

DAMERHAM VILLAGE BEFORE WORLD WAR ONE



WRITTEN IN 1968 BY FLORENCE
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'TODGE' (GEORGE) AND PIETY
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Damerham village, in the county of Hampshire, approximately four miles from the country town of Fordingbridge and eleven miles from the city of Salisbury in the county of Wiltshire, comprised, with Rockbourne and surrounding areas, The West Park Estate owned by the Coote family.

The mansion in the park, now demolished, formed a great part of Damerham's history. In 1830 the house was attacked by "The Rioters" several of whom were taken prisoners and the leaders sent to Winchester.

A monument still stands in the grounds of West Park and can be seen for some miles around. It was erected to the memory of one Sir Eyre Coote for bravery in the defeat, in 1781, of Hyder Ali at Porto Novo. In the days of house and garden parties the monument was open to the public, today it is unsafe. It was a bit weird climbing round and round the stone steps with candles to light the way and to hear the echoing voices of those higher up, and a great relief to get out on the parapet into fresh air and daylight.

Three entrances gave access to the 'residence' with a lodge at each of them, of course there were numerous ways of getting into the grounds through woods and fields. As the village constable occupied the Damerham East End lodge, we thought ourselves to be well guarded from intruders.

Many village people worked on the estate, my father was employed there for thirty years and his brother was a gardener for forty years. Wages were low but so were rents for the houses on the Coote estate and workers were always sure of a place to live, usually with a large garden to enable them to grow plenty of vegetables.

My family changed houses several times as the family grew, eventually settling down at 'Northovers' in the High street and where both parents ended their days.

For a time the family was housed at Back Lane Farmhouse, (where I was born in 1899) till more suitable accommodation came along, then we moved to Mill End for a while. The couple who then occupied 'Northovers' moved into a smaller semi-detached house half way down the High Street and we again moved to settle down for good.

'Northovers' had plenty of room for our large family though of course some of the older ones were away. Most village girls went into domestic service and lived with the people employing them, thus relieving the burden on parents. Most boys worked on local farms after leaving school so did not have to leave their homes, which was a help to parents as they contributed to the family budget. Many boys and girls left school at thirteen years of age by passing a labour examination.

I was already working in a farmhouse between school hours and at weekends so I did not think I needed to put my name on the list of candidates for this particular examination, anyway I did not wish to leave school till I had to at the age of fourteen, I liked school and our teachers. My mother was a little put out and went to see Mr. Douglas, the school master, to find out why my name hadn't been on the list. Next morning the master called me to his desk but he already knew the answer to his question. "You did not want to leave school, did you?", he said with a wry smile.

He was a good master, he knew his pupils and their home lives and took great interest in them individually. His widowed elderly sister, Mrs. Slater, taught the infants in the "little room" as everyone called it, while a female younger teacher, Miss. Jones (later to become Mrs. Douglas), taught the lower standards in part of the "big room", partitioned by a huge green curtain, from the upper classes.

I began my schooling at the age of three so that by the time I was ready to pass into the "big room" I could read and write fairly well, I was good at sewing and during my two years in the Infants I won a lovely doll dressed in lace and pink satin and a beautiful sewing workbox full of everything I needed, it had coloured Pansies on the lid and I was very proud of it.

We were living in Mill End when I started school and as I, hand-in-hand with two elder sisters, went over the wooden bridge my hat blew into the mill-race. Luckily Mother and a neighbour were watching us off to school so they soon fished it out with clothes props. The mill was a fascinating place to us children, the big wheel's watery bed was black and eerie

where slimy water-weed writhed and elongated like creatures trying to evade the clutches of the enemy. The water churned into a frothy mass as the wheel turned regardless, oblivious to the "agony" it caused to anything in it's way and spitting at anyone going too near. It would have liked to have got my boater (hat) in it's "teeth".

We liked to see the horse-drawn wagons bringing in the corn for grinding. The wagon would be drawn along below the tallet door, which was high up the side of the wall of the mill, a long chain with a hook on the end would drop down, grab a sack of grain from the wagon and haul it up into the gaping "mouth" where it disappeared from view, then the chain would come rattling back for more, to our childish imaginations like a monster swallowing it's prey.

Water-cress beds running along the back of the mill and reaching down to the 'Common' - where the proprietor resided- was another interesting place. A narrow wooden plank spanned the beds enabling pedestrians to reach common by a short cut, vehicles having to take the South End road. As children we used the plank as a running board to see who could get from one side to the other in the shortest time, never fearing that we might slip off the plank and get a ducking and a whacking if we arrived home wet through. The rod wasn't spared in those days, a good thing too.

Two or three cottages beyond the mill housed the workers who were employed in the cress-beds and on the farm on the hill, known as Hill Farm. Here the road ends but three "rights of way" lead to the church, Hawkhill Farm and to Court Wood road. Great changes have been

made in the Mill End area in recent years as well as other parts of the village.

The Church of England school has been improved through the years. Things were very primitive before the first world war, bucket lavatories and coal fires, slates with slate pencils for writing but we seemed to cope and learned very well. We had good teachers, very strict but understanding and most children respected them. Any misdemeanours out of school had to be accounted for by the culprits. Our school and places of worship seemed to fill the needs of children in those days,

One often wonders in these days of chaos if the definition of that era should be, "good bad old days" or "bad good old days". Poverty was rife but despite that people were happier, life was simple with no "sham", food was good and pure and not filled with preservatives and packed in ice-boxes.

Damerham was a well kept village, three "state men" as they were referred to, kept the churchyard, verges and hedges trimmed, controlled irrigation of the water meadows, freed the river and ditches of weeds so keeping all things in ship-shape order.

My father often told of the day he was working alone in one of the meadows when he heard a strange noise, turning, he saw an adder swallow her young for their safety.

Pride was taken in the most menial task in those days. Sir Eyre Coote had only to walk through the village and see a gate open and he would close it.

My father did the thatching of houses and barns and in his spare time thatched the farmers' ricks to earn a few shillings extra.

The agent to the estate, Mr. Berney, his pupil, Mr. Hunt, the estate carpenter, Mr. Marsh and the agent's gardener all resided around 'The Cross' area for easy contact in carrying out orders. These were issued every morning from the estate office which was situated in the sawmill yard adjoining the agent's residence. Sir Eyre Coote and his Lady had no children, neither did the agent and his wife, consequently they gave a lot of thought and time to village children. At Christmas a tree was set up and gifts presented to the village children. In the right season a strawberry and cream tea was given, we sat in rows on the agent's walled-in lawn and the ladies waited on us themselves.

The Squire and his affairs was the pivot around which everything turned and much was done to make our lives seem a bit more rosy. The village hall was given for recreation and through the years has proved a great asset to rural life. Joints of beef were given at Christmas to employees and I well remember my father walking the four miles to Fordingbridge to collect ours in a clean pillowcase carried over his shoulder in a rush basket.

I remember too going to the mansion to collect cans of soup for several elderly widows in our street, while waiting for cook to fill the cans I was given a glass of milk and a slice of cake.

On the whole people felt more secure in those days despite poverty which was rife but we lived on a more even keel. Not striving to reach the moon but just making the best of our resources.

Naturally poverty was frustrating in many directions, much talent was lost to the community and to the betterment of the individual, one boy in our school wanted to be a doctor but farm work had to be his lot. My own ambition was to go into the nursing profession as a midwife but the only midwifery I did was looking after my married sisters as their babies came along. Between these insights into human nature it had to be domestic service, which I very much resented. My father would not hear of me being a nurse, a calling frowned upon in those days.

At one time during my school days the army literally took over Damerham, rows of tents mushroomed overnight in every available field, horses and the smell of them seemed everywhere, water pipes snaked in all directions.

My family by this time had settled in at "Northovers" after a few repairs had been carried out to suit our requirements. We appreciated the large garden with so many kinds of fruit trees, six different sorts of delicious apples, pears, plums and rows of gooseberries. The apples were ripening when the soldiers were around and it wasn't long before they spotted them and wanted to buy some. With mother's permission we filled each hat at a penny a time. We missed the lads when they pulled out of the village and spent a lot of time going around the fields they had vacated searching for "treasures" left behind, all we did find was a few rusty horseshoes. Material goods were not so plentiful then so there was little waste.

The farmers were glad to get their fields back again and soon things seemed back to normal,

yet, as in every new experience, something indefinable was left behind possibly in things unforeseen by many but known to a few that the world was edging towards catastrophe.

Damerham village had quite a number of one man businesses, every area had some sort of activity to liven it up for those living there. High Street had "North End House" with it's staff of servants, it's carriage and pair, four little black pug dogs barking furiously at everyone passing. Surrounded by high white railings wired at the bottom they couldn't get out but they were a little frightening, as they tried to climb it.

Beyond "North End House" - which backed on to farm buildings - there were two more farms, "Channel Hill Farm" and "Back Lane Farm", also a small-holding, farm cottages made up the rest of the north End area.

Just below "North End House" was another fairly large house where people came as paying guests to enjoy the countryside for a week or two or to make a temporary home.

On the opposite side of the road was the biggest Elm tree that has ever grown in Damerham, it's roots formed steps to the top of the high bank and High Street children made of it one of their places to play.

Next to our house the 'carpenter-undertaker' sawed and hammered, mingling with the ring of hammer on anvil of the blacksmith living opposite and the tap tap tap of the cobbler a few doors away. Next to the cobbler the primitive Methodist chapel gave us quite different sounds on Sundays and often on a weekday evening there would be voices lifted

in praise followed by a prayer meeting - often called a "Crawley meeting".

Two new cottages were built about 1911 opposite the chapel, the village postman occupied one and the carpenters' married son occupied the other. Next to these cottages was a very old thatched house. The home of Miss Goodenough, an elderly unmarried lady who bought and sold second-hand clothing, a boon to many poor families in the village. Much of the clothing was given to her by ladies she had served in her younger days, the garments were of good material so could often be passed down. The old cottage was full of beautiful old furniture and I often wonder what became of it when she died in 1924.

She was a pillar of the Baptist chapel and was pushed in a wicker bath chair to the services on Sundays. For a time, during my school holidays, I helped her in the house at weekends, as she always had lodgers, and of course it fell to my lot to "Get her to the church on time", whilst I was her help at half-crown weekly. How I hated that old bath chair, it was so clumsy and heavy especially up the chapel path - which was on the incline - where it always seemed reluctant to go, had it not been steered by means of a long handle from a small wheel in the front by the occupant herself we would have landed in the hedge many times.

Almost on the elbow of the High Street and opposite the old thatched cottage was the children's paradise. A small window of the house - where an elderly couple and their unmarried daughter lived - had a row of large gleaming jars full of brightly coloured sweets. Small noses were for evermore pressed to that window surveying the goodies arrayed along

the bottom shelf and on the shelf fixed across the window, half way up. Outside was a notice saying "Licensed to sell tobacco". It was surprising how many different things were stocked in that convenient little shop, soap, soda, shoe laces, pegs, pencils, combs, cottons, vinegar, paraffin, needles and hairpins and the smell was wonderful, everything was kept scrupulously clean.

Mr. Ambrose, the old gentleman known as 'Cutty' often served when his daughter was cooking or doing the weekly wash and as he deftly twisted a square of paper into a cone to hold a halfpenny-worth of sweets he told many a tale of his boyhood days. We knew poverty but were never so poor as to have to eat tallow candle and barley bannock to keep alive as he had to many times. He was a good Christian but without preaching at us children he sowed many a good seed into small minds by telling us little stories with morals to them, making us think. I loved to hear his experiences of life, to me, he was a pillar of wisdom and understanding.

He was a rank Liberal and at election times his house was sprayed with blue liquid, known Tories were sprayed red by some of the "lads" during the hours of darkness, not through feelings of opposition but for the fun of it, the village was very colourful till the elements erased it. The most bandied words were 'Free Enterprise' and 'Tariff reform'.

Right on the bend of the High Street, Mr. Brown, one of our two carriers had quite a good little business, husband and wife, no children, but the wife worked as hard as any man, the husband being a bit disabled. He had some sort of hand trouble, as children we were

told it had happened because he took Robins' eggs when he was a boy, which of course was not true. The wife managed a two-horse van, driving to Salisbury twice weekly, Tuesdays and Saturdays. The horses were stabled on the opposite side of the street making a lot of "to-ing and fro-ing".

On the left of the right-hand bend - the road leading to the South End area we had our Post Office, a small room in the cottage beside the clap-wicket to the Green-close allotments and the school. Miss Freke, a nice lady, was the Post mistress. This was very convenient for West Park estate affairs, but as people became more educated larger premises had to be found.

The turning to the left of "Cross" leads to the East end of the village and to Fordingbridge. The first cottage over the Compasses bridge had a room built to the front of it and soon we had an "up-to-the-minute" Post Office.

Next to the Post Office Mr. Fred Marsh had his grocery and bakers business which must have been a great worry to him as he was owed so much money by the poor families he served. Most people paid as much as they could manage on Saturdays, when wages were usually paid out by employers of labour. Mr. Marsh handed over a packet of "Black-pops" - as they were called - to the payer, despite the arrears. This must have cost him quite a bit. The shop stayed open till ten o'clock Saturday evenings and customers were able to get a few stale cakes cheaply.

We had a burglar visiting our village one night who stole quite a lot of items from the shop, a sack of potatoes from other premises and cooked food from the larder of a widow whose

son was lying upstairs very ill. The burglar was never caught.

The Compasses Inn next to the shop was only allowed to open six days a week, no doubt it is a thing of the past, a condition laid down by the Coote family. People recognised the Sabbath more then than they do today, more's the pity.

Farther along the road we had a blacksmith-wheelwright, Mr. E. Percy, who also let out bicycles for hire at sixpence an hour, which was very handy at times. He was also the verger of St. George's church, a post he held for many years.

One of West Park's main entrances is in the East End area, in those days the Groom to Sir Eyre Coote lived in a cottage on the left nearest the gate. There were four small cottages in the row.

'The Barracks', known today as 'The Terrace' is opposite the Inn, most being bungalows they are more suited to elderly people. In 1863 the old Barracks was burnt to the ground supposedly by a child playing with matches. My father was between four and five years of age and could remember the black flakes and the pall of smoke over Rockbourne - where he was born and brought up. My mother's family lived in Damerham and at the time of the "Fire of Damerham" she was a toddler of about two. Her mother tied her to the leg of the kitchen table to prevent her going outside where flaming material was falling in all directions.

The Compasses bridge was a favourite playing place for village children, we liked to walk along the inside of the iron white railings, one little girl got her head stuck between two of the

rails which frightened her and us very much, luckily our schoolmaster came by on his way to the shop and he soon had her out.

Damerham is rather a scattered village made up of several "parcels" of land making it more interesting. The main road leading to the South End area, reached by turning left a short distance from the "Cross", is also the road to Cranborne - the turning on the right. A small farm, "Greenbank Farm", on the bend of South End road supplied many villagers with milk. Mr. Britton, the farmer carried a pail of milk with a dipper and ladled out as much as each customer needed or could afford, it was extremely unhygienic. "Skim" milk was sold at a penny per quart to poorer families by the farmer at Back Lane farm.

I helped the farmer's wife between school hours and at weekends during my last two years at school and for a short while after leaving when it was time to find a full time job, which of course meant domestic service, and leaving home.

During my farm working time I did - with the help of the two girls, daughters of the farmer, much younger than myself, quite a number of things, such as taking the cows after milking back to their pasture and watching while they grazed along the old roman road where there was plenty of herbage, collecting the eggs, sawing wood for fires, delivering "new" milk in cans to the wealthier households and helping to make butter twice weekly. I did the scalding of the separator morning and evening and scrubbed the dairy floor daily. There's always plenty of work on a farm, inside and out.

The Baptist chapel is in the South End road, a narrow path leading to it on the right, it is a

"chapel in a field" as it were, a very nice setting. Most children attended this place of worship in my childhood days, many happy, instructive hours were spent there. Band of Hope and Christian Endeavour meetings were held in evenings during the week.

In the summer a Band of Hope outing to Bournemouth was the high spot of our lives. "Bossy Coombes", the farmer at Court Farm - on the Fordingbridge road close by the church - loaned two wagons and men to convey the children and mothers to catch a scheduled train to Bournemouth from Fordingbridge station. We met at "Cross" on the appointed day, this was the starting point for most village events as it was the most central spot from every direction. Excitement rose when the wagons reached the Compasses bridge. Bags of straw were spread over the beds of the wagons to lessen the jolting along roads vastly different from those of today.

Hoping, and mostly getting a nice day for our outing, weather was the chief topic the evening before, we would go out and look at the Aspen trees, in the little plantation by the "Cross", to see if the leaves were turning over and over showing their undersides but they, like us, were usually good mannered.

After a day by the sea we piled back in the train tired and happy knowing that the wagons would be lined up in the station yard ready for the homeward journey. We sang loudly above the sound of the crunch of wheels on the hard road all the way home, we must have been heard for miles around. When we were about to pass Court Farm we were given the cue to sing "For he's a jolly good fellow" and again as we passed the Compasses Inn. The farmer and

the landlord, Mr. Curtis, both helped to make our day. As soon as he heard the "gay cavalcade" coming down the chalk-pit hill the landlord would be out on his front step to see us go by, tears trickling down his cheek, happy for us. He was a dear old gentleman, people seemed to care more in those days.

Most of the children managed to bring back a stick of bright pink 'Bournemouth Rock' to share among those who stayed at home, even though it was a matter of only a few pennies spending money, parents were too poor to allow children pocket money, by running errands or doing a little job of work for someone most children managed to earn a copper or two, which they saved up.

I often hear it said that children grow up more quickly today, in stature possibly, but poverty teaches many things and chief of these is to learn to stand on your own two feet. By the time I had reached the age of fifteen I was away from home earning my own living in domestic service. At sixteen I moved into a fully staffed house as between-maid to "better" myself as I thought. I was very homesick and would not have stayed had it not been for the kindly butler who took me under his wing and treated me like a grand-daughter, the cook I worked under was a tartar and he knew it. I seldom came into contact with Milady who had been lady-in-waiting to a royal lady in her younger days.

Queen Victoria was on the throne when I was born in 1899, having reigned almost sixty years, she was now a frail old lady and died January 22nd 1901 at Osborne House, Isle of Wight. Her son Edward was proclaimed King Edward VII on January 24th 1901. He reigned

for nine years earning himself the title of 'Edward the peacemaker'. Like every town and village, a fete was organised to celebrate his accession.

I can remember my mother taking me to the fete in a perambulator and at the entrance to the field a large shallow box stood on end and a man dressed as a soldier stood on "guard". While we were passing through the gateway the "guard" smartly turned and he had another "face" on the back of his head which frightened me so much I have never forgotten it. It was of course a gimmick to help make the show, naturally I was too young to understand that.

I can also remember the mummers running around the houses with blackened faces, this was not effective in hiding their identities.

It was anything for making your own fun in those days though sometimes some of the things done were a little unkind through thoughtlessness. We had a blind man, Mr. Young, in the village who got teased by children, one of the elder girls would go close to him - as he walked down the middle of the road - put on a voice to pretend she was the squire's lady and she had the poor man doffing his cap and calling her "my lady". Even today it makes me squirm to think of it, it was a cruel thing to do, she seemed to revel in hurting people.

Most people had to "do their own thing" and I'm sure were far happier finding ways to amuse each other, and themselves and their children learnt many crafts in this way, necessity being the mother of invention.

We as children had the "freedom of the village", we roamed any and everywhere

without let or hindrance. Flowers grew in profusion in the fields and along the grass verges. Meadows were gay with yellow Iris, Marsh Marigolds, Ragged Robin and 'wiggle waggle' grasses. The Allen river meandering through the centre of the village lends beauty to it's surroundings. We loved to play in the shallow parts where the red and yellow pebbles - smooth as velvet by the constant flow of water over them - provided little hiding places for the minnows which we used to catch by dangling glass jars on lengths of string in the deeper parts of the river. These were taken home so that we could watch the fish, giving no thought to them out of their own environment, now and then they would be returned to the river after a day or two's "ownership" but many of them perished. We would wander the meadows spoiling the beautiful pictures of nature by picking the flowers. Along the river's edge heavenly blue Forget-me-nots cast reflections in the water vying with the blue of the sky.

The bridge at the foot of the church was very narrow for many years, recently it has been widened to allow for the passage of cars through the railed-in path to and from the Fordingbridge road and the old St. George's church on the hill top. The church is rather remote from the more populated parts of the village but with a perfect setting, green meadows and the river at it's feet, tall trees it's background, a place of peace which can be felt even in the midst of mourning. For many years the beautiful beech tree by the gates has shed it's nuts and leaves over graves beneath.

Very few people who were actually brought up in Damerham had any other religion than

Church of England or chapel but one or two of the older school girls were very interested in the monks who had their monastery at Martin, out of curiosity more than for religious reasons I think, of course all the children wanted to know about the way the monks conducted their services. The monastery and grounds were more or less at the back of the village, covering quite a large area, with orchards, farmland, church and burial grounds.

The monks employed quite a number of people so must have been missed by a good few people when they left martin during the First World War, exhuming their dead and taking them back to France, where they came from originally. It seemed horrible at the time to know that they were exhuming their dead brothers and taking them through Damerham during the night, a lot of sleep was lost over it. One ghost was apparently left behind to creep around Martin late at night, seen by a number of people - a number of years later, including my husband and myself. After the monks left, the monastery became a farmhouse.

Every little thing happening in those days was of great interest to villagers, time seemed to move very slowly but a change was on the way as the world drew nearer to the First World War 1914-1918, since when, things have moved more rapidly.

My eldest brother was a regular soldier, he joined the Second Wilts Regiment with two other village lads in 1907 for seven years. He was due to come out of the Army sometime in 1914 but owing to the outbreak of war and being a trained soldier was one of the first to be sent overseas. A lot of his service was in Ireland then Gibraltar where he still was at the

time war was declared. His battalion was sent back to England, stationed at Lyndhurst for two weeks under canvas. He and his mate, Darkie, came home for the last night of the fortnight spent in the New Forest. As many as possible of the family gathered to say "good-bye", we tried to smile but our hearts were heavy, sprigs of white heather for luck didn't dispel the premonition he seemed to have for as they walked away my brother said, "Good-bye, I shall never see you again". That was the last time we saw him.

I was about eight years old when my brother enlisted, being a bit ambitious he wanted something different to farm work. He worked in the bakery at South End before joining the Army, attending night school when he could manage it, thinking a little more tuition would help him later on. Sometimes he had to work late in the evenings but my parents never worried till one night there was no sign of him at a very late hour. My mother - who was expecting a baby - was getting in a state so my father set out to look for him. The bakery was quite some distance from home along a very quiet road, having to walk it took some time. Arriving at the bakery all was in darkness so my father knocked up the baker, Mr. Tiller (later Mr. Palmer), to be told that my brother had gone home hours before. They searched the premises but could not find him. My father returned home to see if he had reached home in the meantime but still no sign of him. A neighbour joined him in the search each taking a different way. Some hours later my brother was found asleep in a manger in the bakery stable with a horse close by.

He had started out on his homeward journey when he heard cursing and swearing coming from the old dried-up pond which he had to pass, along the South End road. Not wanting to get involved he went back to the stable, the only place left unlocked, to wait till it had quietened down, being tired he sat on the manger and fell asleep. A band of gypsies had pulled in for the night under cover of darkness, the old pond was an ideal place to camp. My mother lost her baby, otherwise I would have had a younger sister. I would have liked that.

Beyond the bakery the congregational chapel, wedged between two cottages, often shared services with Methodist and Baptists, we enjoyed going between the chapels, there was so little to interest children in those days beyond religion and schooling yet I'm sure we were happier than many who have so much today.

Two or three small farms and several old cottages made up the rest of the South End area.

Along the South End road, "Steels Lane" runs down to the school and 'The Vicarage' along the Mill End Road. In my childhood it seemed a very eerie place, surrounded by trees, even to go past it we felt we had to talk in whispers in case we were confronted by the supernatural. Rev. Owen, the vicar, was an elderly man and I was never sure if the lady who lived with him was his sister or his daughter, she usually wore a large black hat and veil. Most women wore black bonnets with beaded trimmings and black ribbons tied under their chins, voluminous petticoats and dresses making them look very feminine and smelling of lavender and rosemary.

Opposite the school a railed-in path leads to the church and to the Fordingbridge road and through the clap-wicket 'The Green-close' cuts through the allotments to the clap-wicket by "Cross". We used the Green-close as a place for games especially in the evenings when the older children were at night school.

About 1911 there was a lot of talk about Halley's comet which scared us a little but it didn't deter us from going out after dark. One evening as we played around the clap-wicket while night school was in progress we spotted the comet high over the church. We were very excited and decided that it didn't look all that menacing so were allowed to watch the progress of this phenomenon till it could no longer be seen by us.

Some of the older boys had a small garden each in the Green-close which they tended under the master's supervision two or three afternoons a week, whilst the girls bought garments from home which needed patching or darning, their occupations not only taught them for later life but were a help to parents. Our master was interested in bee-keeping and when he had a swarm we had to watch him take it. Looking back I can see how good our school teachers were. We were taught so many subjects, and what we didn't learn at day school we learnt at Sunday school.

Religious matters were drummed into our lives giving us a good foundation on which to build our futures. Despite all modern techniques I think we had a fairly good upbringing having had the fundamentals drummed into us.

I feel privileged to have been born in that era, to have known Damerham as it was then. It has changed so much over the last twenty years but

for it's layout it could hardly be recognised. At least two cottages should have been preserved so that future generations could see at first hand how people lived, little pieces of history gone for ever. Chain Cottage, where the cobbler lived, and Miss Goodenough's old cottage were two such places, the like of which will never be seen or imagined again.

Buildings today have no character, all looking alike, easy to keep clean box-like places, erected in no time and soon occupied.

Damerham is more interesting than many villages with so many "parcels" of land, roads or lanes running round them and coming out on to the main road but at different points.

Women worked very hard in their homes to keep them clean. Everything scrubbable was scrubbed, floors reddened-up with "riddle" and grates kept bright with "blacklead", washing "the weekly" - always done Mondays - was a ritual, the big built -in copper had to be filled and kept baited with "bavins" of firewood, a girl was generally kept home from school to do this job, Sunlight soap and soda were the main washing agents. Cooking was done by the crudest of methods over smoky fires which made the outsides of the pots, pans and kettles cake up with soot, very different from those of today which are black inside and so easy to keep clean on electric and gas stoves.

At Northovers, High Street, we had the usual type of open fire grate, oven to one side and hobs on either side. A long toothed-hook hung from a built-in iron rod a little way up the chimney on which the large oval cooking pot was suspended over the fire and which was adjustable to the height required for slow or fast cooking, everything for a meal went into

that pot. A large chunk of home cured bacon went in first as that needed longer cooking than the rest of the fare, then a roly-poly or apple pudding securely tied in a cloth, lastly any and every kind of vegetable in season would be added, potatoes were always placed in a net as they were apt to "mash" themselves. I hated washing those cloths and net. At dinner time the meal was dished out on to a huge flat platter, covered in bubbles, and despite the sooty black exterior of the pot the food which came from it's depth was fit for the Gods.

My parents had a pig for home consumption killed and cured every year, the hams were hung on big hooks, the sides salted and the offal all used to the best advantage. I can remember helping my mother clean the chitterlings, it seemed to take such a long time pouring water through them, but she was very deft at turning them inside out and plaiting them when cleaned to her satisfaction.

People made the best of everything which came their way especially the fruits of the earth, Autumn was a very interesting time with so many different crops to be gathered in, children were only too happy to help with the garnering of fruit, nuts, potatoes and heads of corn, "leasing" as it was called, most villagers kept fowls and the corn would feed them for quite a time.

The one drawback to days in the harvest fields was getting covered in little red harvest-bugs which brought you up in itchy patches and had to be treated with soap or vinegar. Remedies for ailments were few in those days, adults mostly took 'Doan's backache kidney pills' and children were dosed with 'Mother Siegel's syrup', vile tasting stuff. For cuts and grazes

we used Fuller's earth. For burns, leaves of a certain weed were used, I remember having some on my foot for quite a long while, I'm not sure if the weed or time put it right, anyway it got better.

The village school closed for six weeks during the summer and at Easter we "broke-up" the Thursday before Good Friday and had the following week as a holiday. Looking forward to the "breaks" was exciting but most children were quite happy to get back to the class-rooms.

A few little episodes during my schooldays stand out very clearly in my mind, being very sensitive by nature I hated doing things which called for a reprimand. I remember North End House being unoccupied at one period and large juicy pears covering one of it's walls, childlike we thought it wouldn't matter if a few of them were taken so about ten of us, girls and boys, picked some of them, someone informed our schoolmaster who had us lined-up the next day. Coming close to me and looking sadly into my face he said, "I am more than surprised at you." This hurt me more than a caning would have.

Another misdemeanour on my part was when an older girl urged me to knock on a lady's door and ask for a bunch of Lilac - which was growing in her garden - and say my mother sent me. Of course the lady didn't believe me, knowing my mother, so she called on her to find out the truth of the matter. When I passed the house on my way to school I always walked on the other side of the road after that.

The one time something I did wrong turned out alright was when we were giving a strawberry and cream tea on the estate agent's lawn.

Mother had put clean folded handkerchiefs in the pockets of our "pinnies" and when I saw the lovely strawberries I did so wish that mother could have some. Taking out my clean handkerchief I wrapped up four of the largest, innocently thinking no one had seen me. When the strawberries had all gone the way they were meant to Lady Coote and the agent's wife came round to have a word with each child before leaving. When they told me they had seen what I had done you could have lit a match on my face. However they understood and promised that my mother should have some. Next day a beautiful basket of strawberries was taken to mother (by the ladies themselves) and told her they thought it was so sweet of me to think of her, how could she grumble at me for that?

Parents on the whole were kind but strict, we were well and truly disciplined both at home and at school, taught to respect our elders and other people's property.

Of course we had a rebel or two in our midst. Most children took pride in their appearance, having "best" clothes and boots for Sundays and high days, and heavy boots for everyday wear, either hob-nails or three pronged protectors and always a clean pinafore with stiffly starched frills over the shoulders, sometimes it was an evenings work to wash, dry and iron the "pinnies" ready for school next day, especially where there were two or three girls in a family. Black stockings were mostly worn and I remember well how I used to "re-feet" mine as long as the stocking legs were good, I was quite adept at this. We were never bored for want of something to do.

Roads were vastly different from those of today, lengths of highway would be covered

with flints and chalk, water poured over and steam-rollered, it was a messy affair. The driver of the roller usually had a shepherd's hut to live in which was parked on a wide verge, sometimes he would bring his wife, making a sort of holiday for her.

There were no traffic problems, the first car I remember was Dr. Johnston's high black car with a hood which could be put up or down like a perambulator hood. His wife often accompanied him on his rounds wearing a large flat motoring hat and veil. His surgery was at Fordingbridge, four miles to walk each way from Damerham for any medicines needed unless one was lucky enough to catch someone who owned a bicycle going that way. Sometimes the man living opposite Northovers would collect items from the surgery (which gave him a few extra coppers) on the days he visited Fordingbridge as a carrier - Tuesdays and Fridays. He was one of the characters of Damerham with his horse and cart, a bowler hat perched on his head and a grin on his rugged face, he had a word for any and everybody.

Mr. Parvin, another carrier, lived at South End plying between Damerham and Salisbury Thursdays and Saturdays. He carried passengers as well as goods, who had to be prepared to play the waiting game as he called on his customers in the different villages he passed through, patience was frayed a little at times. Most people would tie a white rag to a stick and put it by the gate if they wanted him to call so saving their time and his.

It is surprising how people coped with living conditions. A fish-man pushed a barrel of fish through Damerham once a week, kippers were

really kippers then and I used to have one waiting for me on the hob for my supper at the elderly widow's house where I slept as company for her for a time, she was a sweet old lady and that was a way to repay me she thought. Though I didn't need payment I did enjoy those kipper suppers once a week.

Those were hard but happy days. The morning of my life I like to remember in the evening of my days.

Damerham in July

Hear the church bells ring in the belfry on the hill

See the river glisten as it flows down to the mill

Listen to the children's voices from the school nearby

Hearken to happy bird song in the tree so high

Wild life all around in meadow and field

Bring hope of rich bounty from the earthly yield

Ripening corn, fruits of the earth, as seasons come and go

Help swell the competition in Damerham's Annual Show.

Time brings many changes, not "Back Lane" anymore

It's "West Park Lane", its dwellings now bear numbers on the door.

All mod cons and telephones are much in evidence

Though many dislike change, it's really common-sense.

Damerham is still Damerham, there's beauty all around

And old familiar places happily can be found.

Here's hope that many writers to the village will bring fame

Damerham is a beauty spot despite its strange old name.

F.M.S.

Winds of change

Winds of change are blowing over all the Universe

War or strife in every land, pollution getting worse.

Those seeking Peace, elusive Peace or strive to right the wrong

May one day say a sad, "Amen, Time sings it's own swan-song".

Time seems to pass more swiftly and time is running out

Mother earth is getting weary, warnings we dare not flout

Get more lucid day by day to the more discerning

And for Peace, elusive Peace many hearts are yearning.

Man must find his God again, He has been spurned too long,

And man, God's earthly agent, must now put right the wrong.

This God-given World is beautiful but man is not content

He reached in space for higher things, was for the moon hell-bent.

Now on to Mars and Jupiter his probing mind proceeds,

Surely there's enough on Earth to satisfy his needs.

Maybe he's establishing a place to go someday

Before the "button's" pressed and this old World has passed away.

F.M.S. 1972