

# THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE



BY CHRIS BAVERSTOCK

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Even in the "fifties" many people seldom went out of the village, few people had cars and we had our own shops. Jos Tiller kept the Post Office, Dicky Rogers had a grocer's shop, Dan Palmer was a baker and Marky Tiller was the shoe mender. Apart from a trip to Fordingbridge, or occasionally to Salisbury most people stayed put.

The only time that we went further was on a Sunday school outing in Herrington's Charabanc and then we sometimes travelled as far as Weymouth or Swanage.

There was little to disturb the tranquil routine of village life so the Flower Show was something to look forward to. There was usually a Fair with swingboats, a coconut shy and roundabout - Connely's Golden Galloping Horses. When the show was held in a field at North End there was even grass track racing! There were also races and other sporting events for children and adults.

Records in the Salisbury Journal Office would show that C. Baverstock and C. Baverstock (cousin Clifford and I) won the three-legged race. There were pillow fights where two men sat on a pole and tried to knock each other off. Budgie Jerrard was very good at this and Cyril Hooper took some shifting - bloodied but unbowed!

Sometimes there was a tug-of-war - the ICI Estate versus the village. The ICI Team had some big fellows Jock Somerville and Bob Saunders were two.

I don't suppose that Damerham more than any other village welcomed newcomers. George Bowers was the new village policeman. I first met him when I was up a tree in the copse by the crossroads - he told me to get down. I couldn't understand this since I had been climbing ever since I could walk and had conquered most of Damerham's best. I suppose he thought it was dangerous and he clearly didn't understand the nature of country "play" - he must have come from a town.

Also at this time there was a men's race which was twice round the cricket field, a distance of about six hundred yards. There was a rumour that George Bowers; a tall athletic man was a serious runner and out to win this race. The rumour caused a certain amount of hostility among the locals and a plan was devised - probably in the Compasses - to beat him and bring him down a peg. The plan was that somebody should run the first lap very fast, tire George out and leave the way clear for a back runner to come through and win. Arthur Percy and Bill Mulligan were chosen to put this plan into action. Arthur Percy (otherwise known as "Little Peck") was a rotund red faced man with short grey hair. He worked for the Post Office and no doubt in his day he had been quick, but now he was in his forties. Bill Mulligan was a gamekeeper on the West Park Estate. He had brown curly hair and always wore brown plus fours even while playing tennis!

The day of the Flower Show came and there as much excitement and speculation about the race. George turned up in full running kit - singlet, shorts and spikes! - something unheard of in Damerham. Arthur had managed to find a pair of shorts and plimsolls while Bill was still wearing his plus fours and boots.

When the race started there was a crowd of spectators and some vocal interference. Arthur set off at full speed with George tracking him. There were others in the race and Bill soon took his place at the back of the field settling into a steady pace. At the end of the first lap, Arthur had shot his bolt and retired. George overtook him and kept going at the same speed. Bill was a long way behind. The moment when George was supposed to tire never arrived and when he finished the race, a clear winner, Bill was still plodding around the top of the field with half a lap to go. Perhaps the applause was slighted muted - I can't remember.