

1705 Rosie Jeffs memories hand-written

Extracts from these which can be seen in their original form in WVA

1909

Farm Close Lane was divided by a stone stile leading across the meadows [a stream ran through these from Betty Brown's spring, see record 2614] to the railway station on the left path; and on the right led to station Road and the Railway Inn. Avery's sawmills too were adjoining the station. Old Granny Clements lived in a tiny cottage by the stile [see record 2429] and opposite, the two houses were occupied by the grandchildren in one; and in a large house were Mr and Mrs Farthing. Jani Farthing used to empty the chamber pot on the unlucky passers-by; she lived upstairs and never came down, being an embarrassment.

Towards the square was the croft and on the corner was Mrs Holland's shop where we used to buy farthing eggs with a present inside – wrapped in tissue paper. Mrs Holland made beautiful pillow lace. The Chequers was at the bottom of Fridays Lane.

In the winter, the children used to have a huge slide right across the square and all groups liked tops and high jumps – hoops too were always about. Door knocking was one of the sports too – at night-time. On the bank were old houses up narrow paths which had to be reckoned with by the housewife carrying the washing and water from the village pump. All the houses had a copper in a shed or outhouse, kitchen ranges and old open grates. The loos were right at the top of a long garden and very eerie at night for a visit.

The old Crown Inn used to be occupied by Mr Tombs, and once or twice a year the Village Feast was held down in the yard which was the old coaching station.

Opposite the Crown lived Dr Barns [Mulberry Court] and John Bull – characters as I remember him and his groom-gardener live on the bank alongside in a thatched cottage.

Children were poorly dressed in general and there were quite a lot of drunken men at night.

I remember at school singing the times table. Miss Christian was our teacher.

Our shopping was by pony and trap by rough roads to Oxford and Cowley – hail, rain or snow. We had a village carrier who bought goods ordered from Oxford for a small fee.

A huge threshing machine used to stand in Mr Tombs yard bordering the square.

Piano lessons ere had for 5 shillings a term and tuning for 3/6d.

The chosen few for Thame Grammar School were very posh and no longer looked the way of the village students.

The old gramophone was to be heard in most cottages.

We had Sunday School outings in a smart break – two horses pulling smoothly – and on our trap we had candle lamps.

Most gardens had a pig sty somewhere and the pigs were butchered in the gardens by the local butcher with his ropes and knife and, afterwards burning and scalding.- gruesome. It was the era of chitterlings, bowls were brough along to collect the offal. Hog puddings were made in the house – blood and rice being the main ingredient.

The Post Office was ten on Station Road corner and run by two sisters.

The Chapel was well attended, in those days by children. Mr Pike, Mr Joshua Harris, Miss Pike and Annie Holland used to sing.

The chemist was owned by Joshua Harris who would extract an aching tooth – no pain killers in those days and I never deserved the cinnamon sweet after kicking the poor man's shins as he applied the pincers – he held his ground until the object was held out still in the pincers. His hop had lovely coloured bottles around and smelt very nicely of chemistry and coffee-freshly ground. The half of the shop was grocery stocked.

On the way to school we always looked in at Mr Sheldon, the blacksmith, and watched horses being shod; the almost dead fire being blown by huge bellows until it was glowing red, and the iron tapped into shape; and the acrid smell of the hoof.

We did not have far to go to find pounds of blackberries. Fresh cream we got from Mr Charlie Sheppard's farm opposite our house. In the early days I had to go across the fields and over the railway line to a farm for a large can of skimmed milk – waiting sometimes while Mr Dennis finished milking his cow.

I remember the terrible fire at the sawmills