

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY EARLY LIFE IN DAMERHAM



GERALD JERRARD.

I was born in January, 1929, at "Cressview", The Common (now Common Farm House). The family then moved, in the early 30's to Mill House, where my Great Uncle Aquilla Jerrard had lived, who was the last person to operate the water mill.

The road to Hill Farm in those days was just a track, which went through the River to the rear of Mill House. At the front was a footpath with a wooden bridge over the millrace. and an arched bridge over the River which led to the stables and farm buildings (now demolished) where our lorry was later kept.

Fred Butler, who farmed at Hill Farm used to bring all his dairy cows down to the river to drink every day. All the water for cooling the milk had to be pumped by hand.

The Mill was a two-storey building. On the ground floor was a 10 foot metal water wheel, which was connected to a wooden wheel, which can still be seen outside the Old Corn Mill today. The first floor was the milling area, and the top floor had storage bins for grain. (I used to keep my tame rabbits in these). The sacks of corn were winched to the top floor by hand - 2cwt. barley sacks, 2 1/2 cwt wheat, 1 1/2cwt oats - all in hessian sacks .

I remember well the war days, standing with my mother Emily outside the back door of the Mill listening to the war planes. She would say "That's one of ours." or "That's a German." At night we would watch the red glow to the South East as Southampton burned.

One time, a glider crashed at Brick Hill, and the Halifax bomber which had been towing it crashed at Stapleton Farm. The crew were all Canadian. I don't know if any of them survived.

On another occasion, a glider crashed at Hill Farm near Millbrook Cottage. The crew of two were taken to the Farm House and cared for by Mrs. Susan Butler until the military ambulance arrived. The wooden ladder from the glider is still in use today at Crossways Farm.

My father's business was haulage, market gardening, and slaughter-man. In those days many people kept a pig or two in their gardens, one for selling at market, and one for meat. My father would often slaughter pigs for villagers. The pig would be shot in the head with a humane killer captive bolt pistol (which we still have in our possession as a family heirloom). It was then laid out on tin, and surrounded by straw which was burnt until all the bristles were gone, and the skin was a golden colour. Then we would hang the pig up in a tree, usually the old apple tree, and the pig would then be bled. A large bath placed underneath caught all the chitterlings, which my mother would wash, by me holding a funnel in the end of the intestines as she poured water through them. She would then plait them and fry them for our dinner. A couple of days later the pig was cut into joints, put into

silt, salt, and brine. Every two or three weeks more salt was rubbed in to preserve the meat. (No freezers in those days).

During the 1930s. Col. Coote of West Park House regularly visited the bathing pool at Mill End to fish, which in those days was surrounded by tall poplar trees and laurel bushes. I used to hide in the bushes and throw small pebbles into the water and watch him cast his line towards the splash. The Cootes constructed the bathing pool in the 1800s but failed to realise that the river was partly fed by the spring in "Vicarage Meadow" below the Church, which is ice-cold even in Summer - much too cold for comfortable swimming!

To the West of the Mill were the cress beds, owned then by Tommy Bedford. Now moorhens did a lot of damage to the cress, and he would pay me a silver threepenny piece for every one I shot with my No. 3 shotgun, and took to his packing shed. He would throw the birds into the bushes, and when he wasn't around, I would retrieve them, keep them for a while, and then take them to him to be paid again.

I well remember, during the 2nd World War, my father Arthur Jerrard teaching me to drive his Bedford lorry Reg. No. DRU 214, 1937 model, at the age of only 12 years. One of our regular jobs was to collect the swill from the Army Camp based at the Old Village Hall. We also had to collect the 8 1/2 gallon toilet buckets and take them to the field in Brown's Lane called "Sourland" and empty the contents, and then take them to Mill End and wash them in the River. In return for this rather unpleasant task, we were given extra petrol coupons. The toilets were simply a

long, tin shed with lengths of 4" x 2" timbers to sit on - no comfy seats!

On one such trip -I was about 13 or 14 years old, and driving illegally - I was stopped by our local Copper who was riding his bike past the Vicarage. He got me out and gave me a good clout around the ear, and marched me home to my father at Mill House, and gave him a good telling off too. Yet, that very same night, I drove the toilet buckets back to the Village Hall and parked the lorry outside the Compasses. My father got me a bottle of lemonade (in those days the bottle had a glass ball in the neck). From the driving seat, I could see into the Public Bar. It was past closing time, and the Landlord Mont Hockey had locked the door, some of the drinkers staying inside. And in through the bar door came the copper, and was immediately bought a pint by my father! Later I asked my father why he had bought him a drink after he'd told us both off, and he explained that the copper has to be seen to be doing his job - someone may have been watching.

I had my first driving licence in 1945, at the age of 16 1/2 years, having added one year to my age. Lorries then were petrol driven. Our nearest pumps were Joe Miles at Harnham, Salisbury, "Croudies", Fordingbridge (site of Rose and Alexander today) or Nicklens Fordingbridge (still going strong). A sovereign would buy 10 gallons.

The lorry had one rear light, one mirror, no heater, one windscreen wiper which worked by suction - only operating when you decelerated. Batteries were 6 volt and engines were started with a handle, remembering always to pull the

handle up, never to push it down, or the engine may "kick" and possibly break your wrist.

Our lorry was used for livestock and general haulage. The tail loading ramps were in two halves, and it took a lot of effort to lift them, as in those days they were not spring assisted. Most farms were Dairy, Arable, Pigs, Hens, etc. The cattle mainly being shorthorn, (with very long horns!) To transport them on the lorry they had to be roped head to tail, so they could not harm each other. Potentially wild cows or bulls were "bull dogged" - a detachable ring put in their noses. Bulls were blindfolded and roped for transport. Farmers kept their bulls tied most of the time, unless required to visit an amorous cow!

During the War there were 16 mixed farms in the Damerham Parish, most, if not all, with dairies:-

Reg Zebedee, Lopshill Farm

George Gray, Hyde Farm

Bill Hockey, Stapleton Farm

Bert Beale, Bouldsbury Farm

Edgar Hibberd, Allenford Farm

Dr. Benson, Knoll Farm

George Rumbold, Back Lane Farm (now Channel Hill Farm)

Hubert Jerrard, Channel Hill Farm (now Old Channel Hill Farm House)

Jimmy Lush, North End Farm

Mont Hockey, The Compasses

George Bryant, Court Farm

Fred Butler, Hill Farm

Charles Lush, South End Farm

Arthur Lush, Manor Farm

Simeone Loader, Greenbank Farm

Sid Butler, Lower Lopshill Farm.

Cattle markets at Salisbury were:-

Woolley and Wallis, Castle Street

John Jeffrey and Son, Brown Street

Knapman Son and Bament, The Canal

and at Ringwood, Woolley and Wallis.

At the end of 1999 there were no dairy farms

left in the parish. The last one was John

Burrough's of Manor Farm, Cornpits Lane.

The Dairy was sold in 1998. The last person to

keep two "house" cows was myself. "Choco"

and "Liz" were sold in the latter part of 1998.

By the time the I.C.I. came to West Park in the

late 1940s., I was living at Crossways Farm.

The bungalows at West Park Drive were built

for the keepers to live in and to breed

pheasants in the gardens, and half of Park Field

(the field on the left of West Park Drive), for

shooting in the winter. Some of the keepers

liked to tell us village bumpkins what to do and

we were not allowed to shoot their pheasants

for food. But I would borrow my father's bird

scarers (bangers with long fuses). I would

light the fuse of one in the chalk pit on Court

Hill, go back home and wait for the bang. The

keepers would race on their bikes towards the

bang, and I would hurry up with my gun to

Greenbank corner plantation, shoot a pheasant

or two, race back home, and watch the keepers

pedalling again towards the sound of the latest

shots! They were quite a sight pedalling along

in their plus-fours!