

MEMORIES OF ARTHUR JEFFREY WHEN HE LIVED AT FORD AS A YOUNG BOY IN THE EARLY 1930s

Firework night - During half-term from school, all the boys borrowed a cart from Keen's Farm to collect all the rubbish and wood from hedge cuttings. Pulling it all round the village to build the communal bonfire, held sometimes in the pub field, at other times in a paddock by our house. We joined Joe Woodford's firework club with whatever money we could get to buy the fireworks from him. One year we put Bill Field in a pram dressed as a guy and took him around the village in half light, knocking on doors, he squeaked if they touched him. We made enough money to buy some paraffin to start the bonfire as it was wet. John Saunders took the money but insisted that he put the paraffin on as we were only kids. He did just that but caught himself alight, burning his arms and legs, and had to go to hospital, but luckily it was not too serious.

Opposite our house was a big chestnut tree, one day Ron Ludlow (nicknamed Knighter) got his Mum's new axe and stripped all the bark off the front of the tree. When his Mum came home she took him to the tree, dropped his trousers and thrashed him. That tree remained like that for years and was eventually felled.

We used to have an old woman tramp in the area called Mag Mary. She used to go around with an old black pram with all her belongings in. She used to get vicious if we teased her. She would come around the village selling pegs and iron holders. She died shortly after accidentally setting fire to a farm shed by Ford Crossroads.

During the summer holidays we would build a dam in the Ford brook. We would go on picnics along the Ford lower road at Lanchbury's farm which was half way to Haddenham, Aunt Maud, Mum's sister and her family and friends, who lived in Haddenham would meet us for games.

When we went to Aunt Maud's for the day we used to spend time by the railway station watching the goods trains, counting the trucks as they passed by. We would have to go to Grandfather's at Gibraltar to pick gooseberries, pull rhubarb and dig potatoes. I liked going there, as he always had condensed milk on the shelf in his old kitchen. I used to eat it by the spoonful.

In the winter we would have paper chases. Saturday mornings we would tear up bags full of paper. When the older boys came home from work at noon, two would go off leaving a paper trail, the rest would follow half an hour later. Today we would have been called litter louts.

Washing day took up the whole day, Mum used to light the fire in a copper in the outside shed which took hours to boil. She used a big wooden mangle in garden. The toilet used to be at top of our long garden so in the winter Dad always lit some newspapers to warm the place up. When one of us was ill, Mum would line

us all up and we all had to have a spoonful of brimstone and treacle, then we would know the way up to the toilet.

When a cow had calf Mum used to get the first milk from the farmer and make a lovely milk pudding called cherry curds, it would be illegal to do this now. Our first cat was called nigger, no race relations in those days. Occasionally, we had a coloured man come to the village selling silks and ribbons from a suitcase.

Mum did not back horses but one day Dad said to her 'Royal Mail' will win the Grand National. She said she would only back it if the postman came to our house that day which he did so Mum put a shilling on each way and it won at 7/1. In those days it was a lot of money. Funny thing was the postman came to our house by mistake that day.

In 1938 the family moved from Ford to Upton. Arthur joined the Royal Navy at 17 and half years of age and served with them throughout World War 2. He spent many years as Scout Master with Dinton Scout Group.

Later the family moved to Stone and was Church Warden at Stone Church for some years. He was also an active member of the local British Legion and keen member of the Quainton Amateur Dramatic Society often performing lead roles.

Arthur now lives in Chingford, London with his partner, Mary.

Arthur was born in 1924 and celebrated his 85th birthday in 2009.

