

DAMERHAM IN 1959



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When we were house hunting in 1959 we had specific requirements. We wanted to live in a village - not too far from Salisbury. We needed a house large enough for Ted and me, our two children Andrew and Alison aged three and a half and two, a soon to hatch Sara and also an ageing mother-in-law. Also that house had to be one that no-one else wanted and so be cheap enough for our budget. We were so lucky that we found all these in Damerham.

On our very first visit I just knew that I could live there. Herbie in the shop next door directed us to the owner, on the way I met and had a chat with Mrs Daisy Nicklen and Mrs Nelson Bush. I was hooked.

The house had been empty for 2 or 3 years, it had a cold tap, basic electric lighting and one socket outlet. The very un-mod con was at the back behind the laurel bushes. We moved in and did it ourselves in situ.

We found Damerham people to be welcoming and kindly, two little tots and a bulge provided a good passport no doubt. I spent the first 10 years of my life amongst village people, mostly related to me, so I felt really at home there.

Mr & Mrs Ron Ridout ran the shop next door, Mr & Mrs Josh Tiller the Post Office in the High Street, Mr & Ms Roberts in the Garage, David Herrington was their apprentice, Bill Stamp delivered the papers and the bread and Mr & Mrs Cliff Butler delivered the milk. The Vicar was the Reverend George Moule, a bachelor and very keen botanist. He had taught in a number of public boys schools. His late father had been vicar form many years, his mother lived in a bungalow in West Park Lane.

The older Moules had been missionaries in China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion Mrs Moule was very old and was lovingly cared for by Mrs Marjorie Budd, a good friend to me.

The village school was taught by Mrs Wilding and Miss Nellie Tiller, one of Damerham's Tiller Girls - a kind and popular teacher. Her sister taught Martin schoolchildren.

The village hall was the largest one in the area. It was given by Lady Eyre Coote and looked like an old Nissen Hut. The roof leaked and there was absolutely nothing "mod" about the "cons" whatever - they were best avoided.

However this was where village events took place. A barber, Dennis Chalke, came over from Broad Chalke, fortnightly I think, and had his salon in a draughty cubby hole at one end. I met more people while waiting with Andrew for his turn and caught up on the latest gossip.

The children's Christmas Party committee invited me to join them and I was able to see the village in action. The "committee" was really an assembly of all those who were likely to be able to help, with the jumble sale and with the party which ensued. Mr Billy Manston was there, a wise and tactful

presence, he may have been the Chairman. The committee itself merely fixed the date and everything else happened as before. They all knew their jobs and did them with a will. Mrs Ivy Manston, Mrs Marsh, Mrs Daisy Nicklen, Mrs Ernie Pearce, Mrs Budd and Better Waterman always did the catering arrangements. They were a very experienced team and they had a lovely old gossip as they worked. There was plenty of laughter escaping from the kitchen area.

We lived opposite the village hall. The most regular booking was for the Youth for Christ's gospel rally each month. There didn't seem to be many youths in attendance but it filled the hall with people and song.

These are some of my memories of Damerham in 1959. We lived there for 25 years and became absorbed into village life. Ted is now in the churchyard among friends.