

Life in Dinton Village from 1935 to 1956

By
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Dinton Church



Dinton School

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1. The Cottage 1935 to 1948.

I was born and lived in the middle cottage of three next to Hope cottage. (I have been told that these three cottages have been restored back to two as I believe that that was how they were originally built). In the thatched cottage lived the Bateman family and in 1937 when Mr. Bateman died they moved to Plum Tree cottage in Westlington. As our cottage was very small the then landlord, a Mr. Patrick Wise who lived in 'Hazledean' now 'Staddlestones' took a section from the now empty cottage and added it to ours. We then acquired another much needed bedroom and sitting room. Half the cottage was now under thatch and the other half tiled. We also acquired some of the garden from this cottage. My earliest recollections were that there was no electricity or running water inside the cottage. We had oil lamps for lighting and candles fitted into holders when we went to bed. There were six of us in all, mother, father, my two sisters and my brother. I was the youngest by five years from my brother. My brother had also been born in Dinton but my two sisters were born in London. There were three bedrooms and two sets of staircases, one set led to two bedrooms and from the sitting room another set led to a bedroom where my sisters slept. There was no bathroom or toilet inside.

Water was obtained from a well just down the garden and had to be pumped into a bucket then carried up the garden to the house. Each evening we had to remember to leave a bucket of water by the pump to prime the pump the next day. I remember the Bucks. Water Board coming to install mains water. Our well was sealed off and we were forbidden to use any water from it. The mains water tasted awful, clearly full of chemicals but probably for the best. Dad was not happy. We continued to use the well, not for drinking water but as a refrigerator. Milk, butter, margarine, cheese etc. was packed into a bucket and lowered down to the bottom of the well to keep it cool.

The new cold—water tap was fitted above the already existing sink in the kitchen but the waste water continued to flow into a bucket under the sink. This of course had to be emptied into the outside drain as it became full. Sometimes we forgot just how full this bucket was with disastrous results. However a few months later a pipe was eventually fitted through the wall to the outside drain. What luxury we had now!

We did have a cat, a large ginger one called Jimper. He helped keep the cottage free from mice. He was a lovable cat but didn't take kindly to strangers! He died before we left the cottage.

Mother cooked in the oven heated by the fire, water was boiled in kettles on the fire hob and supplemented by an oil fired Primus stove. These stoves could be hazardous and the atomizer had to be heated by methylated spirits correctly prior to lighting the paraffin. When working properly these stoves were very good. How Mother managed I know not, but she did. There was always a kettle full of hot water on the hob waiting to be used for tea, cocoa or washing. Clothes were washed by hand in the sink, mangled and then hung out to dry on the washing line in the garden. There was no electric iron and ironing was done using flat irons heated by the fire.

In the shed where we kept the wood and coal there was a full set of 'lasts', which Dad would use to mend all of the family's shoes. He had all the knives needed and he would buy a sheet of leather and made an excellent job of it. If we ever found an old car or bicycle tyre we would bring it home and this rubber would be cut up and used to provide us with new heels or soles for a long time. Dad taught his brother-in-law Albert Wainwright how to repair shoes for his family and it was in Dinton that uncle Albert started up his shoe repair business helped by his children. The Wainwright family left Dinton for much larger premises in Princes Risborough in 1936.

I cannot remember when electricity was installed in the cottage but a large transformer was placed at the bottom of New road adjacent to the chapel wall to supply it. That came as a big relief.

No more oil lamps or candles (except for the lantern for going out in the dark) but we did not have any electrical appliances in those days. I think that Mother did have an electric iron though. The electricity was paid for by feeding a shilling into the slot meter so there was no quarterly bill. The meter was emptied quarterly and mother would receive a small rebate back according to the amount the collector found in the meter. This rebate was then fed back into the now empty meter for further use.

Mother hated thunderstorms. As a small child lightning struck the ground near to her and she was injured. When the first rumblings of thunder were heard she would remove any cutlery from the table and turn any mirror or picture to face the wall so as stop any reflections. As the storm progressed she would put a blanket over her head so that she did not see the flashes of lightning.

In 1939 a tragedy did occur in the village and although I was only four years old when it happened I remember it today still very clearly. It happened at night after we had all gone to bed. For some reason or other I was in my parent's bed and we were wakened by noises outside. Dad got up and looked out of the window and there was a glow of a fire. Dad said it must be Dinton Hall and he quickly got dressed and went to see if he could help. Alas it was Dinton Hall and the fire claimed the lives of two people, one a lovely young Dinton girl who was a live-in employee in the house. The whole village was devastated on hearing this unwelcome news. Her grave is still well kept in the churchyard.

In 1941 Dad had a very bad accident along the Oxford road as he was cycling to the allotments. He was knocked down by an RAF staff car and badly injured. In those days it was possible to stand by this road all day and not see one vehicle. He was taken to the Royal Bucks. Hospital for treatment and remained there for several months. It was just over a year before he was well enough and could return to work. As there were no witnesses it was 'just an accident'. His income fell to nothing during this time and Mother had to take on a part time job to make ends meet. My elder sister was in work and there was a small income from the evacuees but again times were hard. We all had to put in some extra work especially in the allotment and garden and some of the other allotment holders helped out to keep Dad's plot tidy.

The post lady called in most days but there wasn't a great deal of post (junk mail was an unknown). I think she just dropped by for a chat and cup of tea.

After the war had ended in 1945 some of the evacuees left and returned home to London together with our cousin but the two young girls stayed with us. Numbers in the household dwindled, my elder sister had joined the WRNS in 1944 and my brother joined the Royal Navy in 1947. The goat had died. Ten new council houses were being built up New road and we had been allocated one of these. In early 1948 we moved from the cottage to the Council house.



The postal address of these three cottages at that time was,
1, 2 or 3, Cobble Cottage,
High Street,
Dinton.

2. The Council House.

The new house at No. 2 New road was a three bedroomed semi-detached house with a fairly large garden complete with two brick sheds, an outside toilet and a proper bathroom. The heating was still by coal fires one of which heated the water for the hot water system in the kitchen and bathroom. The back garden was soon prepared to grow vegetables and Mother grew flowers in the front. She loved flowers and as a young woman she had been a trained florist in Stubbings in Aylesbury. She made wreaths for many people in the village. We would help her by gathering moss and recover old wreath frames from the churchyard. Mother done all the internal decorating and she made pegged mats by cutting up any old material and pegging it through jute/ Hessian sacking. These proved to be very useful.

The two young evacuee sisters were still with us and continued to live with us for a few more years prior to their return to London in about 1950. The house was not crowded and my sister and brother often returned on leave. My other sister also joined the WRNS but only lasted a short time as I don't think that she could accept the discipline of the service and so she returned to Dinton. I had my own room for the first time ever except when my brother came home on leave. He married in 1951 and thus left Dinton for good and our sister still living with us married in 1952 also left.



My elder sister Elaine



My sister Doris



My brother Frank

We didn't keep chickens any more but as wild rabbits were becoming scarce because of myxamatoxis I did breed some tame rabbits which we sometimes ate. We didn't need a cat as there were no mice in the new house but I did acquire a dog. One of the village families was leaving Dinton and left me their dog. A lovely black spaniel, trained for the gun and totally obedient. Initially he was not allowed in the house but eventually Mother spoiled him and he became her guard. He didn't know my sister from the WRNS and he wouldn't let her into the house when she came home on leave. She had to call a neighbour for help. He eventually died in about 1955.

The piano came with us of course and I continued with lessons and daily practising. The Council house had its advantages especially with the constant hot water and flush toilets but it was never as warm and cosy as the cottage. The chimneys still needed sweeping regularly as they did in the cottage. The soot was always saved and left out in the garden for a year to 'weather' before being used on the garden.

3. Food.

We had a garden and an allotment so all our vegetables were home grown. Dad did most of the work but it was expected that we would all help especially at potato harvesting time. In the garden there were apple and plum trees. Mother would make plum jam and the apples were eaten either raw or in pies etc. and some were stored for the winter use. There were soft fruit bushes which would bear fruit in the summer months. Any spare fruits were bottled and kept for later use. There were no sell by dates and if by chance there was mould on the top of the jam, it would be scraped off; the knife rinsed and then continue to use the rest of the jam. Mould didn't harm you!

The allotments were situated at the top of New road and owned by the Hollyman family. We could go to the allotments to work at any time except on Sundays. Mr. Hollyman was very strict about keeping the Sabbath. Blackberries were gathered in the autumn to provide another food source. We were never short of vegetables. Seeds were gathered from one year's crop to be sown to provide next seasons produce. At potato digging time all the very small potatoes were picked up and put in a separate bag and traded with someone who kept pigs. Seed potatoes were carefully selected for next years crop and Dad would exchange a bag of seed potatoes with someone else at the other end of the allotment as yields would fall if the same strain were grown too many times on the same piece of land.

In our cottage garden we had a few chickens as did many other families. These hens supplied us with fresh eggs and the odd cockerel was fattened up for our Christmas dinner. Christmas was about the only time that we would eat chicken. Any surplus eggs were preserved using Isinglass.

We also kept a nanny goat and each year my brother and I would have to walk the goat to a farm in Stone to be 'served'. I never really knew what this meant but the following week we would have to go back to Stone to collect her. Later on in the year she would produce one or two kids and when not weaning her kids she supplied us with some daily milk. She had young most years and we would take the goats up the Elms towards the church on our way to school in the morning, pegging each goat on its own patch of grass. At lunchtime the goats were moved to a fresh patch of grass and at the end of the afternoon session of school they would be taken back home and housed in a shed in the garden. This practice continued over the weekends. When the young goats were fully grown our uncle who was a butcher in the Lambeth Walk in London would visit to kill and 'dress' the carcasses ready for eating. This always occurred in the winter and the carcasses were then hung in the shed as we did not possess a refrigerator and deep freezers were unheard of! (The winters were always like winters then, long and cold). These provided us with a meat source for some time and the nanny goat would continue to provide us with milk.

After the farmers had collected their wheat harvest in the autumn we would go into the fields for gleaning. The ears of wheat that had been left after the harvesting were collected from the fields, taken home in bags and the grains winnowed from the husks. This was valuable food for the chickens. All our scraps, potato peelings outer cabbage leaves etc. were boiled and then mixed with 'meal' and fed to the hens. All the family liked mushrooms so we regularly went into fields usually very early in the mornings to collect as many as we could.

Our neighbour who lived in Hope cottage kept some ferrets. He and Dad would spend a Saturday afternoon down the Goosey where there was a large rabbit warren. Rabbits were a good low fat meat and very tasty. At harvesting time we would go and watch the binders at work hoping that a rabbit would run out of the wheat and come our way as we always carried a stick, just in case. At Hope cottage there was a very large pear tree which always seemed to crop in abundance. We shared some of that harvest. At some time in the year usually in the evening we would hear pigs squealing. The Hitchcock

family who were the then village bakers also kept pigs and it was evident to Dad that they were killing a pig! A short time after the squealing stopped my brother and I would each take an empty bucket to the bake house and we would be given the chitlings. Chitlings were a very good source of food (so I was told!). These were cleaned and cut into short lengths, flattened out and later cooked. I cannot remember actually eating any but I probably did!

Each week Smiths the butcher arrived in his van. He came from Haddenham. Mother would sometimes go to the van and buy a joint of meat and sausages etc. Our daily cow's milk came from the Gregories who farmed Westlington farm. The milk was carried in churns using a yoke across the shoulders and inside the churn was a half pint measure. Mr. Gregory would announce his arrival and one of us would produce a milk jug and request a pint. He would then ladle two measures into our jug and then always a little more. Mr. Gregory always gave a 'good measure'. He would then expect to be paid! Bread was also delivered to each house in the village by the Hitchcock family and after their retirement by Webb and Rushton using a handcart. The bread and cakes were fully covered inside the cart and brought to each house in a basket.

There were several shops in Dinton and in addition to the bakery, Mrs. May ran the Post Office with groceries and just opposite, Mrs. Pratt had a general store including paraffin. Down the village in Westlington by the Green was Mrs. Woodford's general store and just about as far as you could go was Mrs. Walker's general store including paraffin.

At Dinton school each child had a third of a pint of milk every school day. This milk came in glass bottles and was served to us mid-morning. The older children would be the 'milk monitors' and they would collect the milk which had arrived in crates from outside. A straw was given with each bottle for drinking and this was pushed through the thin waxed cardboard bottle top. These milk tops were usually saved and used in a game, and are still collectors' pieces.

We did catch some fish out of the Biggin. These were Tench and tasted awful so that line was not pursued but we did have fish such as kippers, fresh herrings and sprats. A fishmonger named Mr. Brown came to the village regularly. All through our childhood we had a large spoonful of Cod Liver oil and Malt each day.

During the war years there was food rationing but because there were so many of us in the household we never went short of anything. Sweets were in short supply but Mother knew how to make slabs of toffee and toffee apples. From the USA came powdered eggs and Spam, these were very welcome. We did not have bananas but there always seemed to be an orange in our Christmas stocking and I always hoped that it would be wrapped in soft tissue paper!!! That paper would come in handy later! Mother used to say.. "When this war is over you will be able to have bananas and real butter". After the war, bananas and real butter came but I didn't like either of them! (I do eat bananas now but never eat butter).

We never left the table hungry but as I recall in those days we always arrived at the table hungry!

4. Fuel.

During the long summer holidays we spent a good few days down the Goosey and Biggin spinney collecting dead branches and twigs. These would then be transported back home with the help of a truck made from discarded pram wheels. Simple but effective. At home the branches were sawn into logs and stacked neatly in our wychert walled shed. By the end of the holidays we usually had enough wood to last us through the coming winter. The dead twigs were used to help start the fires which were in the kitchen and sitting room. The cold ashes from the fire were sifted to save any fully unburned coal and the residue was then scattered along the paths down the garden. Any coal dust in the shed was dampened and put on the glowing embers in the fire.

On one occasion my elder sister, brother and another village boy were out 'wooding' and found a dead tree in the small copse just off the main road opposite the cricket field. Between them they pulled the tree down, cut into manageable sizes and took it home returning to dig up the dead roots. With this done they filled the hole in and carefully raked dead leaves over the area. Dad was very pleased with their efforts and asked them where all this wood had come from. They replied that they had just been 'wooding'. About a week later when Dad was in one of the pubs having a drink with his friends and one of them said to Dad that something quite strange had occurred. He had singled out a dead tree in the spinney but when he went to cut it down it wasn't there and there was no sign of it ever being there. Dad now knew where all that wood had come from!

Coal was rationed and also cost money but the wood came free. In the war each household had to be registered with a coal merchant and that was the only source of your coal. We were registered with Pratt and Shuttleworth of Dinton. Frank Shuttleworth had come from New Zealand and originally worked for Sir William Currie helping look after his horses. He eventually married Winifred Pratt and became a partner in his father-in-law's coal business.

Mother used Primus stoves for cooking and oil lamps for lights. These used paraffin oil and this had to be bought from either Mrs. Pratt's or Mrs. Walker's shop.



Mrs. Pratt's shop, formally The Boot Inn, and the white house to the left was Mrs. May's shop and Post Office

5. Education.

Education started at home. As I was the youngest of four children I received help from my brother and sisters as well as from my parents. They insisted that we must be able to read and write and do simple arithmetic prior to attending school and this was achieved by all four of us. Our parents insisted on good manners, honesty and respect at all times and I believe that this was the attitude of all the Dinton village parents with their children. In addition to schooling Dad continued to teach us at home especially in the garden and allotment.

In 1939, just four years old, I remember not wanting to go to school but the teachers at Dinton school were good, kind and re-enforced the same discipline that we had received at home. Bad language was strictly forbidden and not tolerated! Being able to read and write at this time was a great asset and helped take the pressure off the teacher. The education received was excellent and thorough with the end aim of passing the scholarship (later known as the 11+) to go to Aylesbury Grammar School. I remained at Dinton School for seven years and after passing the scholarship I went on to Aylesbury Grammar School for the next five years. I needed a school uniform, which was fairly costly, but the money was found.

Nine years earlier my elder sister had passed the scholarship but could not go to the Grammar School as there was a fee to pay each term (£4-4s.) and our parents did not have that amount of money to spare. This to me was a great shame as she was and still is the brightest of the four of us. (now three). Luckily for me the 1944 Education Act removed such fees.



This is me in the summer of 1947 with my new bicycle, a present from my sister for passing the scholarship. The lower window on the left was the kitchen and the upper window was the bedroom where I was born. The rainwater barrel is also in the picture.

The educational authority offered me the choice of a new bicycle that had to last for the five years at the school, so that I could cycle to school or a season ticket for the Oxford bus. As I had my new bike I chose the free ticket and went to Aylesbury each day on the bus, it seemed a long way to cycle especially in the winter. It was also a long walk everyday from Kingsbury Square (the old bus station) to the Grammar school and back in the afternoons.

Life at Aylesbury Grammar school was much more demanding. Nearly every day there was homework to be done. Exams were frequent and if pupils did not meet the expected level consistently then they were asked to leave the school and then transferred to another school. This did not happen very often as the humiliation that it may cause made everyone work that much harder.

During a holiday in Street, Somerset in 1947 I learned to swim. An uncle lived there and my parents had taken me for week's holiday. (The only holiday that I or our family ever had with our parents). We had swimming lessons at school in the junior class and we knew that when the next term began swimming classes would be with a male teacher whose reputation was not favourable with boys who could not swim. This threat was a very big incentive to learn and I spent nearly everyday in the outdoor pool in Street, not knowing anyone there and desperately trying to swim without anyone to help me. On the last full day there I made it and next term began at school full of confidence.

Discipline was maintained at all times (with the threat of the cane). The cane was used sparingly but always in public with most of the school assembled to watch! I think that I only saw it happen once in five years. The main punishment used was Saturday morning detention that was later changed to Friday afternoon detention. The education there was first class and I gained my GCE 'O' levels. Cousin Geoffrey would help me with my maths. homework on many occasions. My Father wanted me to stay on and go to on university but this would have meant a bigger burden on my parents. Whether I would have made the grade or not was another matter but I left at sixteen years old in 1951 to start work and earn money to be able to contribute in a small way to the household. My parents had given me so much!

Education is not just about academic subjects. When I was about five years old I started piano lessons. Dad had just acquired a piano from the Gregory family and my lessons were to come from a villager, a Mrs. Tooley who lived in Plum Tree cottage in Westlington. I was very familiar with Plum Tree cottage as I had regularly been visiting the Bateman family earlier but by this time the Batemans had moved to a new council house in Upton. Mrs. Tooley was a very pleasant lady and I enjoyed her lessons very much and progressed quite quickly. Plum Tree cottage had a thatched roof and one day Mrs. Tooley discovered that she had a wasp's nest in the thatch. She decided to smoke the wasps out! The thatch caught fire and Plum Tree cottage quickly became uninhabitable. Poor Mrs. Tooley, she left the village after that and went to live in Gibraltar and my lessons continued with my Godmother who now lived in Stone and continued until I was eleven. The last years of lessons were with a Miss Margaret Nunn who was the church organist of Walton parish church in Aylesbury.

In our house there was a very large selection of books that we were encouraged to read including a set of Arthur Mee's Encyclopaedias for children. These were an excellent source of information and were read avidly. (I still have a set now). In the cottage the books were kept in the sitting room housed in a large polished wooden 'Library' which would turn on it's axis to allow us the choose a particular book.

In 1948 a black and white film entitled 'Daughter of Darkness' starring Siobhan McKenna and Maxwell Read was made with much of the film being shot in Dinton around the Green area. Many of the villagers were used as extras. This was an education in itself to see the 'tricks' of the cameramen and just how many times each scene was shot.

Prior to my entry into the Royal Air Force my sisters taught me some very basic domestic science. The elder one showed me how to wash, iron and fold up a shirt and my other sister taught me how to sew a button on a garment and how to darn a hole in a sock. What valuable lessons these proved to be as in the service you are on your own! There is no-one else there to do these jobs for you.

6. Amusements.

I remember my childhood days in Dinton as happy and content. All the children were happy and friendly. We played together without very much extra equipment. There was no TV or computer games etc. and Dad would not allow us to have a wireless. (Now called a radio!). As we were a musical family we would put on family concerts at home on a Saturday evening. This meant that each member of the family had to do something musical either solo or sing together. Both parents and I could play the piano and Dad could also play the piccolo, ocarina, penny whistle and recorder. My elder sister played the melodeon and the other two could sing. It was all good fun and we all enjoyed doing it.

We did eventually persuade Dad to get a wireless. All those at work chipped in to help pay for it. Dad resisted for a long time saying that it would stop us doing the musical concerts together. He was right of course and our 'concerts' stopped immediately. Dick Barton, special agent and Paul Temple took over completely but we did enjoy the classical music of the Palm Court Orchestra. We also possessed a wind up gramophone and sometimes used our pocket money to buy classical records to listen to.

During the summer holidays most of the time was spent outside and we would play in the street. (There was little or no traffic as petrol was rationed and not many people could afford a car). Whips and tops was a great favourite with the whips being made with old boot and shoelaces. Tin Can Tommy was another favourite as it involved all the children. The equipment needed was simple, one empty Golden syrup tin, two small sticks and a tennis ball. We also played Tip and Run and French cricket. Tree climbing down the Biggin spinney was never regarded as hazardous and I cannot remember anyone getting hurt. Dinton castle was another popular playing area.

As well as the outdoor activities most of us collected stamps, cigarette cards and coins which helped to provide us with something to do during the winter months. In the hard winter of 1947 the Biggin lake froze over and we were able to set foot on the island for the first time.

When we became eleven we could join the boy scouts, the 1st Cuddington troop run by Miss E. Read and Mr. May. These two gave up a good deal of their time teaching us all sorts of useful and interesting things one of which was the Morse code which later in life became very useful for me. They took us camping, showed us how to cook meals and helped us grow up. We were also taught how to use the public telephone. The troop had a large handcart and this was used to transport equipment. Most of the village boys were members of the scouts and some boys came from Stone and Cuddington. The first big camp for me away from my parents was in the Isle of Wight. What a great time we all had there. Most food was rationed so we all had to take a little of certain items from a list provided. At the camp Mr. May took charge of the rations and promptly mixed all the sugar with the salt by mistake! Later when swimming in the sea near Alum Bay he coughed and lost his false teeth. He and some of us returned at the next low tide and actually found them!

The Scout troop c1948



In the autumn gathering 'conkers' and then having contests playing 'conkers' was great fun. As bonfire night approached we would collect all the necessary material and build quite a huge fire on the Green. There was a firework display on the 5th of November and these were bought by the Burrows family who lived in Ivy cottage at that time. This was always a great attraction but left a sorry mess on the Green for weeks to come. The Green was also used for a small fair that came on occasions. (I cannot recall this fair coming to Dinton but I'm assured by my cousin Pamela and my sister that it did). In the summer holidays we would walk or cycle to the brook at Mains Bridge in Cuddington to just play and swim in the river Thames. Haymaking time was good fun and the Miller family of farmers would let us ride on the carts.

After the war Sir William Currie loaned the cricket field to the village and swings and seesaws were erected there for the younger children. Cricket became very popular again and a football club was also formed and played in this field. Frederick Allen, the radio broadcaster played for Dinton at one time. I was treasurer of Dinton football club up to the time of my leaving Dinton to join the Royal Air force in 1953 and I was the cricket scorer for several seasons as my personal sporting ability was not very good.

Regular dances were held in the village hall and these proved to be very popular and well supported. My sisters would teach my brother and me how to dance at home in the council house. The furniture was pushed to one side and with music provided with the help of the gramophone they taught us the basic dance steps. For a while the village hall was used for a film show on a fairly regular basis and concerts did take place organized generally by either the scouts or people from the Stone fraternity. My earliest recollection was a fete or fair held in the field adjacent to Dinton village hall to celebrate the coronation of King George VI in May 1937.

Saturday morning pictures which were specifically for children in the Odeon or Pavilion cinemas in Aylesbury were very popular and I did go at times but they clashed with my music lessons. As we got older Sunday evening visits to the cinema became a regular feature.

A social club was organized and held in the village hall and was open once a week where we could play table tennis in the main hall and there was a snooker and billiard table in one of the back rooms. This club was very well supported by young and old with the older members teaching the younger ones to play.



Ivy Cottage and the Green taken from a copy of an old Post card.

7. Evacuees.

At some time during the 1940s a multitude of children were evacuated from London to escape the bombing and Dinton took its share. These children were welcomed into the homes of many of the villagers. We certainly had our share. Initially there were two young sisters and two boys who were not related. That made a total of ten people in the cottage with just three bedrooms but we managed. Mother and Father in one room, the boys in another and the girls in the third bedroom.

With the welcomed visitors came the unwelcome ones in the form of head lice. Within weeks we were all 'lousy'. No panic though, mother contacted cousin Percy who worked in Boots the chemist in Aylesbury and he provided the remedies needed in the form of a tooth comb and a bottle of foul smelling liquid. (I was never quite sure just who Cousin Percy was as the family was very large on both sides there were lots of unknowns. Dad was one thirteen and Mum one of eight.) A daily ritual of delousing soon solved that problem.

The evacuees brought other problems. Dinton School was now totally full and overflowing so initially and for a very short time we could only go to school either in the mornings or afternoons. The period when we were not in school was filled mainly with nature walks with a teacher, learning about the flora and fauna. The evacuees were taught by teachers who had come with them from London. The problem was solved by turning the village hall into temporary classrooms and the elder evacuees complete with their own teachers were taught there.

We had one almost complete family living next door to us. Mother, three daughters and two twin boys. Living in London had not prepared them for country life and gathering winter fuel was something that they were about to learn. They also had an outside toilet (known as the thunder box!) made of wood with a tin roof and after a while we noticed that some of the lower wooden panels started to disappear from their toilet. Gradually over a few weeks most of the sides were completely gone to be burnt on the fire in the cottage. Eventually all that was left were four corner posts, tin roof, and seat with bucket underneath. To keep their privacy they would hang a blanket around the sides when they needed 'to go'. Soon after, the wooden slats of our fence in between the gardens also began to disappear!

Our household grew larger as a girl cousin of ours from London came to live with us and her mother (our aunt) would often come and stay at weekends. Sometimes the house was so full of people I cannot think where they all slept. My older sister tells me that she often slept under the table in the sitting room. The Hitchcock family bakers would allow mother to use their oven (for a small fee) to cook food over the weekends and that eased the burden somewhat. The elder boy evacuee went back to London after left school and became old enough to work. He did come back to see us on several occasions.

After the war was over and we had moved from the cottage to the new council house up New road the two young sisters were still living with us and they stayed with us for at least two more years. Initially they did not want to go back to London to their parents. To them our mother was their mother and they refused to leave. My mother didn't want them to go either but after a good deal of persuasion and pressure the elder girl went first and a little later her younger sister also returned. They have been back to Dinton on day visits. I'm quite sure their stay in Dinton will never be forgotten.

8. Health Care.

Although just after birth I was a very sickly child I cannot ever remember being ill that required a doctor. Nurse Prestney delivered me as she delivered most babies at the time in the district. She always arrived on her motorbike and sidecar, complete with leather gloves and goggles. She was very very strict! Colds came and went with regularity. If someone in the village had caught measles, mumps or chicken pox we would be sent to play with them. This way we had a dose of everything that was going and built up our immunity system. Eating our 'peck of dirt' probably kept us very healthy and kept the doctor away!

The doctor cost money and it wasn't until the National Health Service came into being that he came free. One of my Mother's friends was a spiritualist and Mother would ask her to come to the house rather than the doctor but she never took money. At Dinton school we were all regularly examined by the school doctor and dentist and an occasional visit from a woman who looked through our hair. We called her 'Nitty Nora' but I don't think that was her real name! She looked for nits and head lice. The school dentist put me off from going to the dentist for many years. The nearest doctor's surgery was in Haddenham and we didn't have a telephone to call the doctor. A public telephone was eventually installed near the village hall.

When I was about five years old I was playing at the bottom of the garden and my foot went into a small hole in the grassed area close to the apple tree and was firmly stuck. I did not know who or what had caused the hole but I was soon about to find out. It was a Bumble-bee's nest and they were not too happy and were very unforgiving for this intrusion into their nest. They stung me all up my leg and arms and face. I yelled and it seemed ages before anyone heard me. With the help of a spade my foot was extracted from the hole. The stings were bathed using a 'bluebag' which was the standard remedy at that time.

Whilst still at Dinton school a young boy Alan Laslett died from meningitis. In those days the doctors did not have the medicines to cure it. We did not know then just how serious this problem could be but we were all very sad. His sister Mary was still a pupil at the school.

The only grandparent who was still alive when I was a child came from London to live with us for a while get away from the bombing. He was very old and frail and the spiritualist visited regularly and soon after he died and was taken back to London for burial. (This grandfather was a stonemason in his younger days and worked on the scrollwork of the Aylesbury market square clock.)

I did have braces fitted on my teeth but they were very primitive, hurt a great deal and were only partially successful. The dentist was in Aylesbury and thank goodness times have changed for the better!

In winter we had a stone hot water bottle which would be put into one bed and we sometimes improvised by heating up a house brick on the hob and then wrap it up in a thin blanket. This worked quite well. To relieve the pain of earache small linen bags of salt were heated up and applied to the outside of the ear.

9. Religion.

In Dinton as well as the C of E church were two chapels. One at the bottom New road which I think was a Methodist and the other just down from the bakery was the Baptist chapel. During our younger years most of us would go to the Baptist chapel, as it was quite a long walk to the church. The chapel was well run and organized by the Miller family who were farmers from Wootten farm in Westlington. Each year there would be the 'Chapel outing' and this was normally a day trip to Wicksteed Park near Kettering. Sometimes a 'Magic lantern' show would be put on in the chapel on a Saturday evening.

As well as the annual outing there was the 'anniversary' and each child was encouraged to do something, sing or recite a poem etc.. One Sunday in the Baptist chapel I had done something 'good' and my reward was to choose the next hymn. My choice was "Glorious things to Thee are spoken". I was about only six or seven years old and I didn't know then that the tune for this hymn was the 'Austrian hymn' and was the same tune as for the German national anthem. It was explained to us that it might not go down too well if passers by heard this. After some deliberation, good sense prevailed and the hymn was sung. There were not too many passers by on Sundays in Dinton!

As we got older we were encouraged to join the church choir and the bell ringing team. Bell ringing was good fun and required a good deal of skill. Provided that we had attended church regularly each choirboy would receive 2s. 6d. each quarter. This was given to us by the then church organist Colonel Watson who lived in Glebe house in Dinton. This was pocket money! (Colonel Watson's son later became the Bishop of Burnley).

I had now reached eleven or twelve years old going to church very regularly and singing in the choir. The Rev. Drury called all the young choirboys together and announced that arrangements were to be made for all of us to attend confirmation classes. I was not happy about this as I did not feel that I was ready to make such a commitment. The Rev. Drury was also not happy when I told him and he then came to see my Mother. He arrived at the house and I was not allowed to take part in the discussion. However both he and Mother reached a very sensible conclusion that my confirmation be delayed until I had given it more thought. I attended the confirmation service of my peers but only as a choirboy. As the years passed I did give it more thought but still found it difficult to reach a decision. In 1954 a family event occurred which made the decision for me and I no longer had to think about it!

To me Sunday was a dreary day. We had to dress up in our 'Sunday best' and we were not allowed out to play in the street. We could only read 'approved' books (the Bible, reference books or encyclopaedias) and no comics were permitted. Church or chapel at least twice sometimes three times. In the summer we would sometimes go for a walk with our parents and on one Sunday on the 21st May 1950 which was my mother's birthday, we set off on a walk to Ford to see her brother who lived there. Suddenly a storm came and we all got soaked (It was the day that the 'tornado' swept through Bucks.). We did laugh together; little did we realize that in just a few short years Mother would be taken from us forever.

Both of our parents are buried in Dinton churchyard along with our grandparents, great-grandparents and many other relatives. I have traced my family back to c1770 in Dinton and it may go back even further.

10. Toiletries.

There were no toilet facilities within the cottage but in the evening a chamber pot would be placed in each bedroom which had to be emptied and washed out the next morning if they had been used during the night.

The outside toilet was at the bottom of the garden and was a wooden structure with shiplap boards on the sides and a corrugated tin roof. There was a door of course and inside was a wooden seat with a bucket underneath the hole in the seat. There was no real need to close the door especially in the summer as the toilet was not overlooked and the fresh air helped!! In the dark days of winter and for evening visits we had a candle lit lantern with three sides of fixed glass and one side of cardboard which could be slid up and down to allow access to the candle.

We did not have toilet tissue but some households did use Izal which was shiny and not very soft. I likened it to fine sandpaper. Dad took a daily newspaper called 'The Daily Herald' (delivered by Joe Woodford from Ford) and each evening when he had finished reading it we would fold the paper up and cut it into squares with a pair of scissors to produce several pads. Through one corner of the pad a meat skewer would be pushed to make a hole and a piece of string would be threaded through the hole and then tied into a loop. The next person to go down the garden took the new pads and hung them inside on a nail ready for use. Luckily the newsprint did not come off like modern papers. The newspapers were quite small in the war years and therefore were used sparingly!

The bucket was emptied once a week by men from the local council whom we called 'stink men'. If the bucket became full before the stink men came, a large hole was dug in one corner of the garden and the bucket was emptied into the hole and then covered with soil. This did not happen very often as we knew that it was unhealthy and this area in the garden was known as the 'dungle'. (I think that this is a contraction of the words 'dung hill' but most of the villagers had one!).

We had a bath once a week but as there was no bathroom in the cottage we would bring a long tin bath from the shed and put it in front of the fire in the kitchen. Water was heated in large kettles on the open fire and poured into the tin bath and cold water was added to bring the water to a comfortable temperature. In the summer months we would sometimes take the bath to the bottom of the garden. It was private and not overlooked! After the war my cousin Geoff moved into Ivy Cottage with his family and he invited me to have a bath in a real bathroom each Sunday morning and I gladly accepted!

Each day we washed in a bowl at the sink and 'inspected' by mother afterwards to ensure the 'wash' had been thorough. There was no toilet soap, deodorants or talcum powder as we have today, usually just carbolic soap but it done the job well. Outside there was a large wooden barrel that collected rainwater from the roof. This water was always used to wash our hair as it was very soft and I can't recall ever using shampoo. Our hair was cut by a Mr. Spragg who lived in Stone and charged us 6d. (2½p.) We had to walk or cycle and on a Saturday afternoon and the haircut could take quite a long time as there would be a queue for his services.

In 1948 we moved into the new council house complete with a separate bathroom and two flush toilets (one upstairs and one down), no more waiting and one pull of the chain and everything disappeared, what luxury! Hot and cold running water as well!

11. The War Years.

At the start of the war in 1939 little changed in Dinton. Life carried on much as before. All households received blackout material enough to make blackouts for each window in the house. The Home guard was formed with older men or those exempt from going to war and Dad joined along with many others. Many of the young men left to go to war and some never came back. In 1941 we heard the tragic news that one of our favourite cousins from London had been killed whilst serving in the Royal navy in at sea in the Atlantic. Aeroplanes continually filled the sky and we knew all the names of them. We would cycle to Haddenham aerodrome to watch the Spitfires take off and land.

Most foodstuffs were rationed but with the number of people in our house we never seemed to want for anything as each person was issued with a ration book. We were all issued with an identity card each with a unique number. I still remember mine, DWDN 151-6. All the village signposts were removed and everyone was urged to give up anything that was made of metal for salvage. There was a large shed/garage up New road by the Seven Stars pub where all the salvage was kept prior to being used.

Gas masks were issued to everyone and at school we had regular checks to ensure that we all knew how to use them if the need arose. At school we were taught how to use a stirrup pump to put out a fire in the school area. At night we would look out towards London and see the glow of fires caused by the bombs. On several occasions a Doodlebug was heard passing over and one of them came down at Brill. A bomb was dropped and exploded in the 16 acre field of the Miller's farm without damage and the air raid siren was heard frequently.

The Air Raid warden in the shape of Mr. Charles Darton would patrol the village at night looking for lights coming from windows and he would inform the occupants to adjust their black out curtains accordingly. Other men would be on 'Fire watch', looking for fires that had been started by incendiary bombs. One of these men was Mr. William Walker who was also the village roadman. His other duty was at the hospital in Stone fire watching at night.

Some of the ladies in the village who didn't take in evacuees became 'war workers'. They would assemble small radio parts or for other types of equipment. This work was brought to their respective houses and they then had to complete their work by a certain time when it was then collected. I believe that they were paid a small amount of money for doing this work. Everyone played their part seriously as it was a very serious time. In the autumn everyone was encouraged to go to the hedgerows and collect the ripe rosehips which would be used to make rosehip syrup, a valuable food supplement for children. The reward for collecting these was 4d. per lb.

The Home Guard controlled road barriers which could be swung across the roads leading into Dinton to harass the enemy if they came. There was one up the top of New road, another up the Elms near the Oxford road and a third one down the Ford road. The Home Guard had rifles but I don't think that they had many bullets. They spent a good deal of their evening time doing their bit in spite of having worked for a full day. We did see convoys of army vehicles going along the Oxford road and at times army personnel would visit the village.

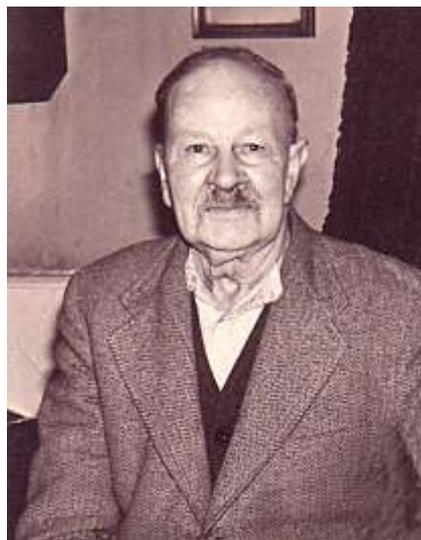
After six years the war was over. Our cousin Geoffrey Weedon who had been captured at the siege of Tobruk and held prisoner in Czechoslovakia came home, as did other villagers to a hero's welcome. Mother hung flags and bunting from the windows of the cottage. Unfortunately some did not

return. Geoff and his family moved into Ivy cottage and he went back to work for Sir William Currie at Dinton Hall. He eventually became Head gardener, a position he held until his retirement.

With the war over new buildings were started and some foods came off rationing but bread which was previously not rationed became a rationed item presumably caused by a shortage of wheat. Blackouts were no longer required and the Church bells could be rung again. Road signs reappeared. Mr. Darton continued his village commitments as a churchwarden, bell ringer and member of the church choir. He also played cricket for Dinton in spite of his advancing years being a useful all rounder and often opened the batting for the village side.

Parties were held especially for the children in the village hall with all the households contributing items.

Mr. Walker continued his work as the village roadman (usually accompanied by his dog Bobbie) until his retirement, mending potholes in the road almost usually before anyone had spotted them. He kept the roads clean and in immaculate order. In 1948 Mr. Walker won the top prize of the treble chance on Vernon's football pools which caused great excitement around the village. Everyone was so pleased for him!



Mr. William Walker

12. Work.

As the youngest in the family (I was 5 years younger than my brother) and with the others in work I used to receive a penny (an old penny) a week pocket money. This I would immediately change into 4 farthings which were then spent usually in Mrs. Pratt's shop buying sweets at a farthing a visit. She was always generous with her sweet measures! We would sometimes help Mrs. Pratt by searching her field and hedges for her chicken eggs and usually finding some. All her chickens wandered about her field all day before being shut up at night away from the foxes.

On passing the 'scholarship' my elder sister bought me a brand new bicycle and during the school holidays and Saturday mornings I and others would hang about outside the Post Office hoping for a job delivering a telegram especially for someone in Ford as Mrs. May paid us by distance. It wasn't a huge amount but it did provide us with something extra and we were learning that if we wanted something then we had to work for it.

As I grew older I needed a part time job and was given the opportunity at the bakery then owned by Webb and Rushton. The Dinton part of the business was run by John Webb. I helped to make the cakes during the week evenings and on Saturdays I would help deliver the bread and cakes around the village. This increased my 'income' considerably and allowed me to buy some of my clothes which helped take the pressure off my parents.

I left school in 1951 and started a full time job in the laboratory at International Alloys in Aylesbury (situated where Tesco's is now, down the Bicester road) using my bicycle to cycle to Aylesbury each day. On Saturdays I continued to help at the bakery and John Webb eventually taught me to drive so that on gaining my driving licence I could then deliver the Saturday bread using the van.

In 1953 I virtually left Dinton when I joined the Royal Air Force under conscription. Although I returned on leave I did not return to Dinton to live after leaving the service in 1956. My marriage took place at Stone in 1956 and we lived there but still returning to Dinton to visit my father.



The White Horse

13. Villagers and their vehicles.

There were just a few village residents who possessed a vehicle but not many. Petrol was soon to be rationed and difficult to come by after the outbreak of war. Even those who did have a car used it very seldom. One car was garaged opposite the Seven Stars pub, a two seater open top tourer. I think it was owned by a Mr. Milne who was away at war. The building was not very secure and we could get in easily. We would sit in the car and pretend to drive it. I never ever saw it on the road.

The Burrows family who lived in Ivy Cottage had a navy blue Austin saloon, DKX 500. It was in this car that I had my first car ride. Their youngest son was about the same age as me and we were at Dinton School together. I don't remember what Mr. Burrows did for a living but he did provide a lot of the fireworks for bonfire night and I remember when peace was declared he took his shotgun into the garden and fired both barrels into the air! They later moved to a house opposite the Seven Stars.

Mr. Patrick Wise, a Naval Intelligence Officer who lived at 'Hazeldean' (now called 'Staddlestones') and owned quite a few cottages in Dinton including ours, owned an American Auburn 8. A superb car, bright red and full of chrome! It was always parked out in the road next to his house.

After the war The Kibbles moved from Grapevine cottage to Mount Pleasant and they had a small Austin car, ABH 60. Mr. Kibble worked at Airtech, a small engineering company in Haddenham. As Christmas approached in 1947(48) he asked me if I would like to go to his works children's Christmas party with his younger daughter Dinah on a particular Saturday afternoon. We had to go on the Oxford bus to Haddenham and were given all the instructions as to where to go and money for the bus fares. We got off at the correct bus stop and walked along the road until we came to a hall where we heard lots of 'party' type noises. We opened the door and were welcomed in and we had a very good time. When the time came to leave we were each given a small present and we walked back to the bus stop, duly catching the bus back to Dinton. On the following Monday Mr. Kibble arrived at work and he was asked why his daughter and friend had not turned up for the party. He told them we did go; but they still had our presents they told him. He made further enquiries in Haddenham and it appeared that another small company also had had their Christmas party on the same afternoon and we had gone to the wrong one! Why we were not taken by car I don't know but it was probably to save petrol. Anyway we enjoyed the party and received two presents!

Mr. Hopgood (Pamela's father) acquired a Lanchester saloon car (similar to the one shown). This type of car is now classed as a 'classic'. It was dark in colour and had pre-selected gears which was very unusual. Pamela became very popular with us boys who wanted a much closer look at the Lanchester and be able to sit in it.



A Lanchester Saloon

Mr. Hughes who lived in Hope Cottage and had a haulage business. He had a lorry and a Ford car. The car was kept in the garage adjacent to the house. As I went to school with his eldest son I often went with them to the brickworks at Calvert during the school holidays.

Eric Gregory had a motorbike and spent a great deal of his time at the weekends cleaning and polishing it. Eric was also very musical, playing the piano and piano accordion. He encouraged us younger boys to take up music and it was he who persuaded his father William Gregory the farmer to sell my father a piano for me to learn to play.

The Pratt and Shuttleworth coal lorry was often in the village as they delivered coal and coke to their customers. The butcher came in his van once a week to sell meat and the fishmonger paid regular visits. The bakers delivered the bread and cakes usually by handcart but later on when petrol rationing had ended they also used a van.

At one time and for a short time only I remember that the Oxford bus (a single Decker) and other vehicles actually came down into the village. They turned left at the Policeman's, came down the Elms, up the High street and turned right up New road and rejoined the main road and from Oxford came down New road etc. An oak tree had fallen across the main road by the cricket field and it took several days to clear the road.

Most of the other villagers used a bicycle to get around on or just walked. Batteries for lights were non-existent and I had a carbide lamp which gave a very poor light but did the trick. Calcium Carbide when mixed with water produces acetylene gas. These lamps were rather dangerous and it is now impossible to buy carbide although I still have a lamp.



Pamela Hopgood on her first bike c1942 with her friend Mary Laslett and dogs.

Thame Mill Laundry was a weekly visitor to Dinton as there were some villagers who could afford to have their laundry done for them (mainly the bedding). The soiled washing was picked up one week and brought back the next. Most villagers done their own by hand, mangled it, hung it out to dry then ironed it! There were no washing machines but some had a copper to boil up the 'whites'.

Usually once a week or so Teddy Plested who lived in Stoke Mandeville would arrive on his motorbike and sidecar, stop at various places in the village and sound his horn. He sold ice creams. Dad would give us some money if he had any to spare to buy one. Sometimes he couldn't afford it but we understood.

Another regular goods van was International Stores which carried a large range of household goods. The picture below shows the van and its driver. This man was Johnny Tapping who lived in Westlington and was employed by International Stores.



Johnny who served in the 6th Airborne division was one of the Dinton servicemen who did not return from the second world war. He died when the glider he was in crash landed as it was crossing the Rhine in Germany.

Pamela has supplied me with another picture, and although not quite in context of the main heading it is very worthy to be included.



A very old copy of Wicksteed Park, Kettering.

14. Service Life.

In 1953 I received my call up papers to join the service. I attended a medical, which showed that I was very fit, and I asked to join the Royal Air Force. After completing an exam I was accepted in as an Air Wireless fitter although I had asked to be trained as an accountant! I now think that they were right as climbing all over aeroplanes was very interesting. The first week prior to actually becoming an airman was spent at RAF Cardington in Bedfordshire where we were all measured and issued with our uniforms and we were treated very kindly. At the end of the week we took the Queen's shilling, swore the oath of allegiance and we were in!

The following day we were transported by train to RAF West Kirby near Liverpool for initial training. Now everything changed dramatically. We were sworn and shouted at continuously. This came as quite a shock to me as I had previously led a very sheltered life! The language of the drill instructors is not printable and although I knew the words they were not part of my normal vocabulary. I did ask why they used all these foul words and was told that it was all part of the brain washing to ensure we were obedient instantly.



The barrack room at
RAF West Kirby

Over the next six weeks we were taught how to polish lino floors, march, salute, stand up properly and then worst of all how to kill. Stabbing sacks full of straw pretending that they were people, screaming and shouting as we did it. We learnt how to kill people with rifles, machine guns and by throwing grenades. It came as a great shock to all of us and worst of all was the gas chamber. Our final effort, which was very pleasant was lining the route in Wales for the Queen's coronation visit and with this over we departed West Kirby for good.



Me at RAF West Kirby

I then went on to RAF Yatesbury in Wiltshire to receive my training in the wireless trade. Life was now very different and most of the foul language had stopped but the work was quite demanding. Back to school everyday and regular exams but at least I was learning a trade. After ten months I left for RAF Lyneham, a fully-fledged Air Wireless fitter with just two more years to serve. During this time I did return to Dinton on leave and some weekends to see my family, and to the funeral of my mother. Life was now so different from life in Dinton village.

Life at RAF Lyneham was extremely pleasant. I had my own single room and the food in the mess was second to none. I soon became an NCO and had my own servicing team. During this two year period I was sent to the south of France where the Royal Air Force had a staging post for their transport aircraft to refuel. I was only there for six weeks and we were issued with a bicycle for transport. This enabled us to cycle down into the town of Istres where I spent a good deal of my free time. I found a shopkeeper who sat outside his shop waiting for customers. He couldn't speak a word of English so I was able to practise my schoolboy French with him. I learned a lot from him and I needed it as when using the Radio communication to the control tower or anywhere else in the area, if English were used there would not be a reply. Only French was accepted.

Returning to RAF Lyneham life went on as before and when my time was up I came home to Stone. I was asked to stay but I really wanted to come home. The service had done others and me a world of good. Taught me self-discipline, responsibility as well as providing me with a worthwhile trade which was to stand me in good stead in the years to come. A week before leaving the service I married in Stone and had left Dinton for good. Service life was not all that bad, I joined as a boy and hopefully after three years I left as a man.



Me, far Right

15. Summary.

I know that we were very happy and lucky to have had a near perfect childhood in Dinton. We were taught the rights and wrongs from a very early age. Our parents insisted on good manners and discipline. We were mildly chastised when it was needed but I was never struck in anger. We had very little in material objects but we made our own amusements. I never heard anyone say "I'm bored, I've nothing to do". How could we be bored (OK, on Sundays perhaps!) because there was so much to do. Piano practise was at least thirty minutes or more each day.

Dinton School provided us with a very good and sound initial education. There were fights but we were all friends again by the afternoon. The young did not have access to alcohol as they were not allowed in the pubs and it wasn't sold anywhere else. Mother did make some wine (elderberry, dandelion etc.) as many of the villagers did but this was not for our drinking although I was allowed a small glass at Christmas. Smoking was strictly forbidden but we did manage to get the odd packet of five Woodbines and try it out! Most of us had a knife but only for sharpening pencils etc., never to hurt anyone. It never entered our minds.

The dustman did call with his dustcart but I cannot recall that there was very much to collect from our house except a few empty tins. All glass bottles were returnable with a small payment by the shopkeeper for each bottle. No plastic bags. Paper bags were saved and re-used until they became unusable when they served their final use helping to light the fires. All food waste was put on the dungle and all deposits from the fires strengthened the garden paths. Dung from the goats was also added to the dungle. The term 'Landfill' hadn't been invented!

I cannot recall any crime. Doors were seldom locked because no-one would steal from you. (Now even the Church has to be locked!) In 1944 a hayrick was burnt down in a paddock in the school field near Moat cottage. This was blamed on the evacuees. (well, someone had to be blamed but I never knew who actually did it!). We did go scrumping in the Autumn and yes this is stealing, well technically it is but it was more of a pastime without criminal intent. People looked out for each other and offered help when needed and I hope that this attitude still exists.

Dinton has changed as everywhere changes. Change is inevitable. There are many more houses, the old forge isn't a forge, the walnut tree in front of the forge has gone but Dinton is still very quiet and peaceful and still very clean. The children still play on the village green. No shops? No bakery? This seems a shame. Motorcars and supermarkets have made their mark. The old days were hard but we were happy and contented. We were all in the same boat! The only commodity that most families were short of was money. We ate the right foods and I cannot recall anyone who was overweight. All the food that we grew was organic and we didn't know that there was any other sort. We lived a good outdoor life. In general I think that we were all healthier in those days although without the modern medicines of today many of us would already have departed this world.

In recent times my wife once said to me "I came from a poor family". My reply was "You were not poor but rich beyond compare. You had two parents who loved you, fed you, clothed you, kept you warm, taught you right from wrong and protected you. How can you have been poor? Money cannot buy all that however much you have".

I have written the following pages especially to illustrate the way of life during my childhood for my grandchildren, grandnephews and grandnieces to read so that they can compare their way of life now all these years later.

Acknowledgements:

My thanks to my sister Elaine and my brother Frank for help in reminiscing our Dinton childhood. My thanks also go to Pamela and Frank Jeffrey for the same reason and for supplying many of the old photographs. I grew up with Pamela (nee Hopgood) and Frank, went to school with them and on joining the scouts Frank was there again helping us younger boys with the scouting activities. Frank was also a full time employee of Webb and Rushton at the time when I worked there part time thus I received even more of his help in cake making. Conscription sent Frank into the Army and me into the Royal Air Force and so our paths were not to cross again for over 50 years. (How we all met up again was because of a book, but then that's another story). On researching Pamela's family tree I found that she and I are cousins and in all these years we did not know this. Although it would not have made a scrap of difference if we had known, life in Dinton for us would have been the just same.

Amended June 2010