

RON SUMMERHAYES



Norah and I were married on 22 September 1962 in St George's Church Damerham making our first home in the High Street and living at 2 Eleanor Cottage for a while where we had two daughters, Hazel and Fiona who were christened in the Methodist Chapel opposite the then Post Office.



Eventually we moved to West Park Lane and lived there for over 20 years. When the girls grew up, married and left home the three bedroom house was too big for the two of us but we had very happy times whilst there.

Damerham has not changed that much really in that time except for the council houses and housing homes some have been made into one from two and others bigger. Approximately 12 houses and bungalows have been built in that time.

Being a country person I enjoyed walking and joined the local rambling club. In 1980 I was

co-opted onto the parish council and became footpath warden looking after approximately 50 footpaths and bridleways which I did for over 12 years. I led many walks for different rambling clubs around the village and a good time was had by all. My work involved clearing, signposting and stile repairing. I had many happy hours doing this unpaid work seeing the wild life such as stoats, weasels, rabbits, hedgehogs curled up in leaves sleeping, kestrels, catching mice in the harvest fields, buzzards flying up above owls, kingfishers, herons plus the fish in the river, a new born deer, hares and many more.

While walking the paths you can see many plants and flowers that you do not see from the car. Take a walk along Higher Back Lane, footpath number 17 and see how many plants you can find. All paths lead to the church if you know how to connect them just like life really all hoping to go to the same place but on different paths. When brambles stop you going any further or nettles hold you up some people just push them aside and carry on others will go back just like the things in our lives.

If you like views there are many really breathtaking ones at times. At the top of Knoll Farm you can see the large blocks of flats in Bournemouth and Poole and may be on a fine day with field glasses you might see the Isle of Wight. At Tidpit Down, well need I say more about the views go for yourselves and see what you are missing!

One Dorset rambling club secretary wrote to a local newspaper 'why go abroad for your holidays for views when we have views just as good if not better and no worries about luggage being lost.'

I know I have enjoyed writing about and doing all the above all those years ago and only wish that I could do it now. If God took time to create beauty, how can we be too busy to appreciate it ?

The Village Store

*Sometimes, in reflective mood,
When the past comes back to me,
I recall our village shop,
In the days that used to be,
In that dim and fragrant cave,
You could buy just everything,
From cottage loaves to candlesticks,
From babies' bibs to balls of string.
When very young, I loved to go,
On messages for this and that,
Some dolly pegs, a card of pins,
Three bacon rashers, not too fat,
And what a welcome one received,
From Ester in a floral pinafore,
When the little tinkling bell,
Announced one's entry through the door.
No pre-packed food, no serve-yourself,
But Ester always gave advice,
On such a multitude of things,
While weighing sago up, or rice,
And wise old Ron knew all there was,
To know about broad beans and such,
For as a gardener, Ron had
An undisputed magic touch.
And oh, the lovely mingled scent
Of polish, oranges and spice,
Of cheeses, and apples, and yellow soap,
Cough candy bars, and sugar mice,
Sometimes, if I close my eyes,
That haunting scent returns to me,
And I am in our village shop,
Buying ha'penny buns for tea.*