# RUSHMERE ST ANDREW
## REMEMBERED

### THE STORY OF A SUFFOLK VILLAGE IN THE 20s & 30s

BY
DON LEWIS

This work is dedicated to the memory of

**Sarah**

my wife and devoted companion
for forty nine years who did not
live to see it completed.

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Sketch Plan Of Village.

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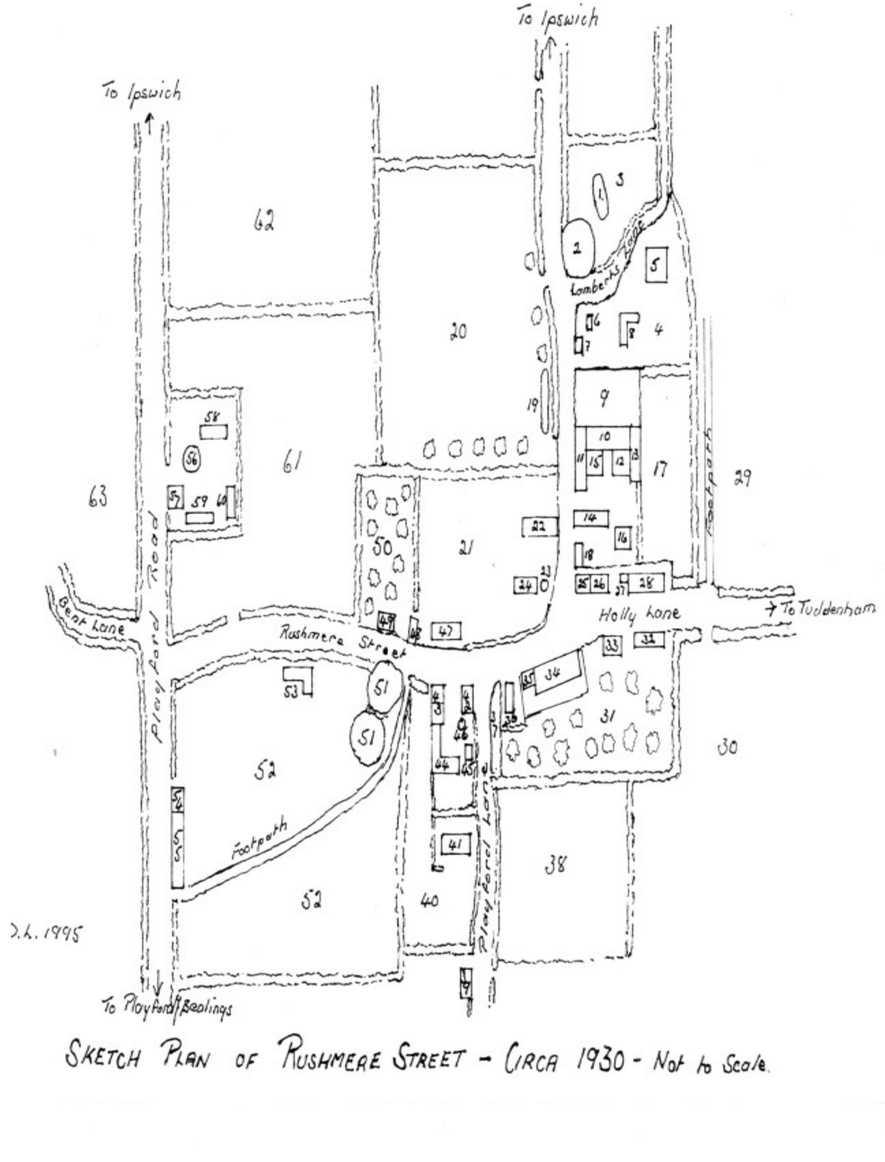
# AUTHOR'S NOTE

**Although the Parish of Rushmere St Andrew covers a vast area stretching from the Tuddenham boundary across to Bucklesham Road in one direction, and from the Playford boundary to Leopold Road in the other, the contents of this publication refer to what was generally known as the 'Village' area, extending from the Tuddenham boundary across to Rushmere Heath in one direction, and from the Playford boundary to Humberdoucy Lane in the other.**

## KEY TO SKETCH PLAN

1. Meadow Pond
2. Mellor's Pond
3. Meadow
4. The Limes Gardens
5. The Limes House
6. The Limes Lodge
7. Cottage
8. Fairweather's Dairy
9. Stackyard. Limes Farm
10. Barn
11. Cow-shed
12. Horse-yard
13. Stables
14. Cart-shed
15. Cart-shed
16. Farmhouse
17. Meadow
18. Stone Cottage
19. Muck-heap
20. Field
21. Allotments
22. Cottages (3)
23. Well
24. Cottages (2)
25. Off-licence
26. Cottages
27. Peck's Shoe Repair Shop
28. Cottages (3)
29. Field
30. Field
31. Orchard
32. Cottages (3)
33. Slaughter House
34. Tablet Cottages (5)
35. Welham's Shop
36. Baptist Chapel
37. Private Garden
38. Street Meadow
39. Cottages (2)
40. Allotments
41. Cottages (2)
42. Blacksmith's Cottage
43. Blacksmith's Shop
44. Wheelwrights Shops
45. Stable
46. Well
47. Cottages (2)
48. Cottages (2)
49. Baker's Bungalow
50. Orchard
51. Pokesys Pond
52. Pokesys Field
53. Bullock Shed
54. Falcon Inn
55. Cottages (5)
56. Windmill
57. Cottage
58. Grain Store
59. Store-house
60. Cottage
61. Field
62. Field
63. Field
64. Field

The circles shown on field (20) represent Poplar trees.


To Ipswich
To Ipswich
1
2
3
Lamberts Lane
5
4
6
7
8
62
20
9
19
10
11
15
12
13
17
Footpath
29
58
56
61
63
57
59
60
22
14
16
18
50
21
23
24
25
26
27
28
Bent Lane
Playford Road
Holly Lane
To Tuddenham
49
48
47
Rushmere Street
33
32
35
34
53
51
51
31
30
52
44
45
54
55
Footpath
41
38
52
40
Playford Lane
39
D.L. 1995
To Playford/Bealings

SKETCH PLAN OF RUSHMERE STREET - CIRCA 1930 - Not to Scale.

# INTRODUCTION

Following the success of the earlier publication 'Memories of Rushmere Village in the 20s and 30s' which I wrote jointly with my friend, Walter Turner, and the favourable comments we have received regarding it, together with suggestions that there should be a second volume, I am pleased to present this new work to our appreciative readers.
It is a revised and greatly enlarged version of the previous work under a new title, and an entirely different lay-out. Although certain parts of the text have been retained, the majority of it has been completely re-written and revised where necessary with much more detailed information added, including such items as how a cart wheel was made from scratch', how a traction engine worked' and much, much more. A glossary has also been included so that the reader can understand the meaning of the unfamiliar words used.

Although I have 'gone it alone' this time, I am deeply indebted to Walter Turner for the material he supplied for the previous work, some of which I have used again.

Despite the fact that I have always had an ambition to record the story of Rushmere as I knew it, the project might never have been started at all if it had not been for my son talking me into it and urging me on. However, now it is finished, I have to admit that I have derived a great deal of pleasure from writing it. I hope the reader will obtain as much pleasure from reading it, in which case my ambition will have been fulfilled and I can rest content in the knowledge that the Rushmere of the past will not be completely forgotten by the Rushmere of the future.

Don Lewis.

Rushmere St Andrew. 1995.

# MEMORIES OF RUSHMERE VILLAGE

## Chapter 1 Portrait

I have known Rushmere village for most of my life, having lived there since 1929, prior to which time I spent all my school holidays there, when I stayed with my grandparents. The day following school break-up I would be taken to Rushmere and fetched away again the day before school started back. I was born in Ipswich at 140 Nacton Road on the 22nd of July 1920. The first school that I attended was Rosehill before moving on to Nacton Road Boy's which at that time was a very old school lit by gas lamps. It was burnt down in later years and a new community building now stands on the site. At that time public transport, single- decker trolley buses with solid tyres, helped in no way in getting to Rushmere so it meant a very long walk, although if the timing was right and providing it had not broken down, the "Swiftsure" bus could be caught at the 'Golden Key' on Woodbridge Road. Sometimes we caught it going the other way, but it was still a very long walk along the length of Rushmere Road, Cauldwell Hall Road, Derby Road and Hatfield Road, especially to a young lad of less than nine years of age, and frequently it meant walking the complete distance both ways in a day.

I was always happy when I was at Rushmere which in those days was indeed a village with its pretty little dormer-windowed cottages, most of which have now, alas, disappeared. Although only three miles from the centre of Ipswich, it seemed in those days to be at least fifty miles from the nearest town there being fields, hedges and trees as far as what is now Colchester Road, which at that time was a sandy track. It was a completely agricultural area where the wonderful scents of the countryside lingered in the nostrils for many years after it became an urban area. But, such is the price of progress, when a country village with all its traditions, its natural beauty, its crafts, characters and family connections are lost forever in a short space of time to be replaced with bricks, mortar and concrete. An area where for hundreds of years the population had lived and worked, usually under primitive conditions compared to modern living, content with their way of life, happy in their environment , friendly and happy-go-lucky, wiped out in a few short months under the bulldozer to satisfy man's desire to own his own home in this so-called affluent period of our country's history.

Approaching the village from the Rushmere Street/Humberdoucy Lane crossroads, where the now closed Post Office stands, the left-hand side of the road, as far as the present Birchwood Drive, appeared very much the same as it does now, although in those days a row of six cottages stood on the site of the present Church car park and a few new buildings have been erected within the grounds of the already existing ones. The pond on the corner of Lamberts Lane was there but it wasn't fenced in in those days and horses, cattle and sheep stopped to drink as they passed along. On the opposite side of the road there were no houses whatsoever until about 1931 when I can remember the thatched house being built, the first house on the right after passing the church, which was occupied by a Mr Ray. I can remember a well, no piped water at the time, being sunk in the grounds, in fact I was lowered down into it in the digger's bucket when it was nearing completion and I can well remember seeing the sky through the hole at the top. The remaining distance of this side of the road consisted of hedges with tall Elm trees interspersed with field gates. Entering the village proper, on the left-hand side was 'Limes Farm' owned by a Mr Sherwood, with stackyard and farm buildings, on the site of the present Birchwood Drive. Then came a collection of cottages and other buildings including the off-licence, on the corner of Holly Hill, (now Holly Lane), general store, Baptist Chapel and wheelwright's and blacksmith's workshops. Behind the chapel was a cherry orchard and on the opposite side of the road were allotments on which the present built up area known as The Willows" now stands. Proceeding towards the present Playford Road, one passed the entrance to Playford Lane, on the corner of which stood the blacksmith's cottage and the wheelwright's and blacksmith's shops. Then came two ponds on the left-hand side which were known as Pokesys ponds, the adjoining field being referred to by the same name. In recent years the roadside pond has been filled in and landscaped, the other still remaining where it was.. Opposite the ponds on the right-hand side of the road was another large orchard, mainly plums and greengages, owned by a Mr Joe Baker. Further along the road on the left-hand side was the bullock shed, part of which is still standing today and used by a haulage contractor. Apart from this on either side, nothing but trees, hedges and fields until the early thirties when a number of houses were built on the right-hand side of the road. A hundred or so yards to the left of the junction with Playford Road stood the 'Falcon Inn' and a row of cottages. This is one of the few areas of Rushmere which is much the same today as it was then except that the inn itself has been mainly rebuilt and modernised as have one or two of the cottages and of course several trees have disappeared. About the same distance along to the right of the road junction stood a windmill, owned by a Mr Alfred Dawson, which ground corn in those days. However, it was burnt down at sometime in the thirties and the cul-de-sac known as The Mills now stands on the site. Of course, there were several other areas of Rushmere but, to me they were not part of what I termed the village.

In those seemingly far off days the village was very much quieter than we know it today. Very little traffic passed through and what little there was consisted mainly of horses, carts,cattle, sheep and bicycles although there was the occasional motor vehicle which were very few and far between at the time. One such vehicle was the "Swiftsure" bus which came through about twice a day. It was a very small vehicle seating possibly twenty passengers. It had quite a small engine for its size and it was not uncommon for the passengers to have to get off and help to push it up Bealings hill and the two hills on Woodbridge Road. It broke down pretty frequently and very often people waiting for it would end up walking to town and back again if it had not been repaired in the meantime. There didn't appear to be any backup vehicle with which to replace it. As a matter of interest, the fare at that time was fourpence return (2p in today's money). Eventually the service was taken over by the 'Eastern Counties' buses when things improved somewhat, although for several years there was never more than three buses each way each day. Perhaps some three times a week a tradesman's motor vehicle would come to the village to make deliveries or the very occasional private car would pass through at about ten miles an hour, unlike today when fifty seems to be the norm, despite the specified speed limit.

The village folk were a very friendly and close-knit community. Everyone knew everybody else and they were always ready and willing to help each other. It was not unusual for someone to be woken up and called out at any hour of the day or night to give assistance or advice when somebody had been taken ill or had passed away. House breaking and other crimes were hardly heard of apart, perhaps, from someone having to appear at Woodbridge Court House for riding a bicycle at night without a front light, (rear lights were not compulsory) for which the offender would be fined 5/- (25p). Such a charge was considered quite a serious one and was always reported in the 'East Anglian Daily Times' and 'Evening Star'. It was common practice for people to leave home in the morning and be away all day, leaving either the front or back door wide open in the summertime, or unlocked, though closed, in the winter months. Money would be left quite openly on the table for the baker, milkman or some other tradesman, who would leave the goods, take what was due to him and leave any change. The majority of the menfolk worked on the local farms and would leave home to go to work at 6-Oam, returning at dusk all the year round regardless of season. The womenfolk also worked on the fields at certain times of the year, helping with haymaking, stooking the corn at harvest time and potato and pea picking. I have also known them to do stone-picking on fields where there was a preponderance of stones. Most years, together with the local children they would spend all day bird-scaring especially during the fruit-ripening season and they would also help to harvest the fruit when it was ready.

Pleasures were very few and far between. In what little spare time they got, the men would look after an allotment plot on which they would grow vegetables and fruit for the family with perhaps a few flowers to decorate the cottage. Occasionally they would visit the local pub for a pint or two and a game of Dominoes. Shove-halfpenny was also played in the local bar, although a sharp look-out for the law was kept when this was in progress as betting games were illegal at the time. The womenfolk seemed to be working from morning till night, washing, cleaning, cooking, bread making, bottling fruit, making jams and pickles besides making, repairing or altering most of the clothes worn by the family. When not occupied with any of these indoor jobs they would be working in the garden or roaming the lanes and hedgerows in search of firewood. During the respective seasons they would spend a lot of time picking dandelion blooms, elderberries etc. for winemaking. They were rarely idle. Winter evenings were spent indoors. Radio was in its infancy and was only available to the the well-off. Because of the lack of public transport, very few people went into Ipswich to visit the cinema, of which there were five. This number had increased to seven when World War II broke out. There were also two theatres and the Public Hall. Evenings would be spent reading, or playing games like 'Ludo', Tiddley Winks', and 'Snakes and Ladders'. 'Dominoes', 'Draughts' and 'Cribbage' were also very popular. Rug making with sacking through which strips of old doth was threaded and knotted was a favourite pastime in which the whole family took part. These rugs were extremely hard-wearing. Needlework and knitting occupied the women and girls. Many households made their own clothes or altered someones cast-offs to fit a younger member of the family. Most men repaired all the family's boots and shoes, using the kitchen or very often the living room as a cobbler's shop. These pastimes would be carried out by the light of an oil-lamp which made it very tiring on the eyes. Most households kept a few chickens in the back yard to provide eggs and the Christmas dinner. Rabbits were also kept and bred for killing off to provide additional meat for the table. Keeping a pig was also quite common. Fed on household scraps it would very quickly be big enough to provide the family with a few months meat. After killing, it would be cut up and salted down in very large stone jars until it was required for eating. During the winter months the occasional whist drive would be held in the Village Hall and the Saturday night Village hop' would take place most weekends and was usually supported by the younger people. Jumble sales were very popular and frequent and were always well supported. A queue would start to form at the entrance at least an hour before the published opening time, the door being kept locked while the organisers piled a vast collection of old clothes, kitchenware, pots, pans, ornaments, books, bric-a-brac, in fact any old rubbish that the donor had no further use for, on to tables that were set out around the room. When zero hour arrived the most agile of the helpers would be delegated to unlock and open up. The key would be turned, the bolts drawn and the doorkeeper would have to make a quick getaway otherwise he or she would be trampled underfoot. The crowd would surge in, very often jamming each other up in the doorway. Once inside, they would dash off in all directions. The clothes, curtains, bed linen etc would be picked over and scattered in all directions and many an argument ensued as to who picked up a certain article first and it was not unusual for the particular item to be torn or destroyed in the process. After about fifteen minutes the tables would be almost empty, any late-comers losing out, being left to rummage through what was left. Anything not sold would be stored and laid out again at every ensuing sale until eventually someone decided they wanted it and in all probability got it for nothing.

Sanitation was primitive to say the least and left a lot to be desired. There was no piped water supply and therefore no flush toilets. Personal relief was acquired by a trip, whatever the weather, to the 'bumby' which stood in the back yard or at the bottom of the garden. This building, normally constructed of timber or occasionally brick, was usually festooned inside with cobwebs which hung from the rafters like stalactites in a cave. Over a large hole dug in the ground, brick-lined with a concrete base, was a wooden box-like structure, with a hole, bevelled round the edge, cut in the top which served as a seat for the adults. At the side was a lower seat with a smaller hole for the children to use. Wooden lids, fitted with a handle, would be provided for covering the seat holes after use. Toilet paper was usually newspaper, cut into squares, spiked in one corner onto a headless nail knocked into the wall. At the rear of the building, at ground level, would be a trapdoor through which, the contents of the hole would be removed, usually about three times a year, by a ladle, usually an old paint tin fixed to the end of a long wooden handle. After removal, the spoil would be transported to the garden or allotment for digging in, thus doing two jobs at once, ie. emptying the 'bumby' and digging the garden at the same time. The smell connected with this operation, particularly in the summer months, I leave to the reader's imagination. However, I would point out that a visit to the 'bumby' at night in midwinter, with a lighted candle, was a never to be forgotten experience. It is hardly surprising that every household possessed two or three chamber pots. It should also be remembered that without a sewerage system there was no drainage. All washing up and other water used within the house was taken out by bucket and disposed of by pouring into a hole dug into the garden especially for the purpose. Vegetable peelings and other kitchen waste was also placed in this hole to rot down. Every autumn the resultant compost would be removed from the hole and dug into the garden. The roads, which were not made up like they are today and definitely had no footpaths, were always littered with the droppings of horses, sheep and cattle which regularly passed through the village, and more often than not was carried indoors on the footwear. As I pointed out earlier, there was no running water, therefore there were no bathrooms. However, people did bathe and bath night, usually a Friday or Saturday evening was more or less a family affair. Sticks, which would have been gathered and broken up earlier in the day were used to light the fire under the copper. This was a brick-built structure, usually in one corner of the kitchen, into which a large copper had been set. Several trips would be made to the nearest well in order to obtain enough water to fill it. During a rainy period, water from the water butt would be used. A wooden lid, slightly larger than the circumference of the copper and fitted with a wooden handle, would be placed on top to trap the steam given off by the hot water. When the water was sufficiently hot, a galvanised bath would be brought in from the shed, stood in front of the living room fire, and partly filled with the hot water. Then each member of the family would take his or her turn at bathing, the original water being topped up with a fresh bucketful) of hot water as each person took their turn. Afterwards, the bath with its by now its fairly soupy and scummy water would be carried outside to be disposed of.

One would think that the lack of sanitation and hygiene would lead to frequent sickness. However, this did not appear to be the case. No one seemed to complain and the only cases of illness that I can remember happened to very old people just before they passed away. Visits to the doctor were rare, but, in the event of having to see one as a last resort, you went along to the surgery and sat in the waiting room until your turn came round. Most doctors made up their own prescriptions while you waited. There were no such things as appointments as we know them today, which meant that you received instant attention without having to wait for three or four days as we do under the present system when you are either better, worse or deceased by the time you see the doctor. At the time of which I write they were always referred to as 'family doctors'. This was no exaggeration as they would frequently call in unexpectedly to enquire after the family's health and well-being and were rarely known to refuse the offer of a cup of tea and a piece of cake, or sometimes something stronger. They were always looked upon as being part of the family.

The seasons seemed more settled and season-like than they do today. Winter very rarely went by without extremely sharp frosts and considerable falls of snow together with strong northerly and easterly winds which chilled one to the bone. Most years the snow would lay around for weeks, much to the delight of the children, but, not so much appreciated by the farmworkers whose job was made very difficult in the trying conditions especially where the animals were concerned. Skating on the ponds was a regular occurrence every year, the ice being some five to six inches thick. Quite often the village would be completely cut off by snowdrifts caused by the snow being blown off the fields. On these occasions the horse-drawn snow plough would be sent out from the farm but it made very little impression in such conditions. This was when the self-sufficiency of the village people proved its worth as no one ever went hungry. Eventually winter gave way to spring with its sunshine and showers. The bulbs would come into bloom, the birds would begin to sing and everyone seemed to brighten up. The sheep flocks which regularly passed through the village increased in size daily once the lambing season started. The menfolk would spend more of their spare time on their allotments preparing them for seed sowing and planting. Meanwhile, the women would settle in to the 'spring cleaning programme. Curtains would be taken down and washed to freshen them up after becoming grimy from the dust caused by the coal fires during the winter. Rooms would be cleaned out, painted and wall-papered, this was looked upon as women's work, the furniture would be polished and the pictures and ornaments washed, after which they would all be set out again in their respective places. Everyone would begin to look forward to summer which usually turned out to be very sunny, hot and prolonged. Soft fruit would ripen and the smell of jam making was strong in the air. Haymaking would have been completed and the dried hay would be carted from the meadows and stacked in the stackyard awaiting thatching. There it would remain until needed for feeding during the winter months. With the prolonged sunshine and hardly any rain, the ground would become thoroughly dried out and dust from the roadway thrown up by the passing through of a flock of sheep or a herd of cattle settled everywhere. It would drift in through the open windows of the cottages to the annoyance of the housewives and the butter, cheese, bacon and lard in the village shop would have to be kept covered with butter muslin. There were no refrigerators in those days and the poor old shopkeeper had his work cut out trying to keep his provisions in good and edible condition. In late July the harvest would start. The binder, drawn by three very fit Suffolk Punches would go round and round the field in ever decreasing circles towards the centre. The boys would spend all day in the harvest field chasing and catching rabbits which would be taken home for eating. I can still taste those delicious rabbit pies and stews my mother and grandmother used to make. Usually, before the harvest had been completed, there would be a terrific thunderstorm with torrential rain which would hold up operations for a day or two until the corn dried out again. Once the corn was cleared from the fields and neatly stacked in the stack yard, the labourers would be given a day off. Some of the more fortunate families would enjoy their annual day trip to Felixstowe which was to them as great an event as a fortnight in Spain is today. As the weeks passed by summer would give way to autumn. The allotment crops would be harvested and brought home to be stored in a frost-free place for use during the forthcoming winter. Harvest festivals would take place at the church and chapel, one of the few days of the year when both would attract a full congregation. Damp, foggy days with a distinct chill in the air were endured. Leaves would be swept up and heaped in a corner of the garden for rotting down for compost for use two years hence. Firewood would be gathered and cut up ready for supplementing the winter's coal supply and I could look forward to my annual six months chore of filling and cleaning the oil lamps every day, a job I used to hate doing as I usually accumulated as much paraffin over my clothes as I put in the lamps resulting in my walking around smelling like an oil tanker and having to keep well clear of lighted matches.

Christmas in the village was a time I shall always remember. It was just like the pictures of olden times as seen on the present day Christmas cards and so vividly described by Dickens in some of his novels. Snow could be expected on Christmas day nine years out of ten providing a very picturesque setting, more so at twilight when the lamps in the cottages were lit. Bearing in mind that there were no street lamps in those days it is not difficult to picture the scene I am describing. Most people remained indoors on Christmas day except for the stockmen who had to go to the farm first thing in the morning and again during the afternoon to attend to the needs of their charges such as feeding and milking. Farming was a seven day a week job regardless of high days and holidays. There was an open invitation in most households to anyone who cared to call in for a drink, usually home made wine, and a mince pie and several such courtesy calls were made during the morning by villagers 'doing the rounds'. Christmas was not so commercialised in those days and shops did not start displaying festive goods until about three weeks beforehand, rather than in September as is done now. This short spell of publicity in itself added to the wonderment and magic of the event. Money was not so easy to come by and presents were not so plentiful and elaborate as they are in these modern times. Each child would receive one or two simple toys, probably home made, with perhaps an orange and a few sweets and nuts. The toys would have to be taken care of as it was well known that no more would be forthcoming until the following Christmas. Presents for adults were not exchanged like they are today. A lady might receive a handkerchief and the men would usually be given a cigar. Most households could afford to provide a fowl of one sort or another, a pudding, a bottle of port, a few oranges and nuts and a box of crackers, and if extremely fortunate perhaps a cake, usually home made. But, the spirit of Christmas meant something and held the family together.

Such was village life in the 1920s. Although some readers might regard the lifestyle as primitive and unexciting, they were happy times for those of us who experienced them, and there are occasions when I think that I would prefer to see them again, rather than the pace of modern living with its continual dashing around, supermarket shopping, pollution, crime and vandalism. People were far less stressful than they are today, and indeed, appeared much happier and contented than many do at the present time. Life carried on in a slower and more leisurely way. As regards agriculture, (after all the area was 99% farmland), the work was completed by horse and manual labour to a much higher standard than it is nowadays, despite the machinery and tractors available. One has only to look at some of our hedges that are 'hacked' and 'carved about' by tractor mounted hedge-trimmers. They bear no comparison whatsoever to the hedges of bygone years, cut and shaped by hand and a joy to behold when finished. The debris would be raked up and burnt on the field headland, not strewn all over the road and left as they are now. But time does not stand still and things change in the pursuit of progress. Unfortunately, like everyone else, I also have to accept it and suffer the consequences.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to paint an overall picture of what life in Rushmere Village was like in my boyhood. In the chapters that follow I hope to enlarge on the foregoing by recording my memories of the village's annual events, its characters, its school, its church, its farms, its trades and crafts and amusing happenings, all of which played their part in making the village what it was.

## Chapter 2 School-days

The school, a red-brick Victorian building, (still standing in Humberdoucy Lane, recently enlarged and used as a centre for the disabled), was well attended in the late 1920s, having a nominal roll of well over a hundred pupils. Although I spent only two years there, I can remember them as being very happy ones, despite the discipline enforced and the punishment inflicted on anyone not conforming to it. Many's the time my fingers, of one hand or the other, were red hot and tingling from a stroke or two of the cane, which would be taken from the hook at the side of the teacher's desk and wielded for the slightest provocation, such as talking in class, yawning, gazing around etc. It was no good my going home and telling my parents that I had been punished at school. If I had have done, I would in all probably, have received a hiding for my pains and told to behave myself in future. A teacher's word was law in those days and they had to be obeyed. They knew full-well that they had the backing of parents, the majority of whom were not concerned in any way about what went on inside the four walls of the classroom. You were sent to school to be taught not only the prescribed subjects, but, manners and good behaviour as well and it was left to the teachers to use whatever means they considered necessary to try and achieve this end. However, on reflection, it doesn't seem to have done me any harm, in fact, it taught me to respect other people as well as what to expect in life, although I must confess that there have been one or two occasions throughout my life when I have, temporarily, forgotten the wisdom that my teachers endeavoured to implant in my mind.

The school consisted of two large classrooms and two cloak-rooms. The slightly smaller of the two rooms was used by the infants (5-7 years) who occupied one half of the room, and the juniors (8-11 years), termed as Standards 1 and 2, who were allocated the other half. There were four teachers at the school, all spinsters, and it was clearly obvious that they had not had any children of their own, judging from the way they treated some of the pupils under their charge. The infant's teacher was a Miss Werts who was getting on a bit in years. She was quite docile towards the infants, but, she could be rather stingy towards the older children if she caught them doing something wrong. There was an open fireplace in the corner of the room and during the winter months she was always perched on the top edge of the fire guard, roasting her backside. A Miss Stannard taught Standards 1 and 2. She was a very bad-tempered woman, becoming quite ferocious at times when she would rap someone on the knuckles or ears with a ruler, or the knob-end of an easel peg for no apparent reason. This form of treatment could be quite painful, as I found out on more than one occasion.

The larger of the two classrooms was occupied by Standard 3, under the charge of a Miss Nunn, and Standard 4, which was taught by a Miss Salter who acted as head teacher. Miss Nunn was quite a pleasant lady, rather younger than the others and not so hot-tempered. She seemed to be able to achieve results without having to resort to physical punishment, although she was very strict and a good disciplinarian. Any punishment that she enforced was limited to being kept in after school, or the writing of a set number of lines, dependant on the nature of the misdemeanour committed. Miss Salter taught the senior children, 11-14 year olds. She ruled with a rod of iron and was an expert at wielding the cane for the slightest offence. Even the girls in her class were not spared the pain it inflicted, although perhaps with a little less ferocity than was experienced by the boys. All classes were mixed. At the time of which I write, teachers remained with one class all the time and taught all subjects. There was no changing classrooms or teachers as is done today.

In the larger of the two classrooms, each morning would start with prayers and the singing of a hymn, after which lessons would start. A curtain, suspended from an iron rod, would be drawn across the room as a means of separating the two classes. Either class could always hear what the other one was doing, making it very difficult and at times impossible to concentrate. The first lesson every morning was arithmetic, or sums as they were always referred to. The teacher would explain, with the help of the blackboard, how certain calculations should be carried out in order to arrive at the correct answer. Some of us found the explanations very difficult to comprehend. However, following this explanatory period, ten sums would be set, which we had to work out while the teacher sat at her desk, writing or sometimes reading the days newspaper. After about half an hour, during which time some of us had struggled or tried to copy the next person's answers, which were probably wrong anyway, the teacher would come round the class checking the answers, the correct ones receiving a red tick. Those that were wrong would have to be done again and this would carry on until everyone had got them all right, which meant that the lesson could go on for a considerable time. In an effort to combat this, once a few red ticks had been awarded, little slips of paper containing the correct answers would be discreetly passed around the class for the benefit of the not-so-bright pupils. This helped to speed up the lesson, as, once everyone had received ten ticks, the class progressed to the next subject, possibly reading, geography, history or composition writing. Thus we progressed through the week. Behind the school was an area of ground divided into small plots, each about 12' x 8'. Each senior boy was allocated a plot on which he grew vegetables and flowers from seeds supplied by the school. A Mr Payne would attend one afternoon each week to teach the boys the rudiments of gardening, possibly because it was assumed that all country boys automatically became horticulturists or farm hands when they left school and started work. While the boys were working on the gardens, the older girls were taught sewing, knitting and general housework. At that time most girls on leaving school 'went into service', as it was known, becoming scullery and housemaids to the better-off. Apart from the gardening session, most of the time was spent in the classroom, although if the weather permitted, about half an hour each week was allocated to what we referred to as 'drill', when we would be lined up in ranks on the playground to carry out a few 'arms stretch and bends', 'running on the spot and skipping. Sport as known today in schools such as rugby, soccer, tennis and athletics were not part of the curriculum, neither were outings or visits abroad. Every year on 'Empire Day', if it was fine, we would be marched along the lane to a meadow, where we would spend the afternoon making daisy-chains, the boys being separated from the girls, as indeed we were in the playgrounds at break-time. The only time we were allowed to mix was in the classroom under the watchful eye of a teacher.

The caretaker, a Mr Webb, lived in the school house which was an integral part of the building. He had a wooden leg from the knee downwards, the result of a 'Great War' wounding and we used to refer to him as 'stumpy'. A door in the corner of the classroom led into his living quarters and during the winter months this door would open at frequent intervals and in would come 'stumpy' to make the fire up. He paid no regard to lessons being in progress, neither was he bothered about the noise he made with the fire-irons. His wife made cocoa every day during the winter months for us to drink with our midday sandwiches (no school meals at that time) for which we had to pay 1d per week. We were not allowed to sit in the desks to consume our refreshments in case we spilt the cocoa. Instead we were made to sit on the floor, leaning against the walls. The teachers would sit in a row in front of the fire with their backs to us. One day a large crust of bread landed in my cocoa. Without hesitation, I picked it out and threw it away without thinking. To my horror it hit Miss Werts on the back of the neck. Suddenly, all hell was let loose. Naturally, I kept very quiet when she enquired as to who the culprit was, and I thought I was safe when no-one owned up and she began to quieten down. However, my luck was short-lived, as some snivelling so-and-so had told her who it was and I was duly rewarded with the biggest caning I ever experienced during my school career. To this day, I still don't know who threw the crust in the first instance, and I doubt if I will ever find out now.

Many devilish, but generally harmless, pranks were carried out during my time at the school. I can remember an occasion when the builders were carrying out some repairs to the roof. They had gone off to have their lunch at the local pub leaving the ladder they were using leaning against the guttering enabling access to the roof. At that particular time there was a bell hung in an archway type structure at the gable end. I assume that in earlier years it would have been rung to summon the pupils to school, although it was never used at the time of which I write. There was a timid boy by the name of Cater, whose parents had moved to this area from Yorkshire, attending the school at the time. He was always subject to ridicule and bullying by some of the older boys. On this particular day, during the lunch break, he was dared to climb up the ladder and ring the bell, failing which he would be the victim of a 'punch-up'. With this threat in mind he didn't need much persuasion and gingerly climbed the ladder and crawled up the roof to the bell, cheered on by the rest of us. Once he was occupied in trying to free the clapper, which over the years had become set fast, the ladder was taken down and laid on the ground. Shortly afterwards, the teachers whistle summoned us back into classroom for the afternoon session. Cater was stranded on the roof until the workmen returned some half an hour later. On entering the classroom shaking like a leaf, he was duly punished with the cane for being late. Naturally, he dare not say where he had been, knowing that if he did he would also suffer the 'beating up' as well.

The toilets were situated outside in the corner of the playground, boys and girls facilities being built side by side. They were bucket toilets which the caretaker had to empty by drawing the buckets out through square holes in the wall each of which were covered by a wooden trapdoor secured by turn-buttons. Frequently, some of the boys would lay on the ground behind the girls toilets, release the turn-buttons and partly open the trap door. Then they would wait for a shadow to appear, signifying that the toilet was in use, at which point the trapdoor would be opened wide enough for a fairly large stinging-nettle to be pushed through, causing shrieks of pain, or perhaps delight, to emit from the inside. On one particular day I was engaged in this amusing pastime when, unfortunately for me, one of my victims happened to be the headmistress. I was severely punished, and she spent the afternoon rubbing her backside up and down on the corner of the fireguard. From that day onwards a teacher was detailed to stand guard, putting the damper on what us boys used to think was an enjoyable occupation.

One day as some of us were passing the stackyard on the way to school, we discovered that threshing had started. Naturally, boys being boys, we could not resist going in to have a look. While we were there a mouse ran out of the stack. We immediately took up the chase and managed to catch it. Rather than kill it, I decided to wrap it up in my handkerchief and put it back in my pocket. On arrival at school I crept into the classroom, luckily without being seen, lifted the lid of the teacher's desk and dropped the mouse inside. One can imagine what happened when, at the start of class, she opened the desk to take the register out for marking. She screamed and turned as white as a sheet. The other teachers came rushing in to see what was wrong and they all began to turn white when told what the problem was. One of the senior boys was detailed to remove the mouse from the desk. He could obviously see the opportunity for a bit of fun and on catching it he, 'accidentally, for the purpose' dropped it when of course it scuttled across the room. From then on chaos reigned. Some of the girls ran out of the room, others were standing on the desks screaming as loud as they could, while the boys were lapping it up, shouting their heads off and chasing the mouse all round the room with no intention of catching it. This went on for some ten minutes or so until the mouse eventually disappeared into a hole in the corner. The fun was over, but, by the time order had been restored we had reduced the duration of the arithmetic lesson by over half an hour. As for the mouse, it was sighted once or twice during the following day or two but it was finally caught when the caretaker decided to set a trap.

Many other such escapades took place during my short stay at the school and a great many caning sessions were carried out. One particular boy who was a regular recipient of the cane installed padding in the seat of his trousers to 'soften the blow' as he put it. Much paper and ink was wasted on writing the thousands of lines, written as punishments, by non-compliers with the system. However, for all that, I suppose that some of us learnt something while we were there for the school inspectors always seemed satisfied when they made their regular visits to assess our progress.

The system changed in 1931 on the building of the new Secondary Modern School at Kesgrave. From then on, children from the surrounding villages were transferred to the new school on attaining the age of 11 years. I began my stay there on the first day it opened in 1931, but that's another story.

## Chapter 3 The Farms

There were five farms in the area, one of which was situated in the village itself. This one was known as 'Limes Farm' to give it its correct name, although locally, it was usually referred to as 'Street Farm'. It covered some 150 acres and was owned by a Mr John Sherwood. It stood on the area now known as Birchwood Drive and consisted of several buildings including three dairies, stables and horse yard, cart-sheds, a large barn, various smaller storage buildings and a fairly large stackyard. As regards livestock, there were about ninety head of cattle, ten 'Suffolk Punch' horses and a pony which was used for pulling a cart around for general light work purposes. There were also several free-range chickens running around and a number of typical farmyard cats, some of which were as wild as tigers.

Of all the local farms this was the one that I knew best. From the time I came to Rushmere to live I used to spend all my Saturdays and school holidays there, along with one or two more of the village boys, helping out as best I could with the various jobs that were carried out throughout the year. These jobs obviously changed with the seasons, excepting the care of the livestock, which more or less followed the same daily routine all year round.

Some eight to ten men were employed as horsemen and labourers. They were generally as hard as nails with weather-beaten faces acquired from working outside in all weathers. During the winter and when it was raining, a corn sack would have one of the bottom corners pushed inside the other to form a point. The sack would then be placed on the head, the point serving as a hat while the remainder of the sack would drape over the shoulders like a cape. Seen from a distance, this apparel gave them the appearance of witches. Work carried on regardless of weather conditions. For example, in the rare event of certain work being held up through excessive rain or snow, another job would soon be found. Employers expected a fair day's work for, in many cases, what was not considered, such a fair day's pay. Despite this, the men were usually loyal to the 'Guv'nor’, because several of them lived in 'tied' cottages, when loss of a job also meant the loss of living accommodation.

The foreman at Limes Farm was a George Smith. He was also 'head horseman' and he made sure that the horses under his charge were always kept in prime condition. He insisted that every horse should be brushed down every morning and night and their manes and tails combed. His theory was that a neglected horse was only half a horse. His animals had to be capable of carrying out their allocated day's work. His brushing programme was more than evident, especially in summertime, when the horses’ coats would shine like mirrors as the sun caught them. Although the Suffolk Punch is a very large and heavy horse, they can be very docile, willing and hard working. Treated with respect, they will do almost anything asked of them. Of course, like all animals, there is always the odd one that can be obstinate and troublesome, although a skilled horseman given time and patience, can usually coax such a horse round to behaving as is expected of them. I can remember that the horsemen of years gone by had many secrets as well as some weird and wonderful ideas connected with the training and welfare of their charges which they never divulged to anyone. It is probably the same today. There was a hierarchy among horsemen on most farms and Limes Farm was no exception in this respect. Certain rules had to be observed. For example, in the mornings, after the horses had been saddled up, they left the yard in order of seniority of their attendants. The horses would leave the yard in line, the head horseman first, followed by the second man, then the third and so on down the line. Likewise, at the end of the day, regardless of where or which field they had been working on, the men would time their return to the farm so as not to arrive before the head man. Even then the men had not finished their day's work. The horse would be unshackled and released from the cart or other implement it had been hauling, unless it had been left on the field. It would then be unsaddled, the saddle and harness being hung up on their respective pegs. If it had been working in muddy conditions the hooves and fetlocks would have to be washed off so that the mud would not dry and cake during the night. Next, came the brushing and combing followed by littering down the stable with dean straw, filling the manger with hay and any other attention that was needed. The horseman's day would then come to an end, more often than not, some ten hours after starting in the morning.

During the time that the horses were away from the farm, the labourers would have been employed on various jobs in and around the farm. Stables and cow-sheds had to be cleaned out and washed down. Hay and fodder had to be prepared and turned into chaff by putting it through a hand-operated chaff cutter. Likewise, at certain times beet for feeding would be prepared in the same way. Eggs from the numerous chickens that ran around the farm would have to be collected. Any produce brought in from the fields would have to be attended to and stored, and any other general work needed to be done around the farmyard would be carried out. Other labourers would be kept busy on the fields doing a variety of jobs dependent on the season such as hedging and ditching, hoeing crops, helping with the haymaking, harvest and a hundred and one other jobs which had to be done in order to keep the farmer happy and prosperous.

As far as my involvement with the farm was concerned, as mentioned earlier, I along with one or two other village boys spent the majority of our spare time around the farmyard, helping out with the seasonal work as it arose. At the time of which I write, there was a very large muck-heap, about sixty to seventy yards long, alongside the road opposite the entrance to the present Birchwood Drive. All the manure from the farm would be placed on this heap throughout the year. I remember that it gave off a very pungent odour, especially during the summer months and during foggy weather, when strangers to the area would scuttle past it as quickly as they could. I have seen many a lady nestling her nose in a handkerchief. I could never understand what all the fuss was about. Despite the fact that it 'ponged' a bit, the local people took no notice of it whatsoever and always referred to it as being a healthy smell. Although I might not have agreed with them wholeheartedly at the time, I must admit that it was slightly more pleasant, and possibly more healthy, than the obnoxious fumes given off by today's fertilisers and insecticides. However, during the autumn and winter months, this heap would be broken into for the manure which was taken to the fields for ploughing in. We would take the full tumbrils (a two-wheeled tipping cart) to the field for unloading and spreading prior to ploughing and bring the empty tumbrils back to the heap for reloading. Likewise, at harvest time when collecting in the corn, we would ride in the empty wagons from the stackyard to the field and ride on the horse's back with the loaded wagons from the field to the stackyard, where the labourers would unload the corn which was built into a stack to await threshing in the autumn. In the meantime, the completed stack would be thatched to keep the rain out and the corn dry. We would fetch beer for the men from the off-licence in one-gallon stone bottles. Vast quantities of it would be drunk during the haymaking and harvest time as it was very hot and tiring work in the full sun all day. Sometimes the men would give us a drop of beer and occasionally a portion of their 'elevenses' which normally consisted of dry bread, a large piece of cheese and a raw cooking onion which would all be held together in the left hand and cut into eatable-sized pieces with a pocket knife held in the right hand. When the corn was being cut, most boys spent all day in the field chasing and catching rabbits which were hidden away under the corn stooks out of sight of the foreman, otherwise he would claim them for himself or the farmer. They were recovered at night after all the men had left the field. The only problem was remembering which stooks you had hidden them under. This was usually achieved by selecting stooks on the field headland and setting up a marker of some description in the bottom of the nearest hedgerow.At other times of the year we would help to dean out the stables and cow-shed, tidy up the barn and the cart sheds, shake out and fold up all the empty corn sacks and slice up the cattle beet on a hand-operated beet-cutter. If we were lucky enough to be around at the right time we would get involved in cleaning, greasing and oiling the machinery. This to me was the most interesting job of any, particularly if it was the 'reaper' or the 'binder', the reaper or 'bamlet' as it was sometimes called, was a two-wheeled machine, drawn by two horses, and fitted with a reciprocating blade, used for cutting the hay which it left in rows. A seat was fitted to it for the operator to sit on, although it was not a very comfortable ride owing to the hollows and humps in the ground. After laying for a few days, the hay would be turned and left for another short period, after which it was carted to the stackyard for stacking and storage. The binder which was a much larger machine, and drawn by three horses, worked on much the same principal as the reaper, except that instead of leaving the corn lying loose on the ground, it tied it into small bundles called 'sheaves'. As the binder worked its way round and round the field, a gang of men would pick up the sheaves and build them into 'stooks', so as to keep the ears of corn dear of the ground. This helped in the drying process. Eventually they would be carted, like the hay, and stacked in the stackyard.

Without doubt, the highlight of the farming year, as far as us boys were concerned, was when the threshing (or 'thrashin' as it was termed locally) started. The steam-driven threshing tackle would arrive and after a bit of shunting backwards and forwards, it would be manoeuvred into position between the stacks. The drum would be located beside the stack to be threshed and the elevator (straw-pitcher) where the straw stack was going to be built. The traction engine would be manouvered and parked at the correct distance from the drum to allow the driving belt to be given the correct tension. The belts would be put on, one from the engine to the drum, the other from the drum to the elevator. A small-mesh wire-netting fence was erected round the bottom of the stack to help trap the numerous rats that had taken up residence therein and the thatch would be removed from the stack. The tackle gang who would have been up since dawn would be busy oiling and greasing all the working parts on the tackle. This could take a considerable time as there were many such oiling and greasing points to be attended to. Meanwhile, the engine driver would be employed greasing and attending to his engine, making sure that the engine had a good head of steam in readiness for start-up and ensuring that a continuous supply of coal and water would be available throughout the day. Several men would be needed to carry out the work and they all had their designated jobs to do. Each man would do his particular job every year at threshing time. This ensured a consistent rhythm of work, as each man's performance depended on how efficiently the man before him did his job. It only needed one man to fumble for the rhythm to be lost all along the line. When everything was ready and the men had taken up their positions, the signal would be given to start. The engine driver would open up the regulator and the piston rods would start to rotate the flywheel to which the main drive belt was attached which in turn started the drum and elevator working. The two stackmen would start taking the sheaves from the stack with pitchforks and place them on the platform on top of the drum. The drum man, or feeder, would cut and remove the twine from the sheaves and feed the corn into the drum which separated the corn from the straw. The straw would fall from the drum onto the elevator to be carried up to the top, from where it dropped off to the two men below who would build the straw stack. The threshed corn would eject from one of the two troughs on the drum into sacks where another man supplied the empty sacks and removed the full ones. The chaff and other debris which was ejected from the drum would have to be cleared by yet another man. Additional men were kept busy carting the full sacks of corn to the barn and bringing in coal and water for the engine. While all this activity was going on, the surrounding air would be thick with dust from the drum mingling with the black smoke from the engine. Threshing was very dirty work and at the end of the day the men would be covered with dust from head to foot. The fun would start when the bottom of the stack was reached. The rats trapped inside the netting surround would run in all directions until they were eventually caught and killed. It was not unusual for a stack to hold half a wheel-barrow load of rats. Mice were also numerous and could escape through the netting, when us boys would chase and catch them.

The reader will have discovered by now that farming in those days could be very hard and tiring work. For example, a ploughman with a single-furrow plough and a pair of horses was expected to plough an acre a day, during which time he would have walked several miles up and down the field in the furrow. It was certainly not work for the weak-hearted. But for all that, the men so employed enjoyed their work which required as much skill as any other trade.

There were four more farms around the village area. 'Heath Farm', owned by a Mr Pipe, stood in Humberdoucy Lane on part of what is now St Albans School playing field. Altogether it covered an area of around sixty acres and included a small meadow and a pond, which in wet weather would overflow across the road. Further along Humberdoucy Lane, almost opposite the Community Centre, was 'Rushmere Hall Farm', owned by a Mr Benny King. It was quite a large farm covering the whole of the area now taken up by Rushmere Hall estate. There was a large pond in the farmyard on which was a rowing boat that the family would use for pleasure despite the fact that they were restricted to its confined area. At the top end of Walnut Avenue, now Seven Cottages Lane, stood Villa Farm', still there today, complete with its small pond which does not overflow now as it did then. It was a subsidiary of 'Hill Farm' which still stands farther along the road. Both of these farms were owned by a Major Norman Everett who always rode around the area on horseback. This particular farm is still worked today and is relatively the same now as it was then except for the horse pond that has now dried up and the loss of a few hedges which have been removed in order to enlarge the fields. Naturally, mechanisation has now replaced the horse power of yesteryear, and farming generally no longer seems to have the fascination that it did sixty years ago.

There was another arable area in the village which should be classed as a smallholding rather than a farm. It consisted of two fields, one of about twelve acres, the other of about five acres. The larger field was renowned for producing some outstanding crops of wheat which was almost five foot high, making the straw from it ideal for thatching.

Most of the fields around the area had names which obviously don't mean a thing today, although it is interesting to recall some of them here rather than have them forgotten altogether. Some of them are self explanatory while others leave much to the imagination. 'Pokesys' - 'Dogses' - 'Clappods' - 'Whiteses' -'Stony' - 'Gold Acre1 - 'Ballses' - 'Gobberts' -'Norman's Hill' - 'Horse Pond Field' - 'Little Pittol' - 'Blox Meadow' - 'Lacey Steps' - 'Cranky Hill' and lastly The Round Field' which was actually rectangular and probably named originally by some old farmer who'd been to market and had a few pints too many.

Every year a 'drawing' or ploughing match would be held, usually on the field opposite the 'Falcon' public house, which incidentally did a good trade on the day. Classes were open to anyone, including ladies, and competitors would come from miles around to take part. The field would have been previously measured up and marked out with white pegs at each end. Each competitor paid an entrance fee and would be given a single-furrow plough with a pair of horses, the object being to draw out a straight furrow from a peg at one end to a designated peg at the other. Some furrows would be spot on while others left a lot to be desired. The overall winner would receive a silver cup, and the runners-up would be given a copper kettle.

At some time in the early 1930s I can remember a machine known as the 'Gyrotiller' coming to Rushmere on what I think was an experimental tour. It was an extraordinary machine of massive length and height. On the back-end of it were three very large rotary tillers which turned and broke up the soil to a depth of some two feet or more. It was fitted with large lamps at front and back and it carried on working throughout the night. It worked on one or two fields in the area, but, apparently it was not a very successful machine and very little more was heard of it.

For anyone wishing to learn more about life on the farm in the 1930s I would recommend reading "Early to Rise" by Hugh Barren, published by Farming Press.

## Chapter 4 Crafts and Trades

Although what I look upon as the village area was small, there were certain trades carried on within its environs. Possibly the most well-known tradesmen were the 'wheelwright' and 'blacksmith'. As I pointed out in Chapter 1, their premises were situated at the corner of The Street and Playford Lane. Much of their work involved each other's services as will be seen later. All the workshops, sheds, cottages and other buildings were in the ownership of a William Fisk, who was my grandfather on my mother's side. He purchased them at auction on the 26th March 1896. The auction took place at the 'Great White Horse Hotel', Ipswich, at seven o'clock in the evening. I have in my possession a copy of the 'Particulars and Conditions of Sale' and it makes interesting reading, the 'Particulars' being described as below:-

A
COUNTRY TRADE PREMISES Situate in the Village Street at Rushmere, at the
junction of the cross roads from Ipswich to
Playford Hall, and Tuddenham to Woodbridge,
about two and a half miles from Ipswich, and
being the only Blacksmith's and Wheelwright's premises
in the Village.
It comprises a
DWELLING HOUSE

Brick built and tiled, having Entrance Passage,
Two Sitting Rooms, respectively 13ft by 10ft
and 12ft square, with two cupboards;
Kitchen, with oven; Pantry, and Three
Bedrooms;
and at the Rear a
GOOD GARDEN
with Shed and Outhouse.
A brick and pantiled
BLACKSMITH'S SHOP
abutting upon the road, with Two Forges
and Traverse, and a
WHEELWRIGHT 'S SHOP
22ft by 17ft, with double doors to yard.
A brick, weatherboard and pantiled
CARPENTER'S SHOP 24ft by 17ft. Shed with Sawpit. Store Sheds. Cart Shed
and Stable. Outhouse and Large
Yard. A good Well of Water, and at rear a
GARDEN.
The property has frontages to the road of about 105ft, and to the Lane to
Playford Hall of
about 140ft and an area of 1 ROOD 10 POLES, or thereabouts. (50 RODS)
TENURE -- FREEHOLD
The house with Garden and Blacksmith's Shop
is let to Mrs E Burch, at
£15 per Annum Payable at Michaelmas, the Tenant paying the
Rates
Mrs Burch is under notice to quit at Michaelmas
next, and is willing, by arrangement, to give up
Possession at an earlier date if desired.
Possession of the Wheelwright's and
Carpenter's Shops and Premises may be had on completion
of
the Purchase.
The Purchaser shall have the option of taking the Benches and Fittings in the
Wheelwright's and Carpenter's Shops and the Stock of Wood
by valuation in the usual way. The Fittings in the House and Blacksmith's Shop
belong to the Tenant.
The occupiers of the Two Cottages on the North-
East side and Four Cottages on opposite side of
road have the Right to take Water from the Well
on this Property, the Owners and Occupiers of
the said Four Cottages paying two-fifths and the
Owners and Occupiers of the said Two Cottages

paying one-fifth of the annual expense of
keeping such Well in
Good Order.

Unfortunately, I have no record of what my Grandfather paid for the premises, but, judging from the annual rent paid by Mrs Burch, I would think that he obtained them for a reasonably low price compared with what they would have made if being sold at the present time, bearing in mind the differences in value and purchasing power of money between the two periods. Also, I am certain that the hap-hazard measurements quoted as being the size of the area would be more precisely and accurately measured today. Another interesting point is that the occupiers of the cottages were drawing water from the well until the mains supply was laid on around 1936. The fact that the occupiers of the four cottages paid double the amount for use of the well than the occupiers of the two cottages had to pay causes me to wonder as to why this was so. On reflection, quite a lot about how things were done in the past can be learnt simply by studying the 'Particulars and Conditions' of this sale.

From the earliest time that I can remember the workshops remained exactly as detailed in the 'Particulars'. No extensions had been added or any alterations to the buildings carried out. They remained so until long after my grandfather's death in 1947 at the age of 93. when the carpenter's shop and adjoining woodshed eventually collapsed one night during a gale-force wind. The inside of the roofs were always festooned with large cobwebs. If ever he cut himself, my grandfather would select one of these cobwebs and wrap it around the wound to stop the bleeding, he did not possess a First Aid kit. Although he was always known as the wheelwright, he carried out all types of general carpentry work throughout the village and in the surrounding area, including house repairs, fence erecting, field gate making, furniture making, wheelbarrows, coal hods, in fact anything he was asked to produce, providing it was to be made from wood. He also made coffins for most of the village people when they passed away. He employed two men to help him in this work, but, he personally carried out all the wheelwrights work himself. As well as making and repairing wheels, he also made and repaired all types of horse-drawn vehicles including not only farm carts, but, broughams, hearses, carriages, milk floats and the like. This type of work required the skill of a craftsman and this he certainly was. Everything was done by hand, in fact, the only item of so called machinery he possessed was a foot-operated lathe which was not capable of turning any material larger than about two inches in diameter, or maybe less. I don't remember ever seeing him use it on more than two occasions.

In my boyhood the wheelwright's shop was my main centre of interest. It always held a strong fascination for me. The smell of new wood being worked was always in the air. Along one side wall hung the majority of the tools my grandfather used. An abundance of chisels and gouges of various sizes, adzes, hand-augers, spokeshaves, drawknives, handsaws of all types and cuts, rasps, files, drivers, punches and numerous other items. Below them, on the bench, was an assortment of wood-planes, hammers, mallets, brushes and oilstones. On the wall opposite hung dozens of wooden patterns of felloes and hames of all sizes. In one corner was a stack of fully seasoned timber set aside for 'whippletrees' and 'pommeltrees'. Another corner was stacked with oddments of new timber and offcuts, whilst in the third corner would be an assortment of used items of timber and pieces, taken from vehicles, which had been renewed. These would be retained as patterns in case an identical new item would be needed in the future. The remaining corner was where the shavings, chippings and other waste would be put. It was conveniently situated at the end of the workbench so that debris could be swept off the bench directly on to the heap. When this heap got large enough to start spreading into the working area, I would be ordered, not requested, to dean it up and burn it outside in the yard. This was not made easy by the fact that usually the yard would be full of wagons and implements either being worked on or waiting to be worked on and invariably one would be parked directly over the spot that I classed as my burning area.

In the centre of the workshop stood a wheelwright's trestle which was 'Y' shaped, being a natural crotch cut from the top end of a tree trunk. It was about 6ft long, standing on three legs and about 24ins in height. The top faces had been planed oft to form a level working base on which the wheel would be made up. There was also another trestle about 6ft long and 2ft wide made up as an open frame on four legs. Timber would be clamped to this for shaping with an adze. The reason for the open frame structure was because sometimes the wheelwright had to actually stand inside the frame in order to work comfortably. Underneath the workbenches was a variety of items; cans of oil, tins of grease, cans of paint and creosote, iron bars wedges, sledge hammers, long-handled mallets, ropes, chains, lifting gear and a number of large wooden blocks of various thickness which would be used to chock up a cart axle when the wheel was removed. The building was fitted with double doors to allow entry of vehicles. There was no form of heating whatsoever. Extra clothing would be worn during the winter months and occasionally throughout the day my grandfather would go to the blacksmith's shop next door for a warm up by the fire.

Having given the reader an idea of what the wheelwrights working environment was like I will now endeavour to explain how a wheel was produced. Most of the timber he used was bought in as complete tree trunks. These would be sawn into planks of varying thickness over the saw-pit. This was a brick-lined rectangular hole in the ground about 6-7ft deep, 9-10 ft long and 5ft wide. The tree trunk to be planked would be manoeuvred into position over the length of the pit and supported by timbers laid across the width. A cross-cut saw, some 6ft long with very large teeth and a handle at each end was used. It was a two man job, one man in the pit, the other on top. Sawing would commence, multiple cuts being made (i.e. if seven planks could be obtained from the trunk, eight cuts would be made) and as it progressed the top man would occasionally drive wedges into the cuts to open them up which prevented the saw from sticking. He was also responsible for keeping the cut straight, in other words he guided the saw.The pit man would have to oil the saw from time to time for which he had a pot of oil and a brush which was stored in a crevice built into the wall of the pit. When the cuts extended to the length of the pit, the trunk would be moved along until its whole length had been sawn. One can imagine the state of the man in the pit with the saw dust falling on him all the time. After sawing, the planks would be stacked flat with splines laid between each one to allow air to circulate between them. Here they would remain for a period of time to 'season' before being used. Each stack would be dated as a means of knowing when it was ready for use. Occasionally the saw dust in the pit had to be shovelled out when it became too deep to stand in. Some of it was bagged up and supplied to butchers who scattered it over their shop floors to soak up the blood from the meat. People would ask for it for a variety of uses. If oak had been sawn, the dust was sought for by fishmongers who used it for smoking fish.

When making a wheel from scratch, the 'hub', or 'nave' would be made first from a cross-section of tree trunk. The axle-hole would be drilled through the centre with an auger. This was a long and tiring job and needed quite a bit of muscle power. The hub would then be rough-shaped with an adze and finished off with draw-knife and rasp. The spokes were made next, shaped and finished with draw-knife and spokeshave. They would then be tenoned on the hub end and round-tongued on the felloe, or rim, end. The mortices to take them would be chiseled out of the hub, sometimes at an angle if the wheel was to be dish-shaped. Next, the felloes (pronounced 'fellees'), which made up the rim of the wheel were shaped and prepared, holes being bored in them to accept the round-tongues of the spokes. The wheel could now be made up. The spokes would be fitted to the hub, followed by the felloes being fitted to the spokes. A short iron rod was fitted into the ends of the felloes to draw them together and to help keep the rim in shape, and fitting the felloes was a bit like solving one of those old fashioned wooden puzzles where one had to fit the parts together to make a shape or something similar. A wedge would then be knocked into the slot that had been cut in the round-tongue of each spoke to ensure a tight fit to the felloes. Making a wheel appears quite a simple task on paper, but in reality it was different. It took at least a week of painstaking work to produce a wheel from scratch. However, our wheel is now ready to have its iron tyre fitted, a process I will describe when I elucidate on the blacksmith's work later.

Another aspect of my grandfather's work as a wheelwright was, as I mentioned earlier, the repairing of horse-drawn vehicles. This type of work was of infinite variety and could be anything from replacing a few lost screws to building a complete wagon. Generally, providing the vehicle had been reasonably cared for and treated with respect, it usually boiled down to such things as replacing a broken floorboard or side-rail . Occasionally a new pair of shafts would be needed or even one new shaft would have to be replaced. But, whatever the job was, it never left his workshop without being given a coat of paint first. In fact all new wood received four coats, primer, red-lead, undercoat and topcoat. He mixed all these paints himself from paint-powder, linseed oil and turpentine, using a large, thick slab of slate for mixing on, working it up to a consistency that he thought would stand up to the weather for a few years. He also made up putty on the same slab. I remember that when the carpenter's shop got blown down, my brother and I cleared the site, and when we eventually found the slab among the debris, the two of us could hardly lift it. I wondered at the time how the bench it was on managed to carry its weight for so long.

The general carpentry side of the business was carried on by the two employees who were normally kept fully occupied. If not in the workshop, their time would be spent on the saw-pit or outside doing jobbing work around the village. Depending on what they were doing, everything they needed, timber, paints, tods, steps, ladders etc. would be loaded onto a handcart and off they would go. In the summertime they were usually to be seen doing the outside painting of cottages or the farm buildings. During the winter months they spent most of their time in the workshop when they would find themselves making cupboards or other furniture, perhaps a garden frame or a wheelbarrow that someone had ordered. Being the only business of this type in the area meant that there was not a lot of competition and work was easy to come by.

If someone in the area died my grandfather might be asked to supply the coffin and carry out the funeral. When this happened he attended to it personally. My grandmother, Sarah Fisk, would go and lay the body out and prepare it for burial. After having measured the body, my grandfather would make the coffin, working all night if necessary in order to complete it as quickly as possible. He always held a stock of coffin handles and other fittings. After completion and polishing, my grandmother would fit the shrouds to the inside. Meanwhile grandfather would have made arrangements for the grave-digging and funeral, on the day of which, he would be seen walking to the church in front of the hearse which would be drawn by two black horses, which in turn was followed by horse-drawn carriages bearing the mourners. I have in my possession to this day, the top-hat that he wore on these occasions which is still in pristine condition in its own leather hat box.

For anyone who is interested in finding out in more detail about the intricacies of the work of the wheelwright, it is worth reading "The Wheelwright's Shop" by George Stun, published by The Cambridge University Press. It was first published in 1923 and was reprinted in paperback in 1993. The author was a master wheelwright himself, having inherited the business from his father and he explains fully the ins and outs of what was a fascinating trade.

The blacksmith was a Joseph Crapnell, or Blackberry Joe as he was referred to, who was assisted by his son Rufus. Rufus had been a farrier in the army during the 14/18 War and was outstanding at horse shoeing. He also had the capability of handling a horse of whatever temperament. They rented the blacksmith's shop, traverse and cottage from my grandfather. Rufus carried on the business for several years after his father died. All types of smith's work was undertaken, which as well as horse shoeing, included tool and agricultural machinery repairs, ornamental gates, hinges and fittings for field gates, fittings for carts and wagons, wheel tyreing and many other types of iron-work that might be needed. The forge was a favourite meeting place for the menfolk, especially during cold and wet weather, when warmth was to be found in the glow of the fire which burned from morning to night, occasionally revived by pumping the bellows by a long wooden handle. The ring of the anvil could be heard all over the village, serving as an alarm clock for some residents, as work started each morning at around 6-30am.

Wheel tyreing was interesting, both to watch and take part in. The wheel would be clamped down on the tyreing platform which was a large, round and flat metal base let in at ground level. The circumference of the wheel would then be ascertained by the use of a hand-held measuring wheel. The bar of iron selected for the tyre, the width of which depended on the type of wheel being shod, would be cut to length before being put through a hand-operated bending machine which formed it to its circular shape. The ends would then be heated and welded together by hammering. This would form it into a solid circle. The join would be cooled, after which, holes would be drilled through it at equal distances around its circumference for eventually nailing it to the wheel. When this had been done, the tyre would be heated red-hot around the whole of its circumference. As wheel tyreing was usually done on a Saturday morning, the boys not being at school, would earn a few coppers for keeping the fire going while the men turned the tyre on the forge. When ready, the heated tyre would be carried outside by two men holding it with tyre-irons'. It would be positioned on the wheel, the tyre-irons would be quickly thrown aside, as by now the wood would have begun to burn, and the two men would take up a sledge hammer each and knock the tyre on to the wheel as fast as they could. The boys would then walk round the wheel pouring water over it to cool it off and to prevent it burning anymore than it already had. Once the wheel was cold enough to handle, it would be undamped and taken off the platform to be stood on one side. Later, the nails would be knocked in to secure the tyre and the wheel was ready for putting back on its vehicle. If the wheel was a new one or had been repaired with new wood, the wheelwright would paint it with four coats of paint, as I mentioned earlier.

With the number of horses around at the time, both heavy and sporting, shoeing was a very lucrative business and hardly a day went by without at least one animal being shod. Shoeing alone was almost a full-time job. Horses would be brought from near and far and I have known the time when a queue has formed of horses waiting their turn. The smoke created when the new and hot shoe was embedded to the horses hoof had a distinct smell of its own, accepted by some people and detested by others. I didn't find it at all objectionable, and if I think about it, I can still smell it to this day.

Part of the original blacksmith's and wheelwright's shops are still standing as is the blacksmith's cottage, although they have been renovated and partly rebuilt in recent years and now bear hardly any resemblance to what they were formally.

In Playford Road on the site of the present cul-de-sac known as 'The Mills', stood a windmill. It was owned by a Mr Alfred Dawson, known locally as 'Diddley'. I can remember the mill working in my very young days, but, it disappeared some time around 1930. I am not sure of its actual fate and I have been told two different stories regarding its demise. One was that it caught fire and burnt down, the other that it was deliberately demolished. However, regardless of which, if either, of these stories is correct, its passing resulted in the loss of a well-known landmark, as, prior to the building of the numerous houses in the area it could be seen from a considerable distance. Luckily for Mr Dawson, the loss of his mill didn't mean the end of his business career because he also owned a number of steam vehicles, in the form of traction engines, ploughing engines, portable steam engines, steam rollers, steam wagons and threshing tackles. His vehicles were to be found working all over East Suffolk in one way or another. Each engine as it moved around pulled a type of caravan along with its other equipment. The engine men would live and sleep in this van during the working week and only got home at weekends. To see one of these set ups travelling from job to job was something never to be forgotten. In the case of a set of threshing tackle for example, directly behind the engine would be the caravan, attached to the rear end of which would be the threshing drum connected to the elevator behind it, which in turn would have the water cart in tow. One can imagine what the overall length of these five vehicles in tandem was, and it was always a matter of amazement as to how the engine steersman manoeuvred such a train of vehicles round the bends of the country roads, some of which at that time were not much more than cart tracks. They did it without flinching and thought no more of it than a car driver does today driving his car on much wider and better surfaced roads. On arrival at the destination, the vehicles would be unhooked and taken in to the site one at a time unless the entrance was particularly wide; more often than not it would be no larger than a normal field gate. You will have noticed that I referred to the engine steersman, the reason being that when travelling on the road from site to site, the law stated that there should be two men on the engine, the driver, who's job it was to set the gears, refuel the fire as necessary and apply the brake when required, bearing in mind that only the engine was fitted with a brake on the rear wheels only, and a steersman who's job was obviously self-explanatory. The drive through the gear train was to the rear wheels, each of which was fitted with a driving-pin some two inches in diameter. When turning into an entrance the driving-pin on the opposite side of the engine to the direction that it needed to turn would have to be pulled out in order to allow that rear wheel to turn freely on the axle. For example, if turning left, the pin on the off-side wheel would be taken out. Once inside the entrance the pin would be put in again. It was normally the steersman's job to jump off the engine to remove pins while the driver took it through the gateway. Once on site, the person for whom the work was being carried out was usually held responsible for maintaining the supply of coal and water throughout the period that the engine was working there. The maintenance of the engine and equipment has already been described in Chapter 3.

As threshing was also dealt with in the previous chapter it is opportune at this point for me to say something about 'steam ploughing'. The engines used were slightly larger than the normal traction engine, more powerful, greater in length and had a wider wheel-base. A very popular engine was produced by Fowler & Co of Leeds, and these were commonly referred to as 'Fowlers'. Ploughing engines were also produced by other firms, but, 'Fowlers' were always the best known. Underneath the engine was a horizontal drum that carried the wire rope which would be attached to the plough before work commenced. This type of ploughing called for two engines, one at each end of the field in line with each other. The wire ropes from both engines would be run out and connected, one at either end of the plough. There were various types of plough. Probably the most popular was known as an 'Anti-Balance Plough', which could plough from two to eight furrows at a time. It could traverse the field backwards and forwards without having to be turned round at the ends. It was balanced on two large wheels and had the same number of shares on each end with their points towards the wheels. On reaching the end of the field it would be tipped so that the shares which had been working would now be out of the ground, and those that had been out of the ground would now be working. As regards the engine's part in all this, one would de-dutch its drum so as to feed the rope out, while the other engine at the opposite side of the field pulled the plough across. This procedure would then be reversed so that the plough went the opposite way. As the work progressed, both engines would move along the headlands until the field was completed. Communication between the two engine men as to when to start the pull or when to move along the headland was made by a wave of the hand or more usually by a blast on the steam whistle. There were other types of plough in use and different methods of steam-ploughing, but I have concentrated on the system used by Dawsons.

The firm owned one or two steam rollers which carried out road works mainly for East Suffolk County Council, as it was then. The workings of a steam roller was exactly the same as any other type of traction engine, the only difference being in that it was fitted with flat rolls at the front instead of wheels and the rear wheels were flat instead of ribbed.

A 'portable engine' was, as its name implies, portable. It had a small boiler and firebox mounted on four iron wheels. It was not self-propelled and was usually fitted with a pair of shafts so that it could be drawn by a horse. It was used for driving various types of machinery that needed something more than man-power. Mr Dawson had two or three of these which he hired out when required.

When Alfred Dawson died the business was taken over by his son, Douglas, The steam engines worked through until after the Second World War when they were gradually sold off and disposed of. I worked for Douglas Dawson after leaving the R.A.F. in 1946, during which time I acted as steersman on numerous occasions and really enjoyed the experience. I found it most exhilarating and it gave me a certain feeling of satisfaction to think that I was actually fulfilling the ambition of many boys of the period which was to drive a steam engine. I was sorry to see them leaving the yard for the last time, the majority of them on their way to be broken up for scrap, a sad end after they had given so many years of faithful service. Luckily, one of them was saved and remained in Suffolk.It's new owner, Billy Jeans, had been driving it for many years whilst in the employ of the Dawsons and was very proud of it. He restored it to it's original pristine condition and up to the time of his death, he drove it around Suffolk attending steam rallies and other public events. Unfortunately, I have now lost track of it, but, I sincerely hope that it is still in preservation for all to see. After all the engines had left the yard, the engine sheds which had been home to them for so many years were converted into light engineering workshops carrying out sub-contract work for 'Ransomes Sims & Jeffries'. Eventually the business closed down, the machinery was sold off and the workshops were demolished to make way for housing. The village had lost yet another part of its history. There was not much more left to go.

I know of four very interesting and absorbing books on the subject of traction engines and steam-ploughing that are well worth reading by anyone interested in finding out more about them. Unfortunately they are all now out of print, but, they are probably available from the County Library. I list them below.

"Ploughing by Steam" by John Haining & Colin Tyler. Published by Model & Allied Publications.

“Steam Traction Engines, Wagons and Rollers" by Brian Johnson. Published by 'Blandford Press'.

"Steam in the Village" by R. A. Whitehead. Published by 'David & Charles'

"A Century of Tractions Engines" by W. J. Hughes. Published by 'David & Charles.

This last-named book contains an account of an epic journey by a traction engine from Ipswich to Edinburgh and back in 1871.

Various other lighter trades existed within the village. A 'slaughter house' owned by Joe Baker stood in Holly Lane. It was basically a wooden shed, white-washed inside, with a concrete floor in which was a trough so that water could drain away into the roadway. Large iron hooks hung from the rafters and on the floor stood a bench on which the carcases were cut up. A very large wooden vat, big enough to hold a fully-grown pig, stood in the centre of the floor. Thinking back, it certainly would not have complied with today's Health and Safety regulations. It was confined to pig-killing only, and being before the days of the humane killer, a knife was used to cut the pig's throat. The pig was then hung up by the hind legs for a time to allow the blood to drain away, during which time the vat was filled up with hot water from a copper outside in the yard. After draining, the carcase would be placed in the vat and scrubbed off with a brush, after which it would be halved lengthwise. Apart from the entrails, hardy any part of it would be wasted. The village folk would purchase the offals, trotters, heads etc. The boys would ask for the bladders to blow up to use as footballs. Some people , if they could afford it, would buy a complete half-pig. This would be cut up and salted down in large brown-stone jars for use as needed later on. The head and any other off-cuts would be made into 'pork-cheese' as it was called then. The so-called 'brawn' sold today bears no resemblance to it whatsoever. The surplus fat, that we no longer see, would be 'tried down' for lard or cut up into small squares, known as scraps, and fried until crisp on the outside. They were lovely for tea with bread and butter. Despite today's way of thinking, fat didn't seem to do us any harm at that time judging from the villager's good health and robustness. Some people kept their own pig in the back yard. It served two purposes in that it ate all the kitchen scraps and ensured the household a regular supply of food. Those that did would take it along to the slaughter house when it was big enough, usually when about six months old, and replace it with a piglet.

A small lock-up shop adjoined the end of Tablet Cottages. It was owned by a grocer by the name of Welham who owned another shop in Ipswich near The Golden Key' public house on Woodbridge Road. The village shop was managed by a Harry Keeble. Although a very small building consisting of the shop and a small store-room behind, it was surprising that it carried the number of commodities it did. Being a general store, one could purchase almost anything there from a packet of pins, through a complete range of groceries and provisions, to a gallon of paraffin oil. Any thing out of stock would be available no later than the following day as Welhams owned a "Trojan" chain-driven motor van which ferried between the Ipswich and Rushmere shops. As you entered the village shop, I can remember an area of about four feet square where the customers stood in front of an 'L' shaped counter. Behind the counter on one side was a large marble slab, supported on wooden brackets, used for provisions, butter, bacon, lard etc. on the back of which were displayed bottles of sauce, jars of pickles and the like. On opening up the shop one morning, imagine Harry Keeble's surprise when he discovered that the slab had collapsed during the night. I actually saw this myself as I called in the shop on my way to school to buy some sweets. It was just a great heap of broken glass, sauce, piccalilli, pickled onions, butter and numerous other commodities all mixed up like a gigantic trifle. Poor Harry was in such a temper about it that I thought it best to scarper, so I made a hasty retreat and went without my sweets for that morning. As regards hygiene, I can remember standing in the shop one day, waiting my turn to be served, when a customer asked for a gallon of paraffin, at the same time handing Harry the evil smelling can over the counter. Harry went into the storeroom, filled the can from a large red drum which stood supported on two concrete blocks, returned, and handed it to the customer after which he wiped his hands on the smock he was wearing. The lady then asked for a half pound of bacon, which was already rashered, whereupon Harry took some rashers from the pile with his fingers and placed them on the scales for weighing. I bet that bacon tasted lovely. The shop closed shortly after the Second World War when it was taken over and used by a shoe repairer before it was eventually demolished with Tablet Cottages.

Standing in the grounds of "The Limes" was a small dairy, looked after by a Mr Fairweather. Milk from the cows owned by the occupier of the big house was brought to the dairy. In the 'nettice' or cool room, there were large shallow pans on a bench into which the fresh milk was poured to await processing. Some of it would be made into butter or cheese. The remainder would be sold to the villagers as fresh milk. Local children would be sent to the dairy each day to purchase the milk which was taken home in a variety of containers such as screw-top beer bottles, jugs, or purposely made tin cans fitted with a lid and carrying handle. The dairy and it's adjoining cottage were made into one and are still standing and lived in today.

Opposite the slaughter-house in Holly Lane was a very small lock-up shop either owned or rented by a 'shimmaker' (shoe repairer) by the name of Jack Peck. He lived in Ipswich and came to the shop two or three days a week which gave him adequate time to repair the boots and shoes handed in by the villagers because, as mentioned earlier, the majority of men repaired their families shoes themselves. However, he liked, perhaps more than his fair share, of beer and he had a companion in the form of a tabby cat who, like his master, preferred beer to milk which it would drink by the saucer-full several times a day.

Whilst on the subject of beer it might be appropriate for me at this stage to mention the three sources of supply that the village had to offer to those who looked upon this beverage as part of their daily diet. There were two public houses and an off-licence. The two pubs still exist to this day. One stood in Humberdoucy Lane and at the time of which I write it was known as "The Greyhound", a typical country pub which was not much more than an over-large cottage with a very small bar and smoke room lit in the evenings by oil lamps. On entering, it reminded one of the beer houses described so vividly by Dickens in his novels. It's landlord was a Jim Keeble who at times could be the most irritable person imaginable, especially if someone asked for another drink when it was approaching closing time when he would say "if you can't drink it quick, you don't want it, and in that case you can't have it". Likewise, if someone had been waiting to be served and tried to rush him, the reply would be "give me time and a big enough shovel and I will bury the town", when he would deliberately go and serve somebody else instead. The building was greatly enlarged and modernised, I think sometime in the early 1930s, since which time it has been known as The Garland'.

The other public house, known as the 'Falcon' stands on Playford Road at the end of a row of cottages. In my boyhood days it too was not much larger than one of the cottages adjoining it, in fact, strangers to the area were known not to realise that it was a pub. Like it's competitor, it was also enlarged and modernised but retained its original name.

The remaining source of supply was the off-licence. This was situated on the corner of The Street and Holly Lane. It did as much if not more day-time trade than either of the two pubs, being well-patronised by the blacksmiths, wheelwright and farm workers, not forgetting Jack Peck, the cobbler. During the 1950s a Mr Shiplee took it over from which time it became a general store as well as an off-licence. Although it changed hands a few times, over the years, it remained in business until around 1981 when, due to the increasing number of supermarkets opening up, it no longer remained a viable proposition, much to the dismay of the people then living in the immediate vicinity who had not got cars, the nearest shops then being over a mile away.

The Post Office was the front room of one of a row of cottages that stood on the corner of Humberdoucy Lane and Rushmere Road, The cross roads were very much narrower than they are now. The new Post Office, the one that closed down around 1992 and it's adjoining house, were built behind the cottages before they were demolished. The Post Office about which I write was a quaint old place. The postmaster was a Mr Ashley, a little short man,and getting on a bit in years, who, when he was not occupied with customers, would sit on his stool behind a wire-netting grill with a pair of round, silver metal-framed glasses perched on his nose. On opening the door and entering the place, a very large bell on a spring would dang away, stirring Mr Ashley from his reverie, forcing from him a grunt which served as a kind of greeting. Inside the door there was a step down into the shop of some nine inches which could be quite hazardous for anyone who did not know of it. Probably as a means of supplementing his income, he sold a few different kinds of sweets, usually of the boiled variety, which were stored in jars standing on shelves fixed to the wall, some of which necessitated the use of a pair of rickety wooden steps to reach them. On the way home from school, some of the children would enter the shop in parties of three or four together, and after being greeted with the usual grunt and a "what do you want", the first one would ask for, perhaps, a half-penny worth of aniseed balls. (The variety of sweet demanded was immaterial providing the jar containing them was on the top shelf which had been ascertained before entering the shop by looking through the window). Mr Ashley would shuffle along and position the steps as necessary, climb up and take the chosen jar down, stand it on the counter, open it, weigh up or count out the sweets, put them in a cone-shaped bag which he would then lay on the counter, while he closed the jar and climbed up again to replace it on it's shelf, come down the steps, hand the bag of sweets over and take the half-penny which he threw into an old toffee tin that served as a till. On asking the second child "what do you want", the reply would be "a half-penny worth of aniseed balls" whereupon the old man would go through the serving process again exactly as before, and repeat it for as many times as there were children in the party. This prank went on continuously, much to the satisfaction of the children. Mr Ashley never seemed to catch on as to what the game was and leave the jar down until all had been served, although more than likely, if he had have done, a different variety would have been selected by each child, so long as it's jar was on the top shelf.

To complete this chapter on traders, mention must be made of the visiting tradesmen who came to the village on a regular basis, without whom, would have meant long walks to the shops in Ipswich if certain items were required. The Co-op had dozens of horses and a range of carts of various types, each designed for carrying specific items. Both the milkman and the baker called daily although not at every house because some people bought their milk from Fairweather's dairy whilst some always made their own bread. Another Co-op cart came round once a week. This was the 'oilman'. He had a covered cart which housed a very large oil tank containing paraffin. Hanging on the back of the cart near the outlet tap were tin measuring jugs of different sizes and capacities. Oil would be drawn from the storage tank and poured into the customer's own container. In racks around the storage tank were soaps and washing powders, matches, candles, polishes, scouring powder, linen pegs, tin kettles, frying pans, saucepans, in fact numerous items that went under the heading of hardware. Yet another Coop vehicle delivered the week's grocery order. Barnard's cart came round once a week, delivering straw, fodder, chicken's corn and pig feed, dog biscuits, flour from their own mill, all of which had been ordered on the previous week's visit, at the same time collecting the next week's order. All these horse-drawn carts carried a 'nose-bag', normally hung on a hook underneath the cart and holding the horse's food. This bag would be hung on the bridle, so that the horse could eat, whenever the driver decided to stop for a pint at the local. Another weekly caller was the coalman who worked for Roland Manthorpe whose coal yard was next to Derby Road Station in Ipswich. The coal was already bagged up and was sold from the cart by the hundredweight. Most people bought a single bag each time he called as their weekly income did not allow them to buy any more, despite the fact that it was only 1/6d (seven & a half pence) a bag.

On Monday evenings, the two 'Beckett' brothers from Westerfield came round with what could be classed as one of the first 'mobile shops, a Model 'T' Ford Van, laden with an assortment of goods which included groceries and provisions, patent medicines and ointments, general hardware, doormats, garden tools and paraffin oil which would be drawn from a tank slung underneath the vehicle's chassis. The village was never wanting for soft drinks. A regular caller was a firm called 'Ministers' who sold non-alcoholic 'Dandelion & Burdock', Stone-ginger Beer, Cloudy Lemonade and such like in one-gallon stone bottles costing 1/- (5p) plus 3d (1.25p) returnable deposit on the bottle. Likewise, 'Corona' called every week selling four one-quart bottles of assorted mineral waters in a wooden crate for 1/- (5p).I can honestly say that it was far better than the 'Corona' drinks we get today. During the summer months the 'Cremax' ice-cream man would arrive on two evenings a week on a motor-bike fitted with a box-type sidecar. He came from somewhere in Norfolk and usually did a very good trade if the weather was particularly warm.

## Chapter 5 Religion

As now, there were two places of worship serving the community at the time of which I write, and both of them were reasonably well attended. At that time, the 'Parish Church of St Andrew' was much smaller than it is today, and probably still as it was originally, being a typical medieval church as built by the Normans. As a boy, I was taken there quite often by my grandmother who, apart from attending it regularly for worship on Sundays, was caretaker of it for thirty six years, and walked there three or four times during the week to clean the floors and polish the brass work, of which there was an abundance, including candle holders, lamps and a magnificent solid brass lectern in the form of an eagle with partly outstretched wings. Unfortunately, this was no longer seen following the extensions to the building carried out in more recent years, since when I have always wondered what happened to it. Whenever I accompanied my grandmother on one of these cleaning missions, I was usually entrusted with the job of filling and cleaning the oil lamps which I did with some trepidation in case I should damage them or break the glasses. As they belonged to the church I regarded them as being sacred and I always feared that I would be punished for my sins if I defaced them in any way. My grandmother was also responsible for the floral decorations for Sundays and in the event of weddings and funerals. What little heating there was in the church at that time was attended to by a man who was taken on to light and stoke the boiler when it was required. I can remember that the heating left a lot to be desired and at times, by the end of the 'service', most worshippers were dose to freezing point.

On entering the church, one was immediately aware of the look, smell and feel of the surroundings. It really was what is termed 'a very pretty church', especially if it was dark outside, when the shadows cast by the primitive-style lighting created a feeling of wonderment and expectation. My mind would immediately drift back to what I had read in my history books regarding life in monasteries and castles hundreds of years earlier. On either side of the central aisle were fixed oak pews, each bearing a carved end depicting a bird, an animal or an angel. The front pews were reserved for the so-called 'gentry' of the area. Proceeding towards the altar, one would pass the pulpit on the left-hand side and the lectern on the right before corning to the choir stalls on both sides, after which, on the left-hand side, was a door leading to the vestry. The organ was situated behind the left-hand choir stalls. The organist, a Mr Ashford. was totally blind. He lived in Ipswich on the comer of Woodbridge Road and St Helens Church Lane, and on Sundays he would walk from home to the church and back twice in the day, completely on his own with just his stick to guide him. He also did the same walk for weddings and funerals and for the weekly choir practice.

The churchyard always seemed a fascinating place with its large gravestones and tomb-like structures, many of which were removed to make way for the new extensions. Earlier in the century, or possibly in Victorian times, wreaths of artificial flowers, mainly white, placed inside a glass-dome on a metal base were obviously in vogue as many of the graves had one of these standing on them. Underneath the bases was a favourite hiding place for small grass snakes and on the way home from school we would sometimes go into the churchyard and gently lift the domes to reveal any snakes hiding there. We always kept a record of the numbers we found and I can remember that the numbers varied considerably at different times of the year.

The vicar was a Rev McMahon who always had a habit whilst preaching the sermon of suddenly taking his watch from his pocket and looking at it, from which point he would speed up the service, on the completion of which he would quickly disappear into the vestry. Before the congregation had time to leave the church, he would be away on his bicycle in the direction of the 'Garland' where he would partake of a couple of whiskeys, leaving the verger to shake hands and bid farewell to the worshippers.

I remember that I was once asked if I would blow the organ on the following Sunday as the regular blower was sick. To carry out this task, you were enclosed in a little room behind the organ which was kept going by filling the bellows with air. This was achieved by pulling a wooden handle, fixed to the wall, up and down. A small lead weight on a string would, by moving up and down, indicate when more wind was required to keep the organ playing. On this particular day I dozed off during the sermon, probably because it was so interesting, and apparently all Mr Ashford got when he wanted to play the final hymn was an unusual creaking sound. For some reason I was never asked to blow the organ again.

The Baptist Chapel was a much plainer, brick-built building erected with the financial help of Mr Robert Lacey Everitt. It too was generally well attended, usually, it was said at the time, by those who were too tired to walk the distance to the church, although I doubt if that was the true reason. It always seemed to attract a devoted and loyal congregation and was renowned for its Sunday School which the majority of the local children attended. Each year at Christmas time a children's party was arranged and held in the Village Hall, and during the summer a Sunday School 'treat' would be staged in the grounds of the 'Pinetoft', a house standing in parkland on Rushmere Road where Winston Avenue now is. The chapel has also been enlarged over the years and is as popular now as it was in former times and does a lot of good work, particularly for the elderly.

Having two places of worship meant that there was always two 'Harvest Festivals' held in the village, and as they were intentionally held on different Sundays, both buildings were always full with some parishioners dedicated to one church attending the other on this occasion.The interiors of the buildings was decorated with flowers, fruit, vegetables, sheaves of corn and always , the 'harvest loaf, a very large loaf of bread especially baked to order for the occasion. Every corner, window sill, shelf and crevice would hold something that had been donated by a parishioner. The singing of the harvest hymns rang out to a crescendo which would remain in the memory until harvest came round again. On the Monday morning the displays would be broken up, the produce being sent to the hospital and children's home.

Occasionally on a summer's evening, the Salvation Army would visit the village and hold an open-air service on the corner near the off-licence. At times it was quite amusing to see some of the men, after a hard day's work in the fields, sitting around drinking their pints of beer and joining in the hymn singing.

## Chapter 6 Entertainment

Most of what could be classed as entertainment was of the villagers' own making. Radio was in its infancy and the few receivers that were around belonged only to those who could afford to buy one. For these fortunate few it was, unlike today, not just a matter of plugging it in to the mains supply, switching it on, pushing a pre-select button and automatically getting the programme you wanted to listen to. There was no electricity supply to plug into at the time. That came in later years. The first necessity was an aerial which consisted of a length of copper wire, the longer the better, suspended between two poles let into the ground and at the maximum possible height. One end of the wire had to be taken into the house through a hole drilled through a window-frame so that it could be connected to the receiver or wireless set, as it was usually known as. The receiver itself was housed in a large plywood cabinet with a fretted design on the front, usually of leaves or flowers, behind which was the loud speaker, below which would be the large tuning knob and two smaller knobs to control the volume and tone respectively. Also inside the cabinet was the chassis to which were fixed the components necessary to receive a signal, not the tiny parts found in todays radios, but, large bulky objects of various shapes and forms. Probably the most popular model was known as a 'three-valve' receiver, meaning that the three large glass valves it contained would convert the incoming signal into the optimum output possible. The receiver needed three types of battery to power it, namely a dry 'high-tension, a 'grid-bias, and a wet accumulator, a glass-cased affair which had to be recharged at frequent intervals at the nearest radio shop. Tuning in to a particular station was a bit of a 'hit-and-miss' procedure. The tuning knob, usually some five inches in diameter with calibrations and numbers etched around its circumference, would have to be turned one way or the other until the required station was picked up. The adjacent number on the knob would be noted for future occasions, although there was no guarantee that the signal would be heard at the same setting every time and it could vary by as much as an inch either way. The set had to be re-tuned practically every time it was switched on. But for all that, the 'wireless set' was the focal point of the household and a prized possession of those who had one.

The less fortunate ones had to be satisfied with whatever public event was staged in the Village Hall'. Of course there were cinemas and a variety theatre in Ipswich, but attending these meant a long walk there and back because of the lack of public transport. The younger people would go on their bicycles which they left outside the cinema without any fear of having them stolen or interfered with. Such was the honesty of the population in those days.

As mentioned above, the meeting place for the villagers and local residents was the village hall. It was situated in Humberdoucy Lane, next door to the school on the site of the present new 'Community Centre'. It was wooden building which I believe was an ex-army hut, and I think it was donated to the village by the Everitts, the local farming family. I have been told that it was originally intended for use by the local lads who returned after service with the forces during the 'Great War'. It was regularly used in the evenings by these lads, who would meet there to play billiards, cards, dominoes, darts and other games, and came to be referred to as the 'Men's Club'. Around 1930 an extension was built on to the rear of the hall for use as a billiard room. The original billiard table was moved from the main hall to the new room and an additional table was purchased. From then on the hall came into more general use by other organisations such as the scouts, guides, and women's institute to name a few and it was always the venue for the parish council and commoners meetings.

For many years regular events were organised for the benefit and entertainment of the local community.Saturday evening dances were popular, usually attracting a large crowd when the young men would be looking for partners from among the local lasses. It was nice to be let off the leash on these occasions, out of the sight of watchful parents, and a few romances blossomed from chance meetings at the Saturday 'hop', although I hasten to add that not all of them bore fruit. Some of the older generation were not so slow either, if the opportunity arose to partner someone else's spouse.

The weekly whist-drive on Wednesday evenings was a popular event attracting many of the more mature residents, mainly females, who apparently, so I've been told, were never at a loss finding something or someone to talk about, more usually the latter. Imagine how the ears of the unfortunate victim selected as the topic of conservation must have burnt when the familiar phrase "should be ashamed at such goings on" was uttered out of earshot, as it undoubtedly was on more than one occasion. One wonders how any concentration whatsoever could have been devoted to the playing of whist.

Every year during the Christmas season the annual concert would be staged. This was an event that almost everyone looked forward to. It was guaranteed to attract a full house at sixpence (2.5p) a head, half price for children. The descriptive term 'concert', as it was known as in those days, should not be confused with the musical concerts of today, the sole musical instrument being a slightly out-of-tune upright piano, usually played by a pianist of very little musical talent. I suppose the only correct way of describing this event would be to class it as a very amateurish variety show. The 'stars' were usually local people, some of whom invariably suffered from stage fright and at times were quite inaudible above the thumping of the keys by the exuberant pianist who always made sure that his or her contribution to the proceedings was heard by everyone present. The programme consisted of short sketches, solos, mediocre jokes by a poor comedian and monologues. Sometimes a conjurer would be brought in or perhaps a soloist playing a squawky violin. It can be safely said that none of those who trod the boards' were of 'Palladium' quality, but, the audience always appreciated their efforts, the concert being classed as one of the highlights of the year. In fact, for some people it was the only time they went out at night from one year's end to the next. After the final curtain came the long walk home in pitch darkness, unless it happened to be a moonlit night. There were no street lights at that time and there were many strange sounds to be heard in the blackness.

The other annual highlight was the 'Fete and Flower Show' held on the meadow next to the parish church. It was held in July and was always looked forward to with great anticipation and excitement, especially by the children as it gave them the opportunity to participate in the events. Large marquees were erected to house the vegetable and flower shows and for the serving of refreshments. Stalls and stands would be positioned all around the perimeter of the meadow. They catered for all ages in one way or another with their games and other competitions, awarding prizes of very little value to anyone who could achieve the objective which had been set, such as three bullseyes with three darts, four tennis balls out of five in the bucket or something similar which was equally as difficult to do, the stallholders collecting a great deal of money from those of the public who were usually conned into having a go. The most popular competition of all was 'bowling for a pig', probably because the prize, a piglet, was worth winning, for once fattened up it would provide the winner and his family with several months supply of meat. Roundabouts and swings were there for the younger children. Another area of the meadow was marked out for races, flat, sack, egg and spoon, hurdles etc, not forgetting high and long jumping. There were various classes for all age groups with cash prizes for the winners. While all this activity was going on, a brass band played its usual repertoire of suitable music, and later on in the evening it would provide music for dancing on the vicarage lawn. The flower and vegetable show was the greatest attraction, the marquees being full of various produce which had been staged with meticulous care. Usually after the judging was finished a certain amount of hostile discussion would ensue amongst the exhibitors as to why Charlie's carrots had beaten George's carrots or why Mother Hubbard's raspberry jam had come second to Jenny Wren's which had too many pips in it. The outcome of these discussions was more often than not a mutual agreement that the judges did not know how to do their job. The flower tent was usually a joy to behold with its vast range of pot-plants and cut flowers, all bearing blooms of every colour imaginable. It was always well patronised by the womenfolk, just before dosing time, who would jostle each other to be given a bunch of roses, sweet-peas or some other variety that the exhibitors had no further use for. For reasons unknown to me, the annual fete fizzled out during the thirties much to the disappointment of everyone.

The village could boast a football team (Rushmere United) in the days of which I write. It played in the Ipswich Junior League and usually finished each season in the top three. Its home ground was a meadow near Villa Farm, and its players were all local lads. Unfortunately, as they got older, females became a bigger attraction than football, and they left the team one by one to pursue a different pastime As there were no younger men to replace them, the football club faded into oblivion, and the supporters turned their attention to Ipswich Town who had just been accepted into the Football League.

## Chapter 7 Personalities

Among the village personalities, probably the most well known of them were the Mellors. They made it their business to make sure that everyone knew who they were. Major Mellor had spent several years serving in India and on his retirement from the Army and his subsequent return to England, he and his wife decided to come to Rushmere to take up residence at The Limes', a large house standing in its own grounds at the comer of Rushmere Street and Lambert's Lane. The Major was not long in inflicting his authority on the villagers, and was soon adopting the role of a self-appointed country squire. He was obviously well-off and owned horses, cattle one or two horse-drawn carriages and later on a Rolls-Royce car. He also owned the dairy mentioned in Chapter 4. Together with his wife they employed several servants to attend to their needs including a housekeeper, cook, kitchen and chamber maids, groom, gardeners and, on the acquisition of the car, a chauffeur. They would ride around the area in their vehicles, driven by an employee of course, and as they passed, the men and boys were expected to raise their caps to them and women and girls to curtsey. If anyone failed to carry out this acknowledgement, the driver would be told to stop, while a reprimand was given to the offender. If it was a boy or girl, they would be told to report to the housekeeper at ten o'clock on the following Saturday morning at the kitchen door, when they would be given a job to do such as cleaning knives and forks, sweeping the yard or something similar. On leaving school, my brother went to work at The Limes as a 'backhouse' boy, who's job it was to do a variety of chores in the kitchen, stables, garden or anywhere else where an undesirable job needed doing. He was to work six and a half days a week with Sunday afternoon off. His first job every morning was to clean and polish several pairs of riding boots and shoes. He was given a small tin of shoe polish on his first day there, and on asking for a new tin some two months later, was politely told by the lady of the house that in her opinion "what he needed was a little less polish and a lot more elbow-grease". On another occasion, when being invited to attend the wedding of one of the village lads, he asked for Saturday afternoon off, on which Mrs Mellor promptly told him that "she wasn't aware that the working classes were entitled to a half-day-off" and that he must go in to work as usual. However, he decided to go to the wedding instead for which he was stopped sixpence (2.50p) from his wages which were at that time six shillings (30p) a week. Probably as a means of 'softening-up' and keeping face with the villagers, every Christmas time she would ride round the village in her horse-drawn carriage, with a maid walking beside it, whose job it was to knock on the door of every household, when Mrs Mellor would give the occupier a quarter of a pound of tea. After the decease of the Mellors, The Limes became a convent for a few years, before being converted into flats.

Further along the road towards the post office, stood a house, which is still standing today, which was known as 'The Cottage'. It was occupied by a Mr and Mrs Chevalier. They were the complete opposite of the Mellors, treating everyone with respect, regardless of their station and were always prepared to help anyone in trouble. They also employed one or two servants and a gardener. I remember Mrs Chevalier as a small demure lady with rosy cheeks and a motherly disposition, well-liked by everyone. Mr Chevalier was one of the early wireless pioneers and had some very weird looking equipment in the house and in a large building, which he called his workshop, in the garden. I can recall seeing some very large glass valves mounted on the tops of cabinets which housed other strange looking objects with a large array of knobs of all sizes on their fronts. Wires dangled everywhere and batteries of various kinds stood about where there was space to put them. Their owner, although sociable, seemed slightly eccentric at times and would become quite irritable if things did not go as he thought they should. He would stand by the gate on occasions and enrol the help of the first person that came along to help him position an aerial. One end of the wire would be affixed to the house or workshop, the other end to a pole which his casual helper would have to carry around the garden, holding it upright until the strongest signal was received. No regard was paid to shrub and flower borders during this exercise. If the optimum point was in the middle of a flower border or the centre of a pathway, that was where the pole was put in. Aerials were suspended everywhere. After his death all the equipment was disposed of, the poles were all taken down and the garden took on a more natural look. For the last few months of her life, Mrs Chevalier had to be pushed around in a wicker-basket type wheel-chair with two large wheels at the back and a smaller steerable wheel at the front.

The local policeman was a Mr Pearl who was to be seen in the village almost every day, not so much as to ferret out offenders, but, rather to pass the time away chatting to anyone he came across. Everyone knew him and he knew everyone else who lived in the village. I would think he had been in the force for several years as he was not a young man, neither was he particularly fast in his movements, appearing to have just one speed, 'dead slow'. But for all that, he did a good job in keeping the peace and although us boys would speak to him when we couldn't avoid it, we always had a certain fear of him and did our best to keep out of his way. However, there were occasions when we would slip up and not see him until it was too late to avoid him. I well remember one such occasion when a party of us had spent the morning looking for bird's nests in the local hedgerows which was an annual pastime in that era, as was the taking and collecting of one egg from each nest that was found. Men and boys always wore peaked caps at that time and the eggs would be placed inside the front of the cap for safe transportation home, when a hole would be made in each end of the egg with a pin so that the contents could be blown out. On this particular day as we walked out of Playford Lane on our way home, there stood the 'copper' near the chapel, out of our sight until it was too late.We were sunk, scarpering being out of the question as our guilt would have then been obvious. There was nothing we could do except face the music.

"Ah" said he, "and where have you boys been?".

"We've been for a walk down the meadows" one of us replied.

"You haven't been interfering with any birds nests have you".

"Oh no Mr Pearl".

"So you haven't got any eggs then?"

"No, we just looked at them but we didn't take any".
Whereupon, he pressed his hand firmly on the front of my cap, saying, "You're a good boy aren't you" with a "don't interfere with them in future or you'll get a clip of the lug", (ear) - ( Policeman could, and would, give you a clout in those days.) Gradually, egg yolk and whites began seeping from my cap and running down my forehead. "You'll have to wash that lot off before you have your dinner" said Mr Pearl.

There was another time when we were scrumping apples from a tree which overhung the six foot high brick wall surrounding the garden of 'The Limes'. One boy had been lifted up so that from the top of the wall he could climb into the tree, pick the apples, and drop them down to us. Suddenly, the policeman's cap was spotted above the tops of the stinging nettles that were growing there. Someone had obviously seen us and had 'ticked him off' about what we were doing. Those of us on the ground beat a hasty retreat leaving our mate up the tree. In any case, he had not got time to get down before Mr Pearl was upon him.

"I think you'd better come down out of that tree" says the copper.

"Not so likely, not while you're there" came the reply.

"Ah well, I've got plenty of time so I'll sit down here and wait for you to come down". Mr Pearl sat down on the bank at the foot of the wall filled his pipe and settled down for a smoke. After about an hour, the hostage had had enough of sitting up the tree and decided to make his way down.

"So you've changed your mind then?"

"Yes, I want to do a .....".

"Well pick one or two more of them apples before you come down. I could do with some myself"

On reaching the ground and handing over the apples, the culprit received a clip round the ear and a warning, "don't let me catch you up there any more".

A Mrs Boast, Granny , as she liked to be called, apparently lived originally in the farm house at 'Limes Farm' where her husband was farm foreman or at least had some connection with the farm. That was before my time. When I first knew her, she was quite old and lived on her own in one of the two cottages in Playford Lane, her husband obviously having passed away sometime earlier. In later years her grandson lived with her. She was a remarkable old girl, as hard and as tough as old boots. She was very independent, doing everything herself and would be really irritable if someone offered to help her. As well as doing the housekeeping, cleaning and washing, she kept pigs and looked after her garden. I lived next door to her for a time and I can remember on day hearing a lot of knocking and rattling on the adjoining kitchen wall, I thought perhaps that she had fallen down and was trying to attract mine or my wife's attention to go and help her. On going round to her back door, I was amazed to see her standing on a board which was resting on a cupboard at one end and on a pair of steps at the other. She was brushing down the wall with a hand-brush. I dare not say anything to her in case it startled her and caused her to lose her balance and fall down. She was well into her seventies at the time. In the end, she lived to be over a hundred years old when she died and was reasonably active right up to the end.

Granny Boast had a daughter-in-law named Emily. She was a very good-hearted person and would help anybody. She lived in one of the Tablet Cottages', next door to the general store, which gave her an excellent view of the whole village in any direction. This suited her admirably as her one failing was that she had to know about everything that went on. Nothing missed her eyes or ears and she built up quite a reputation as the village gossip.

Another character was Stanley Rush, commonly known as 'Hawk'. He was a bit of a comic and was an expert with the catapult which he always carried with him wherever he went, together with a good supply of nice round pebbles. A great many hares and pheasants fell victim to his prowess. I saw him one evening looking through the hedge of a field in Holly Lane. On approaching him he motioned to me to be quiet. On looking through the hedge myself, I saw three hares on a brow in the field. Hawk smiled and said in a low voice, "Two of them are for me, the other one Norman Eyerett can have if he can catch it". He was referring to the farmer who owned the field. In all probability, Hawk had all three of them in the end. He was also an excellent dart player. Having a touch of arthritis in his fingers, he couldn't hold them like anybody else. He laid the dart in the palm of his hand and then threw it at the board with the speed of a bullet leaving a rifle.

He had a brother Tom, who everybody called Tucker'. He was a quieter chap than Hawk, but liked his beer equally as well. He was renowned for a peculiar laugh which consisted of a series of 'ahic-ahic-ahic-ahic-ahic-ahics'. He kept and bred ferrets which he would carry around inside his shirt. It was not unusual when he was talking to some unsuspecting person for one of them to crawl out round his neck.

Charlie Rush, no relation to the above, went round delivering milk from a horse-drawn milk float. The milk was contained in churns, from which a milk bucket, fitted with a lid, would be kept filled up. At the doorstep, the milk would be measured from the bucket and poured into the householder's jug. Charlie was a red-faced, jovial character who always wore a bowler hat and was never seen without a carnation in his buttonhole. His favourite tipple was 'Beano Stout' which he would drink in copious quantities before attempting to ride home on his bicycle on which he very rarely steered a straight course.

Sidney (Boxer) Jay kept hundreds of chickens on a piece of ground on which Chestnut Close now stands. He reared them from day-old chicks, through their egg laying period and into old age, when they would be killed off and sold for the table. I helped Boxer for a year or two with the killing and plucking in the days leading up to Christmas. He had his regular customers who ordered birds every year. After plucking, weighing and pricing, we would pack them into a wicker basket on the front of Boxer's trade bike and off we would go to deliver them. I remember one particular year, probably 1938, when Boxer took a bird to a house in Rushmere Road while I waited outside. After about five minutes he came out, still carrying the chicken. That old women says its not big enough" he said "She wants me to bring a bigger one". We carried on our way until we had delivered all the other birds. On the way home some hour and a half later, we stopped at the house in Rushmere Road again. By this time it was pitch dark. Boxer took the offending chicken from the basket, dosed the lid, and laid the bird on top of it. He then proceeded to stick his fist inside it, pushing in all directions, after which he shaped it up on the outside and promptly took it back to the door. He came back out without the chicken, beaming all over his face. When I asked him what happened, he replied "Oh, she said it was a lot better than the first one and I dabbed an extra ten-bob (50p) on the price". Another job that Boxer did was stoking the boiler at the Parish Church. On many occasions it was well past midnight when he called to do this. He was always to be seen, or heard, riding around on his bike, steering it with one hand and playing a mouth-organ which he held in the other.

To end this chapter on personalities, mention must be made of Nathan Bye, the shepherd, who worked for Norman Everett. He was in charge of a large flock of some two to three hundred sheep, maybe more. A popular figure, never to be seen without a smile, a friendly character with a very weather-beaten face, slouch hat and shepherd's crook, accompanied by his two border-collie dogs. He frequently passed through the village with his charges, calling out to everyone he saw on the way. He was often to be seen erecting sheep hurdles on the fields as he moved the sheep from plot to plot, replacing a spent grazing area with a new one, until eventually the whole field had been covered. During the lambing season he would sleep in a shepherd's caravan which would be moved from field to field, as he needed it, by a horse from the farm. A shepherd's life was certainly a lonely one.

## Chapter 8  The Heath

Although it is not within the area that, for the subject of this work I term as the village, it would be wrong of me not to say something about Rushmere Heath. It has been common land for time immemorial and over the centuries it has obviously contributed to, played its part, and had a bearing on the lives of the parishioners. I know very little of its early history and can only assume that it was once used for grazing as were other areas of common land throughout the country. I understand that it covers an area of around 170 acres.

Apparently, at sometime during the 1800s, a series of disputes broke out concerning the rights of the commoners over the ground. The commoner's leader was a gentleman by the name of Nat Ablitt, who argued on their behalf with the Lord of the Manor who happened to be the Marquis of Bristol. When these disputes were eventually resolved, Nat Ablitt, who at that time lived in the village, had a tablet inscribed and mounted on the front of his cottage, from which time the dwellings became known as Tablet Cottages'. When these cottages were demolished, the tablet was preserved and is now fixed to the front of the Baptist Church, only a few yards from where it was originally positioned. Many people passing through the village today stop to read it. Probably a lot of them ponder as to its origin and to the reason of its existence. For the interest of my readers, I quote its inscription which reads as follows:

**THIS TABLET**
**SHEWETH EVERY PERSONS RIGHT TO THE**
**HEATH WHO LIVES OR OCCUPIES IN THE**
**PARISH, BY THE DECISION OF**
**LANCELOT SHADWELL, COUNSELLOR IN**
**THE HOUSE OF LORDS, BEING APPLIED TO**
**WHEN THE 800/- WAS PAID BY THE**
**GOVERNMENT FOR THE TROOPS**
**EXERCISING THERE, HE GAVE HIS**
**OPINION THAT EVERY PERSON MUST HAVE**
**EQUAL SHARE WHO CUT WHINS AND FEED**
**CATTLE THERE, SO WE HAD ALL 8/- EACH**
**THEN, AND EVER SINCE THE PARISH**
**RECEIVE 5/- A YEAR THE TROOPS BEING**
**FEW, THIS 5/- IS ALWAYS DIVIDED.**
**ABLITT**

I have been told that around the end of the last century and the beginning of this, if gypsies were seen on the heath, the menfolk would take up sticks and cudgels and go to the heath to drive them off. Apparently, some of these encounters would get out of hand and quite bad injuries would be inflicted on both parties.

Army troops were still being trained on the heath during the First World War when the area being used became known as the 'Soldier's Ground', a term that still exists to this day. It lies not far from the present Heath Road. The 'Heath Money' referred to on the tablet continued to be paid to the commoners up to 1947, when each share amounted to 2/6 (12.5p), by which time the number of households in the parish had increased to the point when the pay-out was no longer worthwhile.

Another item of interest regarding the history of the heath is the fact that some 200 years ago, a gibbet stood somewhere within its boundary, on which local criminals ended their days.

Its use as a golf course goes back to the 1890s, since when it has been more peaceful than in earlier times. To the boys of my generation it was looked upon as somewhere to go when we were not involved in anything else. Many's the time when we were told off by an irate golfer because he thought we had strayed from the footpath, or was of the opinion that we shouldn't have been on the heath at all, despite the fact that it was common land and we were, after all, sons of commoners. Admittedly the greens and fairways were leased to the golf dub, but, they couldn't stop the parishioners, or anyone else for that matter, from being there, providing no damage was done to their playing areas. On the other hand, some players were glad of us to dredge the valley pond for lost balls, so that they could purchase any that we recovered from us for next to nothing.

Dredging the pond was to us a specialised job needing a certain amount of equipment which had to be made. We would make a shallow-type basket from small-mesh wire-netting, about two foot long at the front end, the bottom side of which was weighted with a bar of flat iron. To this would be attached a length of thin rope which was longer than the diameter of the pond. The basket, or dredge, as it was more usually called, would be laid at the edge of the pond. We would then walk round the pond , playing out the rope, until we arrived at the opposite side, when the rope would be pulled in, dragging the basket across the bottom of the pond, hoping all the while that it would have scooped up a ball or two on the way. Sometimes, a whole day would be spent doing this without a single ball being recovered. Those that we did find would be cleaned up and sold to the golfers for 6d (2.5p) each.

A few of the villagers would cut whins on the heath to take home for heating the brick ovens which were used for baking home-made bread. Others would cut a few turves occasionally, perhaps for turfing the grave of a loved one in the churchyard.

The fires of recent years which receive prominent publicity in the local press are not something new or unusual. There have been fire outbreaks on the heath for as long as my memory serves me and they will probably continue for many years to come.

The area of heathland lying between Woodbridge Road and Playford Road is known as the 'Little Heath'. At one time sand was dug from it when it was referred to locally as the 'Sand Pit'. I would imagine that at one time this area was connected to the main heath and was separated from it when Woodbridge Road was originated.

## Chapter 9  The dawn of Progress

As far as the village was concerned, the 1930s heralded the commencement of luxury living. Up to this time the villagers had relied on coal and oil for heating and lighting, and well water for drinking and cooking. Now all this was about to change, at least for some. The more unfortunate ones still had a little longer to wait before they too could enjoy the benefits of piped water, gas and electricity. Some were a little pessimistic about the whole thing wondering if they would be able to pay for the services on the low wages of the period while for others they couldn't come quick enough.

Around 1932, lorries suddenly started invading the village, bringing large wooden poles which were unloaded and placed in stacks in convenient places along the roadside. Next came huge wooden reels holding yards and yards of wire cabling. It was not long before gangs of men were busy digging holes everywhere and erecting the poles. When this work had been completed, another gang moved in, some of whom would climb up and down the poles like squirrels in a tree. Soon the village was festooned with wire, and before long a few of the cottages were more brightly lit than before. Not long afterwards, the roads were dug up in order to lay gas mains and everyone started complaining about the mud being carried into their houses. But, not all dwellings were automatically connected to these new services. Several continued to use oil for cooking and lighting. It depended entirely on whether people who owned their dwelling could afford to pay to have them installed, or in the case of rented property, whether the landlord was willing to meet the expense. Some people preferred electricity, while others favoured gas for cooking and lighting. A few were lucky enough to have both, electric for lighting and gas for cooking. Hardly any had electric or gas heating. Everyone preferred their open coal fires.

The water main was laid around 1936. Again the same muddy conditions were endured, this time with the added inconvenience of having part of the road completely blocked off, because of the size of the pipes being laid demanding a wider trench. Access to the village was restricted to one end only, from either Playford Road or Rushmere Road, depending on the progress of the work. Not all dwellings were individually connected and some people had to share a communal tap installed outside in the yard. The two wells continued to be used until after the Second World War when the authorities suddenly condemned the water in them as being unfit for human consumption, much to the disgust of the people still using them, who took an instant dislike to the taste and hardness of tap water. The wells were filled in by householders who found them convenient depositories for unwanted rubbish. Another aspect of country life had gone for ever.

There were other changes taking place in the late 1930s. Motor vehicles were becoming more numerous, and mechanisation was being introduced to the farming community, as tractors started taking over the work previously done by horses. Although not everyone realised, or even expected it, another war was not far off. When it came, the young men in my age group were called up for service, and I lost touch with the village for six and a half years, except for the brief spells when I was lucky enough to come home on leave, when it was immediately obvious that peoples attitudes were changing fast. The friendliness and the close knit community spirit that used to be was disappearing. It was then that I realized that things would never be the same again.

Piped sewerage came to us after the war and the weekly collection of household rubbish began in the 1950s. Street lighting was also introduced. Within the space of a few years the farm, where I had spent so many happy hours, had disappeared like most of the cottages and the village shop. New houses were springing up all around and a different class and type of people were arriving to occupy them.

The village was no more. It was the end of an era.

## Chapter 10 Miscellany

To conclude this work I relate a few snippets that were not included in the main text.

On the site of the present church car park stood a row of six cottages. They had no front gardens, the front doors opening up on to the road. In one of these cottages lived an eccentric spinster by the name of Talbot, who thought the world was infested by evil spirits. When she needed water, she would lower the pail into the well, but, she would always ask a neighbour, usually a Mr Foulger, to pull it up, as she was certain that evil spirits would be brought up in the pail. At night, she would stand at her open front door ringing a small hand-bell to frighten them away. Naturally, she was a regular target for the children, who would scratch on her front door or rattle the door knob, and then run away when she opened the door, ringing her bell. I can remember one particular night when she probably thought that the evil spirits had arrived. It was round about Guy Fawkes night. Children were allowed to buy fireworks in those days. Three of us were on the way home from the scout meeting. On reaching the cottages, we decided to put a half-penny banger into Miss Talbot's keyhole. After lighting it, we galloped across the road into the field to hide behind the hedge. Suddenly, there was a very loud bang. It blew the door open and the old lady came running out of her cottage, ringing her bell, and shouting and bawling at the top of her voice "the spirits are here, the spirits are here", upon which two or three of the other cottage doors opened, their occupants obviously curious as to what the commotion was about. Eventually, they calmed Miss Talbot down and were able to get her indoors again. We were then able to escape from our hiding place. I wonder if she had to have the lock replaced.

As I mentioned in Chapter 8, sand used to be dug out on the 'Little Heath'. A Mr Whinney who owned a horse and tumbril, would regularly dig out the sand and transport it to where it was needed. One day, a Walter Turner, who worked for a builder on Playford Road, was passing when he happened to see Mr Whinney's head sticking out of the sand. Apparently, a sudden fall of sand had enveloped him. Walter immediately ran and got help and they luckily managed to free him.

A kitchen maid by the name of Lizzie once worked for the Chevaliers. One day the cook ordered her to skin a rabbit. Imagine the cook's surprise, and comments, when she discovered that instead of skinning it, she had plucked all the fur off as one would pluck a chicken.

One day, Walter Turner was sent to the well to fetch two pails of water. Having attached the first pail to the chain he started lowering it down the well which was about 80ft deep.Thinking it was a slow job, he decided to do what the men always did when drawing water, which was to release the handle and ease the pail down by pressing the palms of both hands round the roller to act as a brake. Unfortunately, he didn't apply enough pressure, and the pail shot down, causing a tremendous crash as it hit the water. As the well was barely two feet from the wall of a cottage, the vibrations caused as the pail hit the bottom had caused an ornament to fall from the mantelpiece and break. Walter received a severe reprimand from the occupier of the cottage and to add to his misfortune, the pail had broken loose from the chain, so he had to get a man with a set of 'creepers' (grappling hooks on a rope) to try and recover the pail. On returning home he received another reprimand.

What are now Willis Coroon's and Cranes sports fields, were at the time to which I relate, arable fields. In the early 1930s, Alan Cobham, later Sir, the aviator who was quite famous at the time, was touring the country, offering flights at £5-00 a time to all and sundry. One of his stopping off points happened to be one of these fields. Therefore, Rushmere can boast a flying field in its history, even if it was only for one day.

An old lady tramp (vagrant) known as Mother Mackenzie, would visit the village occasionally. She pushed her chattels around in an old pram. Sometimes she would empty this pram and sort out her belongings which she laid out on the ground. The local people referred to this occupation as 'setting up her stall'. The children always went to see her and would help her with her task. Another tramp who visited the village regularly was 'Darkie', a rough looking old man, but, like Mother Mackenzie, if treated with a little respect, they were both quite harmless.

Every Sunday morning would herald the arrival of Lilly, who used to deliver the Sunday papers. She was a funny old girl with a high-pitched voice. The papers were packed into an old pram which she used to push from 'Fox's' paper shop in Fore Street in Ipswich. After leaving Rushmere she made her way to Playford and then on to Kesgrave selling papers, before returning to Ipswich. She did this for many years in all weathers without batting an eye-lid. During the week she sold papers on the Old Cattle Market in Ipswich.

Every Saturday morning, the blacksmith's wife would do her baking. At the back of their cottage in those days was a little pantry window about eighteen inches square which was always wide open. On a level with this window was a shelf on which she would stand plates of jam tarts or buns to cool off. Some of us would watch for the plates to appear, when we would 'bunk each other up' so that the spoils could be reached and a few taken. Sometimes we would take the whole plate, go on to the meadow and eat them and replace the empty plate on the way back.. This went on for some time, her son always getting the blame, although he had nothing to do with it. One Saturday, we were unfortunately caught in the act. The cakes were never stood on the shelf after that.

So ends my story of Rushmere St Andrew village as I remember it.

NOTE: A few years back, the Parish Council published a very interesting booklet entitled "PICTURE OF A PARISH". If a copy can be obtained, it is well worth reading. It contains a great deal of the history of the parish as well as some old photographs.

## GLOSSARY OF UNUSUAL WORDS

**Backhouse** - A term used to refer to the rear of a dwelling, usually a room or building where general chores were carried out.

**Bamlet** - A hay cutter drawn by two horses.

**Binder** - A machine for cutting corn, usually drawn by three horses, which ties the cut corn into sheaves and drops them in rows.

**Drawknife** - A stout, long knife blade with a handle at each end, for shaving away excess wood when making a spoke or something similar.

**Drum** - A threshing machine, driven by a steam engine, that separates the grain from the ears of corn, and automatically ejects the separated grain, straw, and chaff.

**Felloe** - A wooden section of the rim of a wheel.

**Hame** - A shaped piece of wood inserted in each side of a horse's collar to which the cart's shafts are hooked.

**Nettice** - A cool room in a dairy with windows covered with very fine mesh netting material to keep out flies and insects when the windows are open.

**Pummletree** - A wooden bar fitted with metal eyes on each end, which hooks onto the front of a drawn plough. See Whippletree.

**Shimmaker** - A shoe repairer.

**Spline** - A piece of thin wood placed between stacked planks of timber to allow air to circulate while drying and seasoning.

**Spokeshave** - A finishing tool for smoothing away rough edges left after using a drawknife. Stetch A section of a field marked out for ploughing.

**Traverse** - An open building adjoining a blacksmith's shop in which horses are shod. Sometimes referred to as Travvis.

**Tumbril** - A two-wheeled cart which can tip to shed its load.

**Wagon** - A four-wheeled cart, normally used for carting corn, hay and straw. Frames can be fitted to the front and back in order to take a larger load.

**Whippletree** - A wooden bar which hooks to the Pummletree and to which the chains from the horse is connected when ploughing or harrowing.