantity requested. Food was rationed and was quite severe, the coupons in the ration books had to be given up before the order was handed over. Although some food was strictly rationed we didn't starve but we did eat a lot of starchy food.

Perhaps it would be of interest if I mention some of the details about the undertaking business., father always kept a stock of coffin boards in the workshop, some elm and some oak. Oak was more expensive.

When someone died, at whatever time of day or night, father would go on his bike to the house and at the same time call up Mrs Blewitt to go and lay them out. After measuring up he would come back, make the coffin and arrange with the Rector the details of the day of the funeral and where the grave was to be. There were few cremations, the only Crematorium was at Cheltenham. In the winter, without any electricity, father and mother would carry the coffin up into the bungalow and father finished it off in the kitchen, shavings and sawdust were everywhere. It was a good job we didn't have a carpet. When the wood had been done, it had to be lined, a pillow made and the sides and lid had to be polished. When I was quite small father asked me to try one coffin for size. Mother remonstrated with father for letting me get in the coffin and was concerned that father would put the lid on me. He didn't of course and to me it was just a bit of fun. Being brought up as an undertaker's son gave me a less frightening view of death and funerals. Mother always had to dash to Gloucester to get the plate engraved with the name and age of the deceased. This had to be etched by hand by a signwriter. We used to go to Alger and Blackmore in Westgate Street for all the coffin furniture. When I was old enough to lift people, I used to go with father and help lift the body into the coffin. In the early days I only lifted the legs end which was lighter but later on when father wasn't too well I graduated to the other end. Uncle Bill used to dig the graves and later on I was introduced to the spade and shovel. This was when I was about fifteen or sixteen years old. Single graves had to be six feet deep and double graves, seven feet deep.

Seven feet is a long way to throw up soil from the bottom of a grave - it was hard work but I got paid £3 for a single and £4.50 for a double.

I was always expected to help at home and was given many jobs. There was not much time for play when I was older and strong enough to be of use. In the late summer, ladder making was the main job. Just when the fruit was ripening orders came in for ladders which were usually required the day before they were ordered. They could be anything from 20 rungs to 36 rungs high. Father bought Thuya trees and then cut them through the middle on the circular saw. I had to pull the two halves through as they were being cut and had to be extremely careful to pull them out straight otherwise the finished ladder would be twisted and unsafe to use. The halves would be laid together on benches and marked with a pair of compasses at nine inch centres. Holes would be bored with a brace and bit and then tapered using a tapered auger. Care had to be taken when boring that the underside did not split as this would show on the finished product.

The shape of the ladder was decided by fitting in four rungs and cramping them up.

We would then select from the stock in the workshop enough pieces of black sally (withy) sticks to form each rung and cut the pieces to the right length. The ladder was then taken apart and each rung was pulled out by drawknife and finished with a plane. As the holes were tapered the tapers had to be just right, if they were too long they would go through the sides of the ladder and if they were too short, the ladder could not be cramped up to the required shape. After fitting the rungs the ladder would be cramped up and the bark shaved off the sides of the pole, this had to sandpapered and painted. Sometimes metal ties were placed under rungs especially on fruit pickers ladders. These were very wide at the bottom and had to have metal spikes fitted to stop them from slipping. Then the ladder had to be painted. The whole job of making a ladder was expected to take no longer than two working days. There was always plenty of wood in and around the workshop and father used to make seed boxes for the flower seeds he planted, if he had too many he would put the plants out on the hedge and sell them for twopence a dozen.

Father also used to make wooden wheelbarrows. The timber would come from Lancaster Sawmills, next to the Grammar School at Newent. He would test the barrow by putting five one hundred weight bags of cement in it and wheeling it for some distance. If it didn't collapse it was alright.

I made two wheelbarrows in the woodwork class at Newent School and also a bureau. I enjoyed woodwork and elected to do that instead of art. When we started, we had to make several joints, mortice and tenon etc and set out odd pieces of wood, if the joints didn't fit well, we used to soak them in the rainwater tank so that the wood would swell. Mr Brookes our master always knew when we did that.

I have now come to realise that my memories of Newent Grammar School are not as clear as some earlier ones but I suppose that this was during a time that the war was being fought. Miss Duncan was the form mistress for Form 2, Miss Morris for Form 3, Mr Matthews - Form 4 and Miss Ballinger - Form 5.

I was lucky enough to have dancing classes at school - every Tuesday lunchtime for half an hour in the School. I always had the same partner - Diana. The classes were taken by Miss Grace Dovey who came from Ledbury, I think it cost five shillings a term for the lessons.

I used to get many letters from my dancing partner and of course I used to write back.

The boys and girls had separate playgrounds but there was a connecting door which was sometimes open so we could talk to the girls. For games we had to walk up to the sports field at Three Ashes Lane, it took about twenty minutes to get there. I played football for the School's second eleven but played cricket for the first eleven. When I played as wicket keeper on one occasion I caught the ball in my mouth and broke off four of my front teeth. This meant that I had to have false teeth fitted in the gap. As I have said, memories of Newent Grammar are now somewhat vague, suffice it to say that I took the Oxford School Certificate at the end of the fifth year and got Very Goods in Geography and Maths, Credits in English Language, History, General Science and French and passes in English Literature and Additional General Science. This meant exemption from the Matriculation Examination but at the time I hadn't a clue what that meant.

I wanted to stay at school and do a Higher Certificate in the Arts but was told that I could only do the Sciences as there weren't any teachers to take me through the Arts.

Instead I took the Commercial course, shorthand, bookkeeping and typing, being taught by the School Secretary. In May, 1946 I applied for a job as Clerk in the Rates Office of Gloucester Rural District Council and at interview I was taken in to a room and Mr Limbrick, the rating and valuation officer, dictated a passage from a thick book called "Ryde on Rating" and I had to go out in to the general office and type it back. The passage had a lot of long words in it such as "hereditament" for which I did not know the shorthand. Luckily, the ladies in the office helped me and I managed to get enough right to get the job. I found out afterwards that I was the only applicant anyway.

On my last day of School having been a sub prefect for some time, I was made up to a full Prefect. That was the end of my schooldays. I started work at Gloucester RDC on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1946 and this was the beginning of my local government career that was to last just over forty three and a half years.

My job entailed typing letters about rates and I had to share a desk with my immediate boss, Mr Coote, a very large man, who used to cycle to work. The typewriter I was expected to use was a very old machine and I remember rebelling and asking for a better typewriter to be produced. I got the other typewriter from the Civil Defence Office and went on typing happily. The other people in the office were Mr. Newman, a fattish man who lived at Barnwood, Fred Boughton, one time farmer from Westbury-on-Severn, Miss Martin, very much a spinster who lived at Quedgeley and poor old Walter Matthias who travelled in twice each day from Upton St. Leonards.

They were all old people and Mr Newman, Mr Boughton and Walter Matthias retired not long after I started. Mr Newman went first and he was replaced by Nobby Clarke.

We used to torment old Mr Matthias, he sat in the corner and all day added up columns of figures in what were known as posting slips and then he 'posted' the amounts paid into large hand-written rate books.

Above his head on a shelf were boxes of envelopes and when he went to lunch we would balance the boxes on the edge of the shelf. When he was sitting down having his afternoon nap we would throw rolled up paper at the boxes so that they would fall down on him. He wasn't very pleased!

Two more people joined the staff as Assistant Rating Officers, Mr West and Mr Coon.

In 1947, there was a national epidemic of polio and poor Mr Coote became a victim and was partially paralysed. He eventually came back to work in an invalid tricycle but was very severely handicapped. I struggled on there until December, 1947.

Going back to the winter of 1946/7 we had one of the worst winters I can remember. After weeks of frost the snow started in early March and we had about a foot of lying snow. Went to work on the Tuesday morning on the bus and it was snowing then, but we got to work. We left at lunchtime but there were no buses and it was still snowing. We walked to Rodway Hill and a van pulled and asked us if we wanted a lift. It was Les Webb who worked for Lively's at Elms Farm and he was returning from delivering milk in Cheltenham. We only got as far as Tibberton Corner because Buttermilk Lane was full of snow and impassable. We walked the rest of the way and it was still snowing. We couldn't go to work for several days.

At the end of the week it started to thaw. Uncle Jock and Auntie Marjory had to get out of their rented house in Buttermilk Lane (by Court Order) and came to live with Grandma at Cartref. We had to clear the snow to form a lay-by for the furniture lorry to park on the road without blocking it. They stayed with Grandma until 1948 when the new Council Houses were built at Hanman Villas. They moved in to number 4.

During the flood which followed the snow David Bradley and I went rabbiting in his fields by the brook. The rabbits were in the trees to escape the water. We caught several and decided to take them to Gloucester to sell. We cycled to Highnam and walked across the fields to Over Bridge. The Causeway was flooded so we walked along the wall to Westgate Bridge, jumped on a bus (they had their exhausts turned up to avoid the water) and got to Westgate Street. David sold the rabbits and pocketed all the money (I didn't get any for my troubles).

In 1946 I was appointed as Hon. Secretary of the Village Hall Committee and I did this until December 1947 when I was called up to do my National service in the Royal Air Force. My mother took over from me and I never got the job back. She did it for many years.

The third of December 1947 saw me on a train to Padgate in Lancashire - one week there getting uniform, jabs, etc and then on to West Kirby in the Wirral for 8 weeks training. Well, three weeks, then Christmas leave and back again.

There is a lot I could say about training, cross country running, square bashing, night guard duty, rifle practice but I would rather forget it, I wasn't very happy with the training or the trainers.

After training - square bashing etc - at West Kirby, I was posted to 16 Maintenance Unit, Stafford. This was a similar place to 7 MU at Quedgeley. It was the same group of MUs because their numbers added up to 7. 25 MU was at Hartlebury.

I worked in the Stationery Store dishing out forms, pencils and paper for the unit...The store was in a building near the main gate and was part of the camp NAAFI, a relatively new building. It was an easy job and I was able to come home most weekends. Why did I want to come home at weekends - to see my childhood sweetheart and later to be my wife - Barbara Rickards. I used to leave camp at 12 noon by shared taxi and catch the 12.15 train to Birmingham - change trains and get to Gloucester about 2.30. I think it cost 15s. 8d. return (78p). Going back was a little more difficult because I used to see Barbara on Sunday evenings until her curfew at 10pm.

I cycled into Gloucester leaving my bike at the station or with Nobby Clark in Priory Road and caught the 2.12am train to Birmingham, got there at 4.a.m and waited at New Street Station until 5.55am for the train to Stafford. Got there at 7.15 and walked the two miles to the camp in time to book in at 8.a.m. A sleepless night, but I got used to it.

In 1948 I bought a motor bike, a Triumph 350 with a side valve engine. On a few occasions I rode it to RAF Stafford and sometimes took one of my mates to football matches at Aston Villa and Wolverhampton Wanderers matches.

During my RAF career I was sent to Pucklechurch, near Bristol to work when the dockers were on strike. My job was to record lorry journeys used at the docks. A similar job was my lot on the London dock strike when I was sent to North Weald aerodrome, again booking lorries in and out.

Here we were in tents on the airfield which was being used by aircraft. The facilities were rather primitive – the gents' toilet was a line of poles on post over a pit. You sat on the pole with your trousers down and it was in full view of the road immediately behind ones behind. I wasn't a career airman, I started and finished as Aircraftman 2<sup>nd</sup> class and was told that if there had been a third class, I would have been in it. Just two years I served and was demobilised on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1947 at Lytham St Ann's near Blackpool. Spent the last night in the RAF in Blackpool but had no money to buy anything with. Pay was 5s.6d per day. That was £1 18s. 6d a week or £1.90 in foreign money.

So in January 1950 I went back to local government. I nearly didn't go back – there was an offer for me to work at ironmongers in Gloucester, Alger and Blackmore. My father knew the Blackmore's very well and dealt with them through his business. But I didn't accept and went back to the rates office and stayed in that job until 1955.

In about 1953, at Tibberton Church one Sunday the lay reader failed to turn up and I was requested to take the evensong service. Apart from Mr. Phelps telling me that I could not say the absolution and my father at the organ saying "No sermon" the service went off to everyone's satisfaction.

At the rates office, we used to write the rate book ledgers by hand but later they were typed. Then we got mechanised and we had an Addressograph system installed. This meant cutting metal plates with the name and address of every ratepayer in the District, some ten thousand or more. We were asked to do the job as soon as possible but were not paid for overtime – we could have time off in lieu instead. This suited me very well. I could work in the office on wet evenings and have days off when it was dry working at the house we were to build.

I went to work on the motor bike most of the time taking Barbara on the back when she was working at the Bon Marche. I also took my father on the bike to Uncle Bill Prichard's funeral at Blaina.

I had got engaged to Barbara in 1953 in Cheltenham – a long trip away from home for us, we must have gone by bus, and we were looking for somewhere to live. We thought about a caravan in the orchard at Woodcroft and also tried to rent properties in the village, but in 1954 I purchased a plot of land on which to build a house.

The land belonged to M. P. Price and it was possibly the garden of an old cottage which had been demolished. It was used by Fred Rickards, Barbara's father, as a garden. I bought it for £25 plus £9 legal expenses. Mr Bruton, Mr Price's Agent, said that I could have the land but he would have the timber (two Corsican pine trees) taken off the site first. The trees were taken but only the trunks, they left all the branches so I complained to Mr Bruton and he paid me £1 to clear the site. My first job on the site was the removal of the roots of one of the trees. These roots were at least four feet deep and when the stump started to rock a little David Bradley pulled it out with a winch and towed it to father's yard at Woodcroft.

It took a year to build the house, a lot of work but we were young and managed to do a lot of the jobs ourselves.

We hand dug the foundation trenches, we mixed and laid the concrete foundations by hand but having no water on the site we carted it from the brook in a tank on a hand cart. We also hand mixed the concrete for the oversite.

Bricks were difficult to get, they didn't make them fast enough so we were rationed.

Father and I cut and laid the first floor joists and the roof timbers and single handedly I erected the scaffolding moving it up lift by lift as required. We also placed bricks on the scaffold in the evening to make it easier and quicker for the bricklayers. The bricklayers hadn't built a house before and I had to set out the brickwork for the bay windows for them.

Ron Green was the principal brickie, he was from Aston Ingham, and then there was Charley and also Pym Markey who was from Newent.

By October when the darker evenings came I glazed all the windows getting light from a paraffin lamp at the top and bottom of the scaffold and only broke one pane of glass, a small one. I also laid wood block floors – herring bone pattern - in the lounge, dining room and hall.

With the help of parents we eventually finished the house in early 1955 and made plans for the society wedding of the village which was held on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1955.

In January 1955 a different job came up at Gloucester RDC. There was an advert for a building inspector. I applied but was told that as I wasn't qualified I didn't stand much chance of the job. However, there was only one other applicant and he was an architect who apparently knew more than the Surveyor – Harry Freeman. I was eventually told that I could have the job provided I studied for the appropriate qualification. It was at this time that we moved office from Berkeley Street to Longsmith Street. The rates office moved on my last day with them and surveyors moved on my first day in surveyors. So I became a trainee building inspector on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1955. In anticipation of getting the job I had bought a car from Mrs Cowles who was at that time living at Tibberton rectory. It was a 1935 Austin Ruby saloon ADG 319. I took driving lessons but had to start my building inspections on my motor bike ENX 465. My first job was to inspect the foundations of Westbury on Severn Village Hall.

So a week before getting married I had a new career which was to be my life until retirement many years ahead.

We got married at 11am at Holy Trinity Church, Tibberton and had the reception at the Village Hall, catching the 2pm train for honeymoon in Bournemouth. I think the hotel cost £6.00 a week each and they provided a table tennis table so we could keep up our practice. We were playing regularly for the T & T Table Tennis Club at that time. We both played for many years and Barbara played for Gloucester City Ladies and also for the County on at least one occasion.

The house had been nearly finished before the wedding and our presents were displayed in the lounge there. Mother and father finished off the painting while we were away.

A new house, a new wife and a new job and I was 26 years old.

Extensions were built, a garage and later a coal shed, the garage was always too small, it had been built round the Austin 7. I passed my driving test in May 1955.

Daylight hours were spent on the garden and the house and evenings were spent studying.

I enrolled on a correspondence course with the Ellis School of Building doing Building Drawing, Building Construction, Building Science and Building Law. And after a few years obtained their diploma for satisfactory studies.

In December 1956 we had our first addition to the family – Angela Jane and she was a lovely baby. Barbara had to go into hospital to have her and came home the next day. That changed our way of life a little.

In March 1959 our second addition arrived, Sylvia Zoë, another lovely daughter. They were both adorable children and very well brought up by their experienced (Ex nursery nurse) mother.

When the children were growing up we did not have that much money so I spent most evenings drawing plans for building extensions and new houses. I also did the electoral registration for the parish of Minsterworth for many years to earn a few extra pounds.

Now we were into the 1960s and we had a new Surveyor – John Hopkins. He interviewed all the member of staff and asked me when I was taking my Building Inspector's exam. I said "Next summer". He said "You will take it in October this year (1961), if you don't pass you can take it next summer". I passed and that caused a problem because I was the only qualified building inspector. Alan Stokes who was my immediate building inspector boss was moved into the drainage section and I was in charge! As well as building regulation plan checking and taking the plans to the committee for approval I also did building inspections on site and many improvement grants.

The new building regulations came into force in 1975 and I was selected to go to Ministry courses at Bristol to learn all about them and with the promise to convey the details to as many persons as possible. I was also the Chairman of the newly founded Gloucestershire Association of Building Inspectors.

In 1960 Auntie Norah died, not long after her husband Bill Ryder who was much older than she was. That left their younger son Philip, aged 15, on his own and I became his guardian. He had had a brother Gerald but he died in 1943 aged 6 having his tonsils out.

Phil lived at Arlingham and I dealt with hiring people to live in his house and look after him. They didn't do very well and they eventually had to go. Phil cannot have had a very happy life. However a few years later I got him an improvement grant to provide a proper bathroom with septic tank drainage. As I was the improvement grants officer for Gloucester RDC I had to get special dispensation from the Department of the Environment to make a grant to myself from public funds.

Granny Surrell, my mother's mother, died in 1961 and her house was sold to Margaret and Nick Riach.

Angela and Zoë started school at Tibberton and we were friendly with the head teacher, Mrs Trippier. We used to spend holidays with them at Highcliffe when they moved to their retirement bungalow. During the 1950s and 1960s, I was Clerk to the Parish Council, Secretary to the School Managers, Secretary to the Almshouse Trustees, Treasurer to the Parochial Church Council and variously Assistant Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman of the Tibberton District Horticultural Society.

I had also been Secretary and later Chairman of the Playing Field Committee securing the playing field next to the Village Hall which was opened on Coronation Day 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1953.

My father died in October 1964 on General Election day. I was Presiding Officer at Tibberton School on that day and my mother came to the school and said that she thought my father was dying. She wanted me to go and see him so I had to leave my Poll Clerk in charge and I saw him just before he died. I couldn't do much to help mother until I had safely delivered the ballot box to Gloucester but then spent the night with her to try and console her.

My father was only 64 when he died and had played the organ at Taynton Church for 50 years following on the long service given by his father of 62 years in the choir. I didn't continue the tradition.

Work at the RDC went on as usual but I had joined the Southern District of the Guild of Municipal Building Inspectors and regularly attended meetings at Andover in Hampshire. At one time I was on the Committee and used to drive to Bath to the home of the District Chairman, Arthur Loveridge and from there to evening meetings at the Secretary's house at Totton, just outside Southampton. The monthly daytime meetings were held at the Western Café, Bridge Street, Andover.

The area of Gloucester Rural District was somewhat reduced in 1966 when Gloucester City took over a large chunk of parishes adjoining the City. This of course reduced the job load and I was given the task of job evaluation for the office. This meant interviewing each member of staff to find out what they did, or didn't do, and reporting accordingly. Not a job which brings popularity if done thoroughly. So after that something told me that I should get another job, I had been with the RDC for 20 years.

In the summer of 1969 the RDC was considering having a computer so that the rating demands could be done mechanically and the finance staff was sent to Thornbury to take an aptitude test to see if they were suitable candidates to go on the National Cash Register course in London to become computer programmers. None of them passed. I was asked to go on the course, passed the aptitude test and was sent to London on a three week course. I became a qualified computer programmer, but I was then asked to change jobs and go back to the finance department. This I did not want to do so I was more determined to change jobs.

I applied for two jobs, one at Guildford and one at Solihull. I got shortlisted for both but went for interview to Solihull. A colleague, Derek Woodward, had been appointed to the Solihull job but his

wife would not move there. After a day of indecision I was offered the Deputy's job and the current deputy Bill Edwards was appointed as Chief Building Surveyor. The salary for the deputy's job at Solihull was more than I was getting at Gloucester RDC.

For the first few months I was in digs at New Road but eventually got a flat in Shustoke Road, quite near the office. A colleague from the Planning Department, John Sammons shared the flat with me. I went home to Tibberton every Friday evening and returned on Sunday evenings. Later when flexitime came into force I travelled back on Monday mornings. And this went on for 19 years.

When I started at Solihull the authority was the County Borough of Solihull and in my second year there I got the Chief's job. The building inspectors were Brian Flanagan, Eric Bedford and George the drainage man. The office assistant was Mary Pittaway.

My boss Bill Edwards was deaf and would not take any calls he did not want to take pretending he was too deaf to hear. He also had the habit of shutting his desk drawer each time one walked in to his office. This was because during most of his time he was drawing plans for private clients. Once when he went on holiday he submitted about ten plans knowing that he would not have to go through them with the Deputy Engineer and Surveyor. It was noticed that there were many plans submitted by one person during the next week and Bill Edwards was found out and told either to stop doing drawings or leave. He chose to leave.

In 1974 local government reorganisation took place and the Authority became the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull. The Meriden Rural District was taken into the Borough and this included some large flats and also the National Exhibition Centre which was just getting out of the ground. I had two more inspectors from Meriden, Jack Smith and Cedric Cutler.

The National Exhibition Centre opened in 1976 and I was responsible for writing the regulations regarding public safety there. New legislation had to be approved by Parliament and I attended the House of Commons with the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk. The Solihull (National Exhibition Centre) Regulations came into force in 1976.

In 1977 my mother died and with the money from the sale of her bungalow I was able to buy the Council flat, then John left and I had the flat to myself.

We had tried somewhat half heartedly to buy a property in the Solihull area but perhaps because of the daughters' education, it was agreed, much to Barbara's dismay, that we should continue the Monday to Friday arrangement.

During my time at Solihull my two main friends were John Sammons and Mary Pittaway.

I joined Solihull Lions Club and became their Treasurer for a few years. I was also appointed to the West Midlands District Committee of what was then known as the Institute of Building Control and eventually became Chairman of the District. I also chaired the Institute's Weekend School at Warwick in 1976 and eventually became a member of the Institute Council.

In 1980 I was elected Junior Vice President, then Senior Vice President but stepped aside for one year to allow George Barnett to become President. My Presidential Year was 1982 to 1983. In 1982, a member of the Institute, Peter Stone died and he was the only building control member of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee. George Barnett held his Presidential dinner at Eastbourne and Barbara and I met Gavin Watson, an Assistant Secretary at the Department of the Environment. Shortly afterwards I was invited to join the Building Regulations Advisory Committee. This was at the time of the brand new concept of building regulations and I was appointed to all the subcommittees of BRAC. My boss at Solihull, Tom Richardson encouraged me to attend these national functions saying it was good for the name of Solihull always provided that someone did the building control work at the office. My deputy at that time was Mike Copson who was an excellent help to me during that time.

I mentioned earlier that I bought the flat at Shustoke Road but in 1983 Barbara and I decided that we would extend the house. This meant purchasing the area of garden at the rear which had previously been rented under licence from Tibberton Court Estate.

When we bought the plot for the house it was relatively small and the land at the rear, previously allotments land, was rented to Barbara's father and Charlie Boughton who lived next door at Fir Tree Cottage. Fred Osborne and Ron Mogg the tenants of the other two houses owned by the estate asked Peter Price if they could rent some land at the rear. Peter asked me to draw up the plans and I said I wanted a piece as well.

The division was that Fred Rickards had a full depth plot together with the rear half of Fred Osborne's and my plot and Charlie Boughton and Ron Mogg both had full depth plots.

A short time later I negotiated with Fred to widen our plot, then when Barbara's father moved to Phelps Way, Peter planted fir trees and oak trees on land at the rear of our half plots.

The oak trees were taken out very soon afterwards but the land became unkempt so Fred and I asked if we could take it into our plots and keep it tidy. This was agreed.

Since then in the late 1990s Julie, next door at Pear Tree, wanted some cash to buy her house and offered me some of her land. I took a further nine metres width across the full depth of the plot and that is why the plot is now approximately two thirds of an acre.

Before we could do the house extension we had to buy the land at the rear (for £4,000).

The extension took the form of pulling down the conservatory I had built and building a two storey extension at the rear with two gable ends. This gave four bedrooms and double sized lounge.

The alterations were completed in time for Zoë and Andy's wedding in 1985.

We had a marquee on the lawn and many guests. It was a very enjoyable day although the rain which came in late evening leaked into the faulty tent which had been supplied.

At the time of typing this, the wedding was held 26 years ago this week – will my memory let me recall the salient features of the last 26 years? Let's see!

In 1985 I received a phone call asking if I would like to attend a garden party at Buckingham Palace. Barbara and Angie came but Zoë was not invited because one can only take unmarried daughters. Zoë was not married by then but the date had been announced and the garden party was to be held after the wedding. I should have kept quiet and said nothing. Still Zoë drove us to there and collected us from the Palace in our car. Angie, who was a bit loath to dress up for the occasion, loved the event and we were some of the last to leave because Angie was busy sketching the garden there.

In the November of the following year I had a letter from the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher saying that the Queen was minded to award me with the MBE. This was accepted of course but it had to be kept secret until New Year's Day 1987 when the New Year's honours were announced. The press of course get the details a day before so that they can print the list to appear in the New Year's Day editions. Solihull News rang me and also my boss Geoff Brown to tell us the news. Geoff went out into the town and returned with bottles of champagne for an office party in my honour. Later I had to appear before the full Solihull Council to be congratulated.

Locally, the announcement was made at a New Year's Eve Party at Court Farm hosted by Jack and Lesley Hawkins.

In February, Barbara and Angie and including Zoë this time went with me to the Palace to see me invested with the MBE by Her Majesty the Queen. That was the only time I have worn morning dress, top hat, gloves etc, all hired from Moss Bros.

Why did I get the MBE? I mentioned earlier that I had been invited by Gavin Watson of the Department of the Environment to become a member of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee. This was at the time when the national building regulations went through a radical change in form and content. Gavin was obviously pleased with my input to the deliberations and nominated me for the honour.



I was also made a Life Member of the Institute of Building Control and awarded the Peter Stone Award by the Institute of Architects and Surveyors for the contribution I had made nationally to building control.

Life continued through 1987 to 1989 with driving to Solihull on a Monday morning and returning home on Friday evening. I worked at the office during the day and every evening after a quick snack I had the task of editing *Building Control* the bi-monthly journal of the Institute of Building Control. This was before the days of desk top publishing, everything had to be typed, sent to the printer who would set up galleys which then had to be cut and pasted up onto page format. Adverts were also included. I found that in order to produce a reasonable publication, many of the articles had to be written by me.

Since the National Exhibition Centre opened in 1976, Solihull Council had taken on the role of dealing with public safety there and I was given the job of writing the NEC regulations to carry this into effect. There was no precise law on the subject of public safety at exhibition centres so together with the Town Clerk and the Assistant Town Clerk I found myself in the House of Commons speaking to the powers that be on the NEC Act and the Regulations made thereunder. My duties at the NEC included checking exhibitions to see that they were ready for opening at the correct time and checking that the multi storey exhibition stands were safe. When the Arena was built I attended most of the pop concerts to ensure that the 12,000 crowd got in and out safely.

The shows ranged from the Motor Show which had been transferred from Earls Court in London, the Building Exhibition and pop concerts with the latest groups on stage. This was a very interesting but time consuming job.

There were few problems but I remember two which caused some concern. The first was the roof of the Arena, a roof hung up externally by a steel tubular framework. On one particular evening when fans were filling the stadium for a pop concert, the roof members started oscillating and though we went on the roof to ascertain the cause, none was found. A decision had to be made as to whether the concert could continue. The structure had not been the subject of structural calculations but had been subjected to wind tunnel tests which it had safely passed.

I agreed that the concert could go on but the structural designers were at a loss to understand why it had happened on a warm windless summer's evening.

The other problem was with a motor cycle racing show called Supercross. I was not happy about the safety aspect but NEC took me to the Bercy Stadium in Paris to see how it was done there. Safeguards were built in to the show at NEC which turned out to be a success, but it didn't last long. The supplier of the steel tiered seating had developed a new type of stand which to my mind was not sufficiently triangulated. I was assured that calculations had been made but instructed that a thorough inspection be made to ensure that all bolts were checked for tightness.

After half an hour or so of the stands being occupied, one stand began to slide forwards and down. The crowd was taken off the stand and put on another one and the same thing happened. The show had to be stopped and the crowds sent home.

The stand designer arrived in the early hours of the morning, and discussions continued until it was time to go to work the next day. Incidentally, the promoter called in the Local Government Ombudsman who after hearing all the evidence exonerated Solihull Council and me from any blame.

The only other perhaps amusing anecdote was the testing of the seating in the Arena for fire spread resistance of the 12,000 seats. Several designs were shown to me to see if they were acceptable before they were purchased and as I had no means to apply the British Standard test I devised my own which became known as the Davis Blowlamp test. I applied a blowlamp to the seats and the one which gave greatest resistance to the spread of fire was accepted.

I was due to retire in October 1989 but my successor was unable to commence his duties until January, 1990. In August when the appointment was made I was asked to stay on until the end of the year. As my successor's salary was to be higher than mine, I agreed only on condition that my salary for the final six months was to be the same as he was to be paid. That was accepted and I retired on December 31<sup>st</sup> 1989. I had been at Solihull for two weeks short of 20 years.

1989 had been a busy year at work and away in London on BRAC and other commitments, my diary shows that I went to London on over thirty occasions in the first ten months of the year.

I had a very good building control team throughout. There were sad occasions, one member retired and shortly afterwards had a stroke and died, one died suddenly and one committed suicide in a car fire.

I paid occasional visits to Solihull to see my old friends John Sammons and Mary Pittaway and last saw John at Mary's funeral in 2012.

Back to the quiet country life. I continued to edit *Building Control* and was still a member of BRAC. I was also appointed to be a special advisor on the Government's Environment Select Committee. This was very interesting but only lasted through one session of Parliament. I continued to speak at national conferences and seminars and occasionally acted as Chairman.

I was also asked to update the well known illustrated Guide to the Building Regulations which had been prepared by A.J Elder who died in 1988. My Guide to the Building Regulations 1991 was published in 1992 by Butterworths. I also contributed to the Architects Journal book on building law.

When my editorship of *Building Control* ceased I was appointed Technical Advisor to the Institute of Building Control.

In 1992 the government wanted to compare building control systems throughout the European Community and the Institute was appointed to undertake the task. I was asked to take on this together with either Peter Hart or Tony Rackliffe, both retired building control officers.

Each country was visited and asked the same questions based on the EC Construction Products Directive. One of my colleagues helped me with the interviews we conducted in 15 European countries and it was my job to write up the findings. I visited 14 of the 15 countries then in the European Union and it was quite an experience to visit all the capital cities and be shown round each country by the interviewees. The 15 books in the series were well received by the Department of the Environment and all the countries taking part were also given a copy.

Incidentally in 2008, when Turkey was considering joining the European Union, I was asked to do a similar report for that country. Unfortunately I was unable to visit Turkey but wrote up the report based on the same principles as had been done in the 1990s.

I became a member of the Taynton and Tibberton Village Hall Management Committee in 1990 and later became Chairman, a post I held for some 15 years. In 2008 I was elected President of the Village Hall Trustees.

In 1991 I became a member of Tibberton Parish Council and 3 years later was elected Chairman, a position I still hold (2016).

In 1992 I retired as Hon Treasurer of the Horticultural Society but in 2006 was elected Vice Chairman. Since joining the Horticultural Show Committee in 1959 I have acted as Hon Treasurer for 13 years, Assistant Secretary for 3 years, Chairman for 9 years, Vice Chairman for 6 years and an ordinary Committee member for 17 years. I was appointed Vice President in 2012 and President in 2015.

Angie got married to Adam in 1996 and they had two children, Maya Alice Zoë and Reuben Eli Saul. They married at Woolwich Register Office and had a blessing in Tibberton Church.

Barbara's mother died in 1994 and Barbara had looked after her for many years. It was a strain on her and our friends Pauline and Keith Boyce suggested that a holiday would do her good so they invited us to join them on holiday in Tenerife. This we did every year for about six years, normally we did not organise holidays on our own.

We have been fortunate in having good neighbours – Julie at Pear Tree and Paul and Karen Freeman and family and David Booth and Kathy at Fir Tree – now renamed Yew Tree).

Paul and Karen moved to the far end of Tibberton and sadly both David and Kathy died a short time after coming to live here.

Eventually we both settled down to a quieter life. We have both worked hard in the garden which being the size it is can be very time consuming but it is admired by many who either came to visit or attended one of Barbara's Open days for charitable causes. In 2014, after awaiting consent from Barbara to fell the large conifer in the front garden, we employed a local contractor to completely alter the layout and now have a gravel garden containing a design by Reuben and Adam of different colour gravel flower beds. Later we had the old tarmac path across the front of the house taken up and re-laid in brick paving.

When the weather is not suitable for gardening, particularly in the winter, I have written some books. The first one - *Tibberton, Gloucestershire – A history of our Village* was published in 2001. A grant was obtained from the Lottery fund: 400 copies were produced and one was given to each house in the village, the remainder being sold. This was funded jointly with the Parish Council and it has been necessary to have a reprint.

Other books include - *Flower shows held in the village since 1898, A short history of the Price Family* (originally of Tibberton Court). The most recent publication is one I edited for Eric Freeman a local farmer and raconteur who had recorded many interviews and his life history on tape. These I transcribed and produced *Thumbsticks and Frails* for him, an A4 book of some 100 pages. He is so well known in the county that well over 600 copies have been sold.

Two more books are: *Tibberton Church and Churchyard* and *A further look at our Village*, another 100 pages of local history on Tibberton and neighbouring parishes.

On my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday – “No party”, I said, but Zoë had arranged with Tony Haines to hold a surprise party for me in the Village Hall. It was a complete surprise and the hall was filled with local people who had served on various committees with me through the years. An evening to remember together with a book of memories to which many people had contributed.

The garden still flourishes - vegetables, flowers and fruit and at the ripe old age of 86 I can still do all the necessary tasks albeit perhaps more slowly. Lawn mowing which took a considerable amount of time is now in the safe hands of a robot. It does a very good job and mows twice daily for 4 hours.

We are fortunate in having a loving and caring family who visit us when they can, usually Christmas, Easter, half-terms etc and we visit them in London as well.

Grandchildren grow up. Maya went to Oxford University in 2010 and read English at Balliol College. She worked hard and got a 2.1. Reuben went to Bristol University in 2014.

In 2015 Maya went to South America travelling through Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Brazil, Guatemala and to Mexico City where she had a job working for a women's rights organisation. She hopes to become a barrister.

They are both super grandchildren and have devoted and caring parents. Andy and Zoë are also very supportive and constantly keep in contact.

I have had a charmed life, have thoroughly enjoyed practically every minute of it, not everyone gets the good fortune that I have had, good health, enough money to live on, a loving wife and family, what more could I want?

This has taken me to the middle of my 86<sup>th</sup> year – perhaps there will be more to write later.

If I have failed to mention anyone or omitted anything which has occurred (which is worth mentioning) please let me know – there could always be an addendum.

