This memoir was written by Alan Maynard Ford during the 1980s.

Born 12th June 1928, he died 23rd January 1993 – Aged 64 years.

All references to present time relate to the 1980s.

Introduction

1979: While talking with friends in the village *[Wreningham]* one evening, the subject of age came into the conversation and then they asked "had I lived in Wreningham all my life?", which of course I had, although this is not technically correct as will be explained later. They said I must have seen some changes during my life and when I started reminiscing, they were very interested and amused so I thought then that I would write - in my own style - the life and folk on the village as I can remember it. This would be about the mid-1980s.

I have heard it said that a person cannot remember much of one's life before the age of five but one of my early recollections was seeing an ambulance man carrying Jimmy Ireland across the marsh *[this would have been the marsh in Mill Lane]* wrapped up in a blanket and taking him off to hospital. This was before I started school at the age of four.

I was the only new boy but can't say whether or not it was the beginning of a term in 1932. I sat all alone at a long, low table on an equally long, low form, feeling lost. Putting my hand under the table I pressed a piece of wood which moved up and down. This I kept doing until there was a loud crack and the piece of wood broke. This frightened me and I thought that this would be the end of my school days as they would not want me there long. I had heard my brothers and sisters tell of breaking up at school and then being at home.

I gradually settled in and can remember Jimmy *[Ireland]* coming to school after a time and being looked on as a hero for going to the hospital.

In those days there were very few motor cars around and people worked locally so it was walk or cycle to work or wherever you wanted to go. I can remember a bus which I think was owned by the Humphrey family from Forncett hitting a lorry on Mill Corner and turning the lorry over, spilling its load of animal slurry over the road and leaving a smell there for days.

Toprow

Looking back, there were quite a lot of people who earned a living out of what seemed an impossibility and I think I could make this more interesting if I describe the people and their ways so I will do it this way. Having been from on Mill Corner, *[which is*

actually in Ashwellthorpe on that side of the road] I will start and work my way down *[the north side of]* Top Row. First, starting at Sunnyside which was then the home of Mr & Mrs Westgate commonly known as "Dodger and Mrs Dodger". There were a few acres of land with the place, but I think that it was mostly worked by other people, as I think Mrs Westgate had money, as they only kept a few chickens. They always gave you a few pennies for running errands and I think Dodger liked to have a dram if he could get hold of the cash. The older boys used to torment him, especially around about 5th November.

Next, in Walnut Tree Cottage, there lived the late Robert and Mrs Hanton in one end and the Gray family in the other. In front stood a Walnut Tree which we used to throw pieces of wood up to try and knock down the walnuts; there must have been electricity then because we used to get wrong for making the lights flicker. Mr Hanton worked on the railways then and stayed with them until he retired. Mr Gray also worked on the railways but moved away at an early age in the 1930's. Where Mr Harvey's house now stands was a Mr Charles Copeman (Doddy) who kept poultry on the bit of ground that Mr *[blank space]* now has. Directly in front of this stood a pair of cottages which had four or five steps at the front door. The only person I can remember living there was a Mr Thompson who delivered coal from Ashwellthorpe Station by horse and cart. His favourite expression was "My Patience" which became his nickname and I can remember him sitting out on his doorstep in the evenings saying "my patience". I remember him saying this and that.

In Mr Hill's house lived Alfred Stone who farmed a few acres and had one grey horse and possibly a couple of cows. All I can remember of him is a sort of bow-legged little man with a moustache and always wore a trilby; I think he was a confirmed bachelor.

In the next smallholding lived Fred Galer *[in the thatched house]* who also had a small slaughterhouse. His two sons worked for a Norwich butcher, so maybe he did this for them? His land consisted of the piece that Riverview is built on as well as Mr Fairman's, plus the meadows opposite.

The last neighbour was Mr & Mrs John Bunn *[who lived in a thatched cottage dated 1694]* and, to date, I think Mrs Bunn is still alive in a nursing home but Mr Bunn has been dead many years. He used to drive a steam thrashing outfit for Mr Hammond who lived on Rattee's Corner at Fundenhall and travelled round to local farms thrashing the corn. He was a big fellow with a moustache and seemed to lead a very steady life.

I do not know if O.A.P. *[old age pension]* was paid out in those days as in the cottage opposite lived a Mr and Mrs Frost ('Freezer'). They were elderly and he used to help the small farmers at peak times, always wearing glasses and a slouch trilby.

The building in Miss Gray's orchard was, I've been told, a bake house but can't remember anyone living there.

Reggie Moore lived in the cottage now occupied by Mr Robert Preston. He worked as cowman down the farm which we used to call Canal House but is now known as The Grange - but of course is in Ashwellthorpe - although it has always associated itself

with Wreningham. He moved to Fundenhall as his family got bigger and I think there were several other families in and out quite quickly.

Miss Margaret Preston's parents lived next door in those days and Mr Preston worked on the railway. He always amused the kids as he always wore his overcoat over his shoulders and never put his arms in the sleeves and said very little to most folk but mostly said "ullo, ullo, ullo!" so that is what we dubbed him.

"Gunda" Bailey lived next door to where Miss Gray now lives although where he got the nickname from I do not know. He worked on a market garden at Swardeston, I think, but he also kept a few pigs and chickens and of course there were quite a lot of good fruit trees in his orchard. The shop was run by Mrs Bateman for years. Mr Bateman was a harness maker and boot repairer in a little building joined onto the post office cottage. He also did postman duties around Ashwellthorpe and I think he was about the first person on Toprow to own a car.

What is now the Post Office was the home of Ama and Nanna Oakes and their son-in-law Don Bell and their daughter Nellie who had a son, Gerald, and this is what he called his grandparents. Mr Oakes is still alive and lives in an O.P.H. at Thetford but at the time was a team man on the farm and a steady sort of chap.

Down the farm *[Canal House]* lived Mr William Bothway and his brother Charles who I believe spent a lot of his life in India. He was the owner of a car - a Bullnose Morris. I am not sure but am fairly certain it had a "dickey" seat in the back. William preferred his horse and trap and, in common with most farms, kept horses, cows as well as pigs and chickens. As children, we used to go every evening to get milk for ourselves and other people in cans. One of the cowmen use to put in the required amount as it ran through the cooler. Later on in years, I can remember going in the morning and seeing Eric Ireland take a big jug of cream into the house that he had skimmed off last night's milk. If I were there alone before he came down from the cowsheds I would try to raise the churn lid and dip my finger in the cream and have a lick or two. If we could get it working, we use to hand pump water into a tank in the dairy. This was used to cool the milk which was then out on a *[hand cart or trolley?]* and taken to Ashwellthorpe station. I think after the creamery was built at Harford Bridges, it was put on a stand firstly near the front entrance, then in later years, near the Post Office for lorry collection.

Around towards the farm lived Henry Hunt *[plus his wife and 3 children]* in one cottage and in the other Bob Flint. Both worked on the farm. Bob was a little old fellow who nearly always wore rubber boots which looked about three sizes too big. He also smoked an old clay pipe which was nearly always hanging upside down in his mouth. Occasionally, he would get a bit tipsy if I remember rightly.

Henry Hunt was a big, dark man and lived to quite a good old age - quite late in life he was still working and was as tough as nails, out in all weathers. He liked to have a few pints and would occasionally go on a bender then not touch a drop for weeks, but was one of those old boys one could sit and listen to when he was in the mood for a yarn.

In those days cricket was played on the long meadow and the spectators used to sit on a big log under an old oak tree. I can remember all us kids used to sit on a farm roller while the men used to pull it up and down the pitch if it got lumpy. The club packed up several years before the war, if I remember correctly, although some of its members are still around. I can't name many. I know the late Walter Preston got the nickname of KAYF during one of its annual outings.

Main Road / Turnpike

We now move on to the main road "Turnpike" as we used to say in those days. Jim Thompson moved into the far end of Mr Tom Barber's house when, I think Mr & Mrs Ben Rushmore, moved into their new house in Ashwellthorpe.

Mr Jim Barber lived in the other end but most of his family had grown up. One son, George, who lived at home, was a hairdresser by trade and we used to go and have our hair cut in the shed on Sunday mornings, price 2 pence. Then we would go to Sunday School which was quite a large gathering. Some children used to come from Fundenhall and Ashwellthorpe as well as the *[unclear]* boys from Popes Hole (Rectory Lane). In those days there were two services every Sunday, all year round, plus several evening functions during the week. I suppose 20 was a small congregation in those days.

Next to the chapel lived Mrs Fardell and Miss Coe and I can remember going there to play with another boy once. We could only play on the grass and had nothing much to play with - I had to be careful as mother had made me wear my best clothes so I was glad that was not a regular occurrence.

Next door to us lived my uncle Ted Browne. He had a nickname of Banny and worked on a coal cart at Ashwellthorpe station. He moved to Fundenhall in a council house and we moved into his house. Brother Charles married and lived in our end, *(which was the old police house)*. My father worked on the roads and often used to bike miles away to work, although he did have a small motorbike later on. I can remember him being at home, sometimes for several weeks as the jobs were not so regular in those days.

I can just remember the Ready family living on Mill corner but all I can bring to mind was that it was a fair-sized family. Then I think Mr Larwood and family lived there until he retired from working as horseman at Hill Farm when he moved to Penny Green Council Houses. Mrs Setchell and her daughter is still living in the village.

Next door lives Mrs Twiddy with her father, mother, son Jack and Betty, now Mrs Buck of Riverview, I think lived there all her life. I can remember her father, an old man with a beard, and walked with a stick. He used to stand by the gate at the roadside quite a lot watching the world go by. At that time, the London bus, as we now call them, was run by what everyone called "the Westminster" and even in those days seemed to be very fast and seemed to pass close to him, so he always threatened to shove into that "ole

Westminster" with his stick. His wife was very short-sighted and used to walk out to call Jack or Leslie Preston from the gang that always seemed to be on the bridge and they would shout Les was "not here" so she used to mumble "dam boy never around when he's wanted". In those days, loads of houses had no sink or drains so the menfolk washed in a bowl on an old table outside, near the water tub, often with cold water - even breaking the ice in frosty weather and Jack was no exception. He would walk out, and stand stripped to the waist rubbing himself dry and shouting out to those on the corner whatever the topic was. Unfortunately, he went in the army and died in Italy in the 1939-45 war.

Mill Lane

The Mill was run by Mr Herbert Aldridge who also kept pigs and chickens and his son Frank ran lorries which I suppose accounted for a haulage business, taking over the Mill when his father retired to Bunwell. At one time, there was a windmill there but I can only remember the bottom round brick building with the large oak post in the centre. When this was removed, Mr Frank Turner cut it into boards etc and I know Mrs Hugh Howes had some furniture made from it. They had a telephone and I think at one time I can remember only four wires coming over the road on Mill Corner so I imagine they and the post office were the only phones in the village, although over the years they soon increased in number.

Down on the Marsh, in the first cottage, lived Mr & Mrs Bob Preston and their two sons, Bob and Walter. He worked at Hill Farm, Hethel and had two nicknames *[first unreadable]* and "Bumper". Where they originated, I don't know. Bob jnr. worked at Rushmore's in the greenhouses until he got called up, then he went into the building trade and still lives on Toprow. Walter worked on various farms until he joined Forehoe and Henstead refuse cart team but died a few years ago at about the age of 50. His widow and family still live in the Penny Green Council Houses.

Next to him lived a shepherd, Banham, although I can also remember seeing a man go down the marsh on crutches or two sticks. His name was Slight and I believe he or his brother did live there so where the shepherd came from, I do not know. He also worked at Hill Farm and lived alone. I can remember an elderly Miss Newby coming from Wymondham by train to see him quite a lot. Whether he was ever married or if she was his girlfriend or a relative, I do not know.

Next, I can also just remember a Rivett family, they moved to Wymondham and then I think Mike (My sonny) and Ted Dawson moved in. They moved from the cottage near the school that is now occupied by Mr & Mrs Handford. He got a living out of chickens and apples out of the orchard where Mr Wells jnr. lives. They also farmed the field where Claude Westdrop lives. This all belonged to Miss Hopkins *[?]* at The Larches.

At the far end lived Mr & Mrs W Ireland who had a large family, some of whom are still living in the village. He was a horseman for Herbert Bothway and also used to help with the cows. He worked long hours but still managed a big garden and also kept pigs etc.

Then, for several years, he worked at East Carleton and, as kids, we only saw him on a Sunday afternoon going back to milk the cows etc. He seemed to work 18 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year. Even when he retired, he still did part-time work for Percy Coleman - well into his 70's. He was a quiet man but once he got talking was quite interesting to listen to and Mrs Ireland was a real good old sort. Never complained and always joking and laughing. They moved from the marsh: firstly up Wymondham Road and then to the School Bungalows.

The Nurseries in those days were owned by a Kenneth Betts who was really an odd character, not very go-ahead like Gerry Baldwin who took it over from him. He never lived there and used to come from Bramerton by bus or car and I never remember anyone working for him full-time.

The School

The school in those days had a small playground and was decorated out in cream and brown throughout, and had three teachers: Mrs Newman, Miss Bell and Mrs Royall who came from Ashwellthorpe. Children went there from the age of 4 to 14 years and the discipline was pretty strict. I suppose really because sometimes someone would have to stay in and write 100 lines and I can remember Jimmy Ireland once saying to me in class "You come from Swaffham, you don't know nothing" – Mrs Newman told him to write it out 100 times after school but he couldn't spell "nothing" and of course said it in the Norfolk tongue which is "Northan" so the next night he had to do it again. We used to be lined up in front of class if several of us had committed the same crime and out would come the cane – whack, whack, whack. I once remember seeing it broken on the backside of a boy who live Hethel way called Karnero. I think he was an orphan or foster child and his real name was Ireland but no relation to William Ireland.

Corner of Wymondham Road, Ashwellthorpe Road & Folgate

In the little cottage that is owned by Mrs Peel and is now unoccupied, lived the village shoemaker Jimmy Howlett, nicknamed "Shiner". He lived alone and had a small building in front of what is now Mr Handford's house. This had a small window and a shutter on it and the bigger boys used to close the shutter and wedge a stick or hold the door shut so he couldn't get out. So the poor old boy used to be in darkness but if he did get the door open, he would throw his hammer at them. He was a real chapel man and used to cycle around preaching on a tricycle. We kids used to run behind and try and jump on behind or give him a push as he didn't travel very fast. When he crossed Mill Corner he would push it over, sometimes walking over first to see if the road was clear then walking back again for his trike. I think he did get bowled over on it once somewhere, also I can remember his long eyelashes which curled right up.

Next *[down the east side of Ashwellthorpe Road]* lived Mr & Mrs Alfred Howlett who are both still in the village and I think at this moment in time he is the only *[living]* person

who was in the First World War. They had a little wooden hut beside the road from which they sold sweets, tobacco and various other things. If we had a penny on Sunday afternoons, we would walk there and get sweets as one had only to knock on the door of the house and Mrs Howlett would unlock and serve you. She must have turned that key lots of times. Mr Howlett repaired cycles as well as worked on various farms. During the second world war he was in charge of the local Home Guard as a *[rank unreadable]*. *A*t the time he was working for Percy Coleman who was also in the Home Guard but was only a private so when they were on duty the role of boss was reversed. How it worked out I don't know.

Next door lived Mrs Wiseman for several years, then I think, but do not remember much about her, down the Folgate where Alfred Howlett jnr. now lives. Mrs Wilson and her son Alfred, a full-grown man in my days, who never did marry. He worked down Canal Farm and used to like his pint but was often to be seen sleeping it off by the roadside. In conversation, he would often say "As Imysay" so he got dubbed that name and in his late years wanted to pay for some coal with gold sovereigns but he was going a bit funny up top and the coalman wouldn't accept them as he thought they were some old foreign coins.

Next door, I can just remember a Mrs Lane living but she moved out and Mrs Coleman lived there for several years with her son Donald and Edna, now Mrs Neave.

Mr Robert Howlett lived in one end of the other cottage in the roadway and an Amy Howlett and her mother in the first end but never did know much about the latter pair of ladies. Robert worked on the railway and was a keen gardener and a very thrifty, resourceful fellow too, I should think that as he brought up a large family but they were not very healthy and only three of them grew up. Mrs Martin is one of them. Mrs Howlett lived to a great age, remaining active until the last. Looking after her *[disabled]* daughter and her house was always as clean as a new pin. During her late 80's I took a scythe from her as she was trying to mow some nettles and did it myself but she still insisted that she could have managed.

The cottage now occupied by Mr Whiting was originally two and the far end was occupied by a Mrs Goldsmith a widow who brought up a boy, Freddie Riches, and his sister whose widowed father was her brother. She had a son of her own. I can only remember him from living up Wymondham Road when he used to visit her as she finished her days in the house where Jim Green now lives and I lived where Dick Goate now lives.

In the other end lived a Mrs Bunn and her son Jim. I can't remember her but can remember the property coming up for sale and I think they also sold the furniture as Jim (or Shim as he was known) moved out and went into lodgings with Jumbo Baker who we will mention later. Shim was a brother to John who we have already mentioned and use to go on the thrashing engine and do other casual work. At one time, he used to walk to Wymondham and load railway trucks with stone on a piecework basis. I think of six pence per ton. This was hard work but extremely well paid in its time. After a weekend of beer drinking, they had to give Monday a miss, then work like mad to make up ready

for next weekend's session. He was one of those who would work like hell if he had a bottle to go at and one day during haymaking with Burton B*[ullimore]* Long, he asked them to work on in the evening. Shim said "not unless I have some drink". BB went and got a churn of water for them so Shim picked up his bag and was gone right quick. He moved around quite a bit in lodgings but finished up in Pulham Workhouse as he did something to his leg which needed hospital treatment.

[Coming back up Ashwellthorpe Road] In The Poplars lived Herbert Bothway with his wife, two sons Henry and Richard, daughter Evelyn and also an older daughter who was married before I can remember. This was a typical farm: of horses for the teamwork, a herd of cows and of course the usual chickens etc. I can't say if they kept any pigs or not, but I suppose there were on an average of seven or eight men employed there. I can't remember them growing sugar beet until the war years, unless they carted them to Ashwellthorpe Station and loaded them on trucks. The milk used to go away from there, I know, because we often used to ride on the milk trolley to the station with Mr Jack Land to catch the 8.05 train.

At that time of the day the gravel pit was being worked and a lot of the materials were carted away by steam wagons. I can't say whether or not the men worked there regularly but there was no unemployment pay. If you hadn't got a job you went and did some manual work somewhere and the commitments that you had, i.e. the size of family, decided how many days work you did. It was no good slacking because you had to do a certain amount or you did not get any pay not like the "Welfare State" of today.

[Continuing] towards the school in the first cottage lived Miss Rosetta Bell who was one of the schoolteachers. She must have taught for *[left blank]* years as I think she was born and bred in the village. In later years, she bought what at that time was the post office and retired there, living for several years before going into a nursing home. She was a very nice person, always a good word for everyone, regular church goer and a Sunday School teacher as well. Never interfering with anyone, just going about things in her own quiet way.

Next door in what is now "Cherrytrees" lived the two Miss Hopkins. I can't say I knew much about them, just the bonnet and lace type. I imagine they had a bit of private income or something. Of course, the house was not so big then as the archway and extra bit was added about 15 or so years ago.

What is now Lamp Cottage was Jim Quantrill's carpenter's shop. He was another of the village tradesmen. Carpenter, Wheelwright, Bricklayer etc. I think he did employ someone but I can't really say. His mode of transport was a handcart so he didn't expand a lot but more of him later. Next came the Post Office. This was - in my early days - kept by a Mr Bell who I can't remember much about. For a short time it was run by a Mr Munchen. I think he was a Yorkshireman or he moved to Yorkshire when he left, I forget now. Then it was taken over by a Mr Willy Hill, a veteran of the First World War who had a wooden leg. His wife was a bit of a tartar, who *[…?]* anyone who went to their door and, if their dog got on her garden, she would soon lay the law down. He was

a regular churchgoer and used to teach us boys at Sunday School. He would stand no nonsense but I once played a trick on him which he saw the funny side of.

During the war years you could have one pig per year for your own use. If you did this and you had friends, having had one killed, you used to supply them with a joint or something and they would do the same for you. My sister had one done so I was "Butcher Boy" one night and as a reward for service rendered, there was a parcel of sausages for Willy so I knocked on the door in the dark - being blackout period, they had a curtain behind the door. He came to the door and what light there was saw me and said "hello young man what's your troubles" so with sausages behind my back I said sorry to trouble you but could I possible have a tuppenny stamp. Well, the curtain flew back and out stormed her ladyship. I got a lecture on the opening hours of the post office etc, and of course I kept up a pretence of having a parcel to post and this went on for some time, her getting more agitated than ever so finally I said well if I can't post it you may as well have it and I put the sausages into her hand and ran. When he saw my sister, he was quite amused because the old dear got upset over nothing, as it were. I expect the extra meat ration soon calmed her down.

Mrs Wade *(nee Nichols)* has lived in Glastonbury Cottage as long as I remember. In her younger days with her father and brothers: Jimmy, Robert (Bob) and George. Jimmy moved to Bracon Ash. I can't remember her dad dying or when she got married but believe her husband, Hector, lived locally. He was very friendly with Dick Turner for years and I can only remember him working on farms, although from conversation, I know he did work for an electrical firm, driving a lorry for a time. I can remember his mother living at Forncett.

Bob probably moved out when they got married and for several years lodged on Toprow with a Mrs Riley. I think he did lodge elsewhere, then he had a caravan at Hill Farm where he worked and, on retirement, moved in behind Mrs Bob Howlett's cottage. George remained with his sister and was an active man working into his 70's and despite having a lot of illness later on, kept active right to the very end, passing away only a few weeks ago.

Wymondham Road

Just round the corner in what is now Mrs Handford's cottage lived a Miss Cousins but I can't say I knew much about her. Then, during the late 40's, a Mr Wurr moved in and had an extension put on and Jim Shiner's, shoemaker shop was demolished.

In those days there was nothing else on that side of the road at all except at Pokes Hole *[Old Rectory Lane]* where there were three residences. In the first lived Percy Coleman, until he *moved* to Pear Tree Farm around 1940. Then a family from London. Nobby Payne moved in and they lived there for several years before moving to Fundenhall, and then to Australia. At the top, on the left, first of all lived a "Stormer" Hill, as he was known. He was a horseman at Dring's Farm. I think then, a Jack Fiske and his family moved in. He was cowman for B B Long but I cannot be sure which farm. In the other

lived a Jack Pearce. He was a tractor driver for B B Long - as he did have one, or possibly two, tractors then. I think then, over a period of time, several people moved in and out of them until both *[properties]* got into such a bad state, plus people did not want tied houses.

Burton Bullimore Long farmed High Common Farm, Drings Farm and Glebe Farm as already mentioned *[one better known as High House Farm]*. As already mentioned, he was an early user of tractors. In fact, he also had the first combine in the village. His farm tumbrils all had pneumatic types - a rarity in those days. He used to keep a lot of turkeys, which in those days were unheard of except at Christmas. There were also a couple of herds of cows; some milk used to be delivered in parts of the village on a motorbike and sidecar - sometimes by BB Long himself. He was a short, stocky man known as "Put Put" or Burton Burton. "Put Put" being an expression he used with a squeaky voice. His wife used to drive their car, another rare thing in those days. I can't remember what sort it was. They had two sons that I know of.

In the Glebe Farm lived a Miss Leycock with some more of her family. She was a school teacher at Silfield but do not know any more about who lived in Dring's Farm. I can't remember, but there have been several others over time.

On the common, there was a double dweller cottage opposite High House Farm as well as the set of three that stand back now in bad shape, but don't know who lived in any of them as we never went that way as children until we were old enough and fortunate enough to have a bicycle.

The cottage on the railway was then occupied by Mr Jack Land and his family. Mrs Land's sons, Brian and Geoffrey, all live in the village at Millside now. They also had a daughter, Gwen. When we used to cycle to work at Wymondham, if the Briton Brush factory horn went before we got to the station hill at Wymondham we used to pedal like hell so that Gwen was not late as she worked at the Briton.

Jack was a cowman at The Poplars and had help - in those days of hand-milking - but in later years had machines so managed single-handed. As I have already mentioned, he used to have a pony and a light cart and took the milk in churns to Ashwellthorpe Station each morning.

On the site of the small bungalow known as *[.... a gap]* was a converted railway carriage with another piece on the back and a veranda at the front. In this lived Billy Moore and his family. He was brother-in-law to Jack Land and also helped him with the cows, both *[were]* hard-working chaps but do not know much about their leisure activities as they were not seen down our way of the village much.

In the west end of the cottage where Mr & Mrs *[George]* now lives, lived Jim Quantrell known as Jimmy Spit through his habit of spitting on his hand. As I have already mentioned, he was one of the local tradesmen and could be seen pushing his handcart down the road in the morning with his requirement for the day, with his trilby hat and pipe on. I used to hear it said, if things didn't go right some days, he would down tools and say this is a left-hand day for me. Then off he would go to the pub and wouldn't

come back no more that day. If he had a bit too much, he would be in the doghouse when he got home. As his wife was a bit prim and proper, she did not like to see her Jim rolling home three sheets to the wind.

Next door lived Arthur Yaxley with his family of one girl, one boy and twin sons. They were the only twins that I can remember being born in Wreningham. He used to work for B B Long and remember him with the old motorbike and sidecar delivering milk in bottles at various places in the village. He got arthritis in the late 30's and apart from a job on *[a gap]* during the war years, he didn't do any more work. He is still alive today so there is something in that old saying that a creaking cart lasts longest.

In the cottage where Mr Green now lives, lived a Mr Bob Smith and his family. He had a wooden leg but can never remember him working. I presume he was a First World War victim living on an army pension. Next door lived Mr Alex Turner with his wife and son, Frank. Alex was a steady old boy and used to attend sales buying poultry, rabbits etc for a Pat Leist at Flordon, where, I think, he also helped pluck and dress them ready for market. Mrs Turner was not often seen about the village. Actually, Frank was the real character of the family and was known as Dick to most people or Bob or even "Mr one and six". He was a carpenter and wheelwright by trade and also a keen motorcyclist as well as being one of the early working men in the village to own a motor car. He was a very adaptable chap and had a large shed at the bottom of the garden where he had various engines which used to drive saws etc including a generator for his own electricity. There was always activity and quite a lot of the fellows used to go there week-ends and evenings etc, even if they were only playing cards - when Dick used to say he ought to be doing something as he used to make various things for local people. There are several pieces of furniture around the village which he made but I expect the ladders, gates and wheelbarrows etc. have mostly finished on the firewood pile now. He was a likeable sort of chap and would often be seen strolling down Mill Lane on a Sunday summer evening with his little old dog Pip, as usual with his bent pipe in his mouth, which he never seemed to be without. Never remember him having a straight one.

In the cottage of Mr Fred Browne's, lived "Granny" Smith known as such to us kids because she looked after two boys whose surnames I can't remember. Peter and *[?]*, which I believe were her grandsons, although they moved away *[after?]* they left school, I think. I can't remember a Mr Smith. I presume she was a widow.

Next door lived Jumbo Baker and his wife. They had a family but had grown up and lived in the West Norfolk Area. They took in lodgers, I know, but can only remember Shin Bunn lodging there myself. She was a staunch chapel goer herself but *[I]* never remembered seeing *him* there. I think he just did casual work on farms. *[I]* can remember he walked with a stoop, wore a cap and small spectacles and a moustache, and mostly had trousers covered in some sort of canvas laced up to the knees - which was the way lots of working men dressed in those days. Some had leather buskins, others used sacking or canvas to keep their trousers clean as they probably couldn't

afford wellingtons, and Sunday dress was a pair of breaches and polished buskins and boots for quite a lot of men.

Pear Tree Farm at that time was farmed by a Mr Smith and his son Charles. I don't remember a Mrs Smith so assume she died before my time. They moved to Ashwellthorpe and the farm was taken over by a Mrs Page but she didn't stay long. Charles, incidentally, was a very good organist and has played in several local churches. He always wore gloves when working, cycling etc but assumed he took them off to play the organ.

Next came Ephraim Lane in the cottage nearest the road which Gladys Ireland now has. He brought up quite a large family which married and moved away before I knew much about them. I can't remember his wife either. He was a local fishmonger, no shop, just a bike with a carrier back and front. He used to bike to Norwich to buy his fish, then sell it as he returned home. He used to shout something which I am sure was "fish stinking fish". That's about all I can remember of him earning a living. In later years, I used to stop and have a yarn with him, and he used to tell me about his family and laugh at the antics they used to get up to. He also used to give me homemade wine which was often rum stuff as he only made it the week before, so really it was often like dish water. Long before it was matured, he would have drunk it anyway. It did not harm him as he moved to Sheringham with a daughter when he was about 90, although he didn't live long after that. I can remember that, about the time he died, they were testing all the village wells before putting *[water]* mains in and they said his well water was not fit to drink. Billy Ireland told the man that Ephraim had drunk it for years and when he moved, he didn't last long, so I reckon that was what kept him alive.

Next door lived the local length man who looked after all the roads. He was known as "Granfar" Grey and was getting on in years. He had a grown-up son and daughter. I never knew much about Harry, the son, as he used to work on Myhill's farm at Hethel and courted a Violet Ellis. He went to work early in the morning and came home late at night, so really he only slept in the village, although you might see him in the garden over a weekend. May, the daughter, also never married. In fact, I think she is still alive as she lived in the school bungalows for several years before getting a bit feeble and unable to look after herself.

In the far end lived Mr & Mrs Isaac Daniels known as Ikeie or "how ar yah" which was his form of greeting. Both him and his wife were staunch Chapel goers and I can see them leaving chapel now: she pushing her bike a little way down the road before straddling it and pushing herself off on the pedal - whilst Ikeie used to hop on his over the back of the seat as what was known as the back step method. He worked on the railway in the plate-laying gang and always wore a trilby. I can't remember if they had any family. In what is now *[unreadable]* three cottages, although I am not sure who lived in the western one, and I do remember an elderly lady and also Freddie Chamberlain who now lives on Toprow. In the eastern end lived Arthur Lawn known to some as "Mosely" to some. Why, I do not know.

He had a few small pieces of land which he farmed and used to do a bit of dealing in various things. He would buy a tree of apples or pears which he would then gather and take to Norwich and sell. He used to have a dog that went everywhere with him and as often as not ran alongside the road, in the fields catching a rabbit or two which then got put on the cart to sell when he arrived. It would sit on the back of the cart, allowing anyone or anything on but not *[to]* take anything off. He was quite a character and I've heard that *[....?]* Frost, the policeman, always used to be after him for one thing or another. Having his horse and cart on the road without lights, which was allowed if it was not too long, so Arthur used to shorten the harness if he saw the PC coming and was always asking, in a suspicious manner, if the new PC was watching him. He was also reputed to have tied a bag on his horse's backside then put him out to have a feed on the Parsonage meadow during the hours of darkness. The bag catching any tell-tale marks but I don't know if this is exactly true.

In the next cottage lived Harry Bell with his wife, son Victor and daughter Ivy. He worked on local farms, and Ivy worked at the rectory until Canon Fardell died. She then worked at Hapton House for quite a while. After her mother died, she seemed to go to pieces and in fact finished up in an old people's home at a very early age. Victor was either cunning or weak-willed willed depending on how you looked on him. He did very little work in life and was called up for the army but soon got discharged. This was two cottages until a couple of years ago and I know it was a Mrs *[...?]* who lived there then a nurse Brock lived there for several years. She was a very nice lady but kept herself to a small circle of friends so I never did know much about her.

Standing back at the Larches lived a Miss ? then just about the late 30's Mr George Spratt from Tacolneston married the then district nurse Miss [?] and moved in. Previously, this was the home of a Robert *[Dennis]* Day, who at one time ran the village shop and he was quite a keen businessman. I have heard it said that if it couldn't be bought he would make one or get one made and could supply just about anything even to printing his own local news. Whether he ever lived in the shop I don't know as it has been in the Spratt family all my life. Colin's father, Charles, a brother of George, previously kept it and it was fairly flourishing until the war years. Then it went downhill due to rationing and Charles lived there with his wife Dorothy and went to work building on various airfields.

Probably, he was directed there as you had to work where the Ministry of Labour ordered you. At that time, all these local airfields were being built so there was plenty of labour needed as there were not too many machines about then. It was still a pick-and-shovel age, really. After the war, *[the shop]* blossomed again and got quite a good trade. Colin *[Spratt]* started his side of the business with an Austin 7 car, branching into coaches in the early 50's. Charles was in bad health for a long time so they sublet the shop to three different people but only Mrs Wigg made a go of it until regulations made it impossible to carry on without a lot of modifications. They packed it in, which was a pity as it was the closing of the last village shop.

Church Road

Continuing up Church Road *[east side]* the first place was Rectory Cottage, now Mrs Loggy's. Jim Marsham lived there with his family. There were several children all big fine boys and girls but they all moved away or they got married. Jim was gardener at the Rectory and lost one eye chopping wood. He retired first to Wymondham Road, then to a new bungalow at Millside. After he lost his wife, he moved in near the school so it was nearer for his daughter Mrs *[?]* to look after him.

Then, at The Rectory for as long as I can remember, was Canon Fardell and his wife. As we were a chapel family, I never had too much to do with them, although when the war broke out, they started having chicken each week from Miss D Battersby an Irish lady who lived on the Turnpike. This I had to deliver on a Friday evening. After a week or two, Dorothy hadn't killed the chicken on Friday, so after several journeys to see if she had done it, I finally took it on the Sunday morning. At that time, the Rectory was much bigger and the end near the road was the servants' quarters, kitchen etc. So there I was, pulling on the big brass knob and after quite a long while the old girl answered the door, everyone else being at church. Well, when she saw me with the chicken, she raised merry H. about deliveries on Sunday, and I should be at church. I said I go to Chapel Sunday School at 10.30, so I took the chicken back to Dorothy and never did take any more. I know they had one son who held a fairly high rank in the Navy. He is buried in the churchyard [...?] the old boy. Both his son and wife [....?] so I always think of him as a hard-hearted man. He was also supposed to be a big cider drinker, having four or five barrels made every year and never adding any sugar to it, which probably accounts for his hard heart. When they demolished part of the Rectory *[after Canon Fardell's death in 1955],* I got an old bottle of it. I carried it in the lorry and when I did eventually open it, it smelt like vinegar and stunk the cab out for days. How old it was, I do not know, or if that is how he drank it. Still, he lived to be a ripe old age.

Next, in the Homestead lived a retired clergy Mr Cooper and his wife. I do not remember him much, only seeing her pushing him in a wheelchair as he was a good bit older than her. She lived there until the 50's on her own, after he died. *[She]* used to ride an upright bike rather recklessly, and can only assume she drove her Austin Ruby the same way. She once stopped at a policeman on point duty at Oxford Place and asked him how he got his armlets so white; she was annoyed when he told her to move along quickly. She also parked at the Bell Hotel car park and walked to the West Norwich Hospital to visit Mrs Marsham, so she was a bit scatter-brained, I think.

Opposite in what is now the Binstead lived Mrs Newman a widow who was Head Mistress at the school for several years. She must have retired while I was in the forces but can't remember if she finished her days in the village or not.

The Butcher's shop on the bend was owned and run by Tom Brighton and Lily Agnes his wife. They had two daughters and a son, Dick, who until the war years assisted his parents but did not hit it off with father. As they both liked alcohol, always seemed to be arguing. As kids, we used to be a bit wary of going past, especially if they were killing pigs, as we wondered whether the pigs were squealing because they were being

slaughtered or because of the arguing. That was how it carried on for years, so it was just a way of life, I suppose. I got on with Lily who always wore a choker and pince-nez glasses, but Tom always wanted more rates than he should when I went to pay my rent in my early married days. I didn't think much of it when I told him I would have rather he asked for more rent.

Opposite lived George Norgate, a local carpenter who moved into Pear Tree farm with Percy Coleman, his son-in-law. This place also had some land which is where bungalows are and I think Mr J Batch followed Mr Norgate and tried to make it into a market garden. Then war came and he got called into the forces.

Hethel Road

On the corner was the blacksmith shop that a Jim Bilham from Ashwellthorpe ran two or three days a week, as he also had a place at Ashwellthorpe. They did a lot of horse shoeing and as he was a drinking pal of my father's, we boys used to take a handcart there during school holidays to cart the horse muck home for the garden. If we were lucky, he would buy us a glass of pop at the Bird in Hand which was a real treat for us in those days.

Mr Sam Harvey and his wife lived there in those days, although, before, I think Mr & Mrs Jack Ferguson lived there.

Elm Tree Farm was the home of George Minns his wife, sons Harry & Reggie and daughter Bessie who are still in the village except for George. In those days, Bessie used to deliver milk around the village on a bicycle as was the custom of lots of farmers. They used their own bottles which had a larger top than present-day ones and used to be sealed with a waxed cardboard top - all done by hand, so they had quite a bit to do including washing out the bottles etc. George was also a special constable, like my father, but neither would wear a uniform during wartime days when they had to do night patrols, but did wear armbands. If the Bird in Hand had some beer, off would come the armband and patrol would be temporarily abandoned while they downed a pint or perhaps two.

Next comes John Aves in the Woodland. He was a big stout man and used to tour the local farms with a model T Ford lorry, dipping sheep. He also used to keep sheep and fold them out on the fields to eat the sugar beet tops. He would pull a row of iron hurdles from field to field with a horse, and if they were a bit free on the wheels and it was a slightly downhill, they would wobble and snake about all over the road, making a heck of a rattle and clatter.

The next cottage was occupied by Mr J Wiseman. He was the local postman delivering letters twice daily on a bicycle. He was also churchwarden and would dig graves etc as well as doing a few odd gardening jobs. A veteran of the First World War, gas poisoning had affected his health although he lived to quite a good age.

[Details on the remainder of Hethel Road, Penny's Green, the far end of Church Road and Hill House Farm on the main road were never added]