

Interview with Michael Johnson (26 May 2004)

I met Michael, by chance, outside St Mary's Church on Wednesday 26 May. He had lived in Wheatley during the war years, and been at school with John Smith.

The family had lived in the High Street, opposite Harris' Stores in the house that is now called Greystones, but was known at that time as The Kennels. There was a considerable amount of land attached to the property and Michael's father kept pigs and poultry, and also had a number of dogs. Michael believed that the property was actually owned by a retired clergyman, Mr Halford-Adcock.

He recalled that he 'went to school' in The Merry Bells. At that time there were a great many refugees living in the village and there were too many children to fit into the school, so three classes took place in the Merry Bells. There was one class at the north end of the hall, separated by a partition from another class at the south end of the hall. The third class was in the room to the left of the front door (now known as the Coffee Room).

Michael's father, Fred Johnson, was a First World War veteran and a member of the Home Guard in Wheatley during the Second World War. The other two members of the Home Guard in the village were Captain Paintin, who lived in (the cottage beside) the Windmill, and Sergeant Green, who owned the sweet shop at the bottom of Friday Lane, on the corner of Crown Square.

One night a parachutist was seen landing on Jackie's Hill, near to Jackie's Farm (now known as Castle Hill and Castle Farm). So the three members of the Home Guard set off, with their rifles and pistols loaded, to investigate. They crept up to the bam where it was thought the parachutist might be hiding, and one man waited at each end of the bam, whilst the third walked through the bam Unfortunately, there was no-one there - he must have hidden somewhere else. No-one knows who he was.

Michael Johnson's cousin, Ruth Baker, was buried in Wheatley Churchyard before Christmas 2003, and other members of his family are buried in the churchyard too.