

# ROY MURPHY



---

My grandfather Walter Curtis became licensee of the Compasses Hotel in 1898. My mother Dorothy Curtis went to Damerham School, later married and lived in Sussex. Walter Curtis died in 1927, his daughter Winifred married Mont Hockey and he became the licensee of the Compasses. I came from Sussex in 1930 at the age of nine, and went to live with them at the Compasses, they had one son John Hockey, who was the same age as me.

My Uncle Mont also had a small farm in the yard behind the pub, but is now sadly in a derelict state. There are trees growing inside the old barn. There was a horse trough in the car park, it was my job to pump the water into it every day. There were outbuildings in the car park, the horse stable is now a garage. In the old Carthouse, Macky Witt and Jimmy Jerrard had a cider press and made cider to sell in the pub. My Uncle Mont rented a field at Cornpits from Mr Arthur Lush who lived at Manor Farm. John Hockey and I had to take turns everyday to go down to Cornpits and bring the cows back for milking. When we got to the bridge by the crossroads we had to drive them through the water to drink.

I can remember all the men who used to go to the pub for a pint, Marc Tiller, the Cobbler, John Baily, Joe Baverstoek, Edgar Giles, Harry Bush the Carpenter. There was an old man who name was David Vallence, we called him Old Davy, he lived in an old shepherd's hut owned

by Mr Hibbert who kept Lower Allenford Farm. The hut was situated on an old farm track which led off the road to Cranborne at the junction of the Bouldsbury Farm road. He drew his old age pension which was ten shillings a week. He had an old sack bag which he took to Dan Palmer's the Baker, bought seven loaves of bread enough for the week, put them in the sack bag, then go to the Compasses for a few pints. He had an old dog with him, after a few pints he would then go back to his shepherd's hut. He was a real character.

Damerham show was a real thing in those days, a big Fun Fair, bowling for the Pig. A carthorse race once around the Cricket field for a ten shilling prize. All the old farmers riding their horses, it was a lot of fun.

I liked going round to Mr Rodgers bakery which was next door to the Compasses, Percy Budd used to mix the dough by hand, it was lovely bread and he would let me have a go at mixing the dough. Reg Budd, Percy's brother I knew very well, also Herby Nicklen, he worked for Mr Rogers. Old Edwin Percy he was the Blacksmith, when he got too old, Charlie Percy his son took over. John and I loved to see him shoeing the young Colts for the first time, it took three men to hold them. John and I had to give a hand haymaking, we had to pitch the hay with a fork from the farm carts on to the men making the hayricks.

An old man called Fred Blake he lived next door to the Blacksmiths shop. He and another old man lived down Cornpits. His name was Mr Tiller, all of us lads called him Tiff, Tiff and Fred would help with the haymaking, Tiff was also umpire at the cricket matches.

I went to Damerham School, Miss Barnes was the teacher a very lovely lady. To name a few of the boys, Cyril Hooper, John Young, Ted Butler, Gerald Jerrard, Ray Coombs, Ralph Colbourne, George Stainer. The girls, Freda Tiller, Molly, Phyllis, and Barbara Jerrard.

I left school when I was fourteen and went back to Sussex. I came back to Damerham when the war broke out. My Mother and brothers and sisters, stayed at Uncle Bill's at Stapleton Farm, and I stayed at the Compasses again, until Mother rented a cottage at Brickhill near the Brickyard at Sandleheath.

Before going into the army in 1941 at the age of nineteen, I was a member of Damerham Home Guard, talk about Dads Army, we used to go to the rifle range for practising, Old Mr Rumbold the farmer up the High Street could not close one eye, so they used to tie a bandage over his eye, what a laugh. I went into the army in 1941, I did four months training, then went to Egypt. As a point of interest I was in No 1 Army Hospital where I was recuperating, I was sitting on a seat at the front of the Hospital, a R. A. F. lorry pulled up and out jumped Jack Baverstock, our meeting was in Cairo. The rest is another story. I now live in Swansea, and I come home as often as possible, and never miss going to Damerham.