MISS CLARA FISHER of Temple Brow, Clanfield Road, East Meon states:-

I was born in December 1902 in a house ~~then~~ now known as Vicarage Lodge, The Cross, East Meon.

My grandfather had been a pit sawyer and woodman, and my father, who was born near Midhurst in 1866, followed the occupation of carpenter and joiner after being apprenticed to that trade.

~~My~~ He father was very versatile, having ~~as~~ a youth worked ~~with horses~~ on the farm belonging to a Mr. Judd at Bishops Sutton near Alresford, and he had also worked with sheep at one time.

I know that, earlier than my own memory, he had sometimes worked in the harvest fields cutting corn with a scythe.

Even during my own childhood there were times when people not normally employed in agricultural work became part-time workers - for example at the times of hay making, corn harvesting and hop picking. ~~Indeed~~, schoolchildren were allowed an extended Summer holiday for hop picking at Buriton, about 4 miles from East Meon, ~~and~~ My mother used to take part ~~in that activity~~, walking there and back daily and taking me and my younger sister with her. ~~Hops were also grown at East Meon in the field belonging to Messrs. Tosdevine opposite the Recreation Ground.~~

My father had a good tenor voice and, like his father, was always interested in music. In his younger days he was the leader of a stringed band in which he played the violin and his brother played the cello. This band performed at dances, and it was at one such dance that my father met the young woman who became his wife and my mother.

Later, my father followed in his father's footsteps in becoming the leader of a brass band, and he also led a fife and drum band. I have a photograph of this last band taken in 1896 at Langrish Vicarage, showing all the members, including my father and grandfather, wearing very smart uniforms.

There was another "rival" band in East Meon known as the Chapel or Methodist band.

My father was in the Church choir and also a bellringer for 70 years. He had been bellringing at East Meon Church on the day of his death - 23rd June 1964, when he was in his 98th year.

Our family consisted of my parents, and myself and my sister who is 2½ years younger than me. We lived at Vicarage Lodge until 1917 when we moved to our present home.

In my childhood wages were low, but provided families were thrifty, then there was no need for them to be hungry, and life was enjoyable. Music and singing played a big part in our lives. My sister and I belonged to the glee class, which primarily consisted of adults, though children were allowed to join from about 12 years ~~of age~~ old. We met for practice at Mr. Arthur Warren's house, which was then called "The Square Grocery" and is now "The Tudor House". The carrier shop was a simple storey extension on the east side of the house. The conductor of the glee class was Mr. Legg who lived at Fern Cottage in the High Street, and from time to time concerts were given.

Before World War I travel to and from East Meon by those who were not prepared to walk or cycle involved either cadging a lift in a horse-drawn vehicle, or paying for a seat on the carrier's cart (which undertook regular journeys) or ~~paying a fare for special journeys in~~ a wagonette or dog cart.

~~The~~ carrier's cart was owned and operated by Mr. Noble White who lived at what is now ~~known as~~ "The White Cottage" in the High Street. Every Tuesday ~~and~~ Friday he undertook the return journey from East Meon to Portsmouth, about 17 miles each way. His horse-drawn wagon could carry only one passenger, who had to sit with him on the ~~uncovered~~ seat at the front ~~of the vehicle~~, and it was necessary to make a booking about 2 weeks in advance. A tremendous variety of goods were conveyed ~~by the carrier~~ in both directions.

As late as 1921 my ~~younger~~ sister, ~~who was~~ then 15, travelled to Portsmouth with the carrier to spend a holiday with our aunt ~~who lived there~~. The wagon left East Meon at 5.30 a.m. and arrived at its final destination, the Gosport Ferry at 12.30. It was a cold October day, and at the end of the 7 hour journey my sister was so cold and stiff that she had difficulty in ~~dismounting~~ dismounting.

Mr. Luff, ~~who was~~ the licensee of The George (and uncle of Miss Luff, who now lives in the Almshouses) owned a wagonette and a dog cart, both of which could be hired for journeys to places like Petersfield and West Meon, especially to meet trains. The fare to West Meon was 6/- return. Eventually he acquired an early Ford car, also available for hire. During summer time we ~~would meet~~ a strange horse-drawn contraption for tarring the roads, which suffocated one with fumes and dust. A barrel of tar was hoisted

At least five farmers (Hobbs, Pink, Coles, Blackman and Scott) had small dairies, selling milk, butter and cream, some of which they took to market. Mr. Scott carried two large buckets of milk on a wood yoke on his shoulders and measured out half and one pints at your door with the measures which hung from the edge of the buckets. Almost every household kept pigs and chicken, and a butcher came from West Meon each week with beef and mutton. At the Court House, Mr. Jones (whose son Stanley Jones now farms at Hillhampton Farm) had a cheese factory. There were four bakeries, including those belonging to Mr. Parsons, Mr. Smith and Mr. Eeles. Many people baked their own bread.

Wheelwrights named Aburrow, carried on their business at what is now East Meon Stores & adjoining houses & 2 Pound Orchard known as Wheelwrights Cottage. Waggons and other horse-drawn vehicles were taken there to be repaired or to have wheels replaced, and new farm waggons were built. The brothers also owned a steam drawn traction engine used to work a mechanical saw (with a belt) and to draw timber from the woods. My father - who was a skilled "saw doctor" used to sharpen the circular saw.

The saddler's shop was further down the High Street at what is now known as Old Bell Cottage. The saddler was Mr. Banham, who lived at West Meon but came regularly to run his shop. The great collars worn by cart horses, and other large pieces of harness were usually hanging outside the front of the shop.

[SEE MARGIN]

At the end of the High Street, at its junction with Frogmore Lane, stood (and still stands) the blacksmiths shop. This was nearly always a hive of activity, with numerous horses queuing up to be shod. There were normally 3 farriers at work, Mr. James Hobbs and his two sons.

There were two water mills, working, one at what is now Michael Atkinson's farm. A fatal accident occurred on 27 Dec 1912 to an 8 year old child (Muriel Mary Atkinson sister of the late Joe Atkinson) whose hair was caught in the machinery. Dorothy Forster was one of 6 children all dressed in white, who took it in turn to [illegible] the cotton, which was conveyed in pony & trap belonging to Henry (also the undertaker).

The other working mill was at Frogmore, where wheat was ground into flour. This was owned by Mr. Silk. He was the father of the present Mrs. Silvester.

Shoe repairs were carried out by Ernie Blackman at The Cross, adjoining our home (in a separate part of Victoria Cottage). But many families carried out their own boot and shoe repairs, including my own father. A large sheet of leather was bought in Petersfield from time to time, and my father would repair the boots and shoes of all the family on his last.

Most village people kept chickens, a pig or two, and, in some cases, goats. We always had a pig in a sty in the garden. It was fed on household refuse and on barley meal bought quite cheaply from Mr. Silk's mill.

My father acted as his own slaughterman, and my parents themselves undertook the curing or salting. The smoking was carried out by burning oak.

People who did not like to slaughter their own pig took it to Mr. Norgett the butcher, ~~(who carried on business at what is now the of Leal Wyatt's houses, (His late parents carried on business in succession to Mr. Norgett).~~ (Take ... from p. 9)

There was another butcher's shop in the High Street (~~in~~ part of what is now "Barnards Corner") where a Petersfield butcher came twice a week with his stock. A third butcher came from West Meon.

The fish and chip shop was behind the Post Office. Sometimes meat was sold there.

Fish was brought (I believe once a week) from Portsmouth by horse-drawn vehicle, and, every Friday, from Petersfield.

Many more houses were thatched than at present, and, of course, innumerable corn, straw and hay ricks. ~~The Peel family owned a great deal of land.~~ On one occasion Lady Peel wanted to have blackberry jam made and enlisted the services of village children to pick the fruit, and each child was rewarded with a shilling.

~~The village doctor, Dr. Jones, rode a bicycle~~ or drove a gig ~~round the village when visiting patients. He lived at what is now the Vicarage, and held a regular surgery there (I believe morning and evening). He removed my tonsils there when I was aged about 5½ - 6. A Petersfield doctor administered the anaesthetic.~~

Nurse Micklam, mother of Mrs. Lambert, was the village nurse and midwife

As for midwifery, ~~there was one~~ a nurse, known as the village nurse. She was named Nurse Micklam (~~the~~ mother of Mrs. Wm. Fred Lambert) and always wore a grey uniform. There were also a number of amateur midwives ~~in the village~~.

1910 fire

A dramatic event took place ~~in~~ on 20th June 1910 when a terrace of ~~four~~ six thatched houses in the High Street caught fire and were completely destroyed. I was eight years old at the time, and saw the

~~and saw the~~ conflagation from the window of my aunt's house nearby where I was staying at the time.

1910 fire

I heard the horse drawn fire brigade arrive with its bell ringing loudly, and understood it had travelled the 5 miles from Petersfield in 20 minutes. There was a terrifying bang when an oil tank belonging to Mr. Potter on the opposite side of the road ~~in one of the houses~~ exploded.

Another thatched house (now Corner Cottage) on the opposite side of the road belonging to a Mr. Potter (who had a wooden leg rather like Long John Silver's) was saved from destruction by a human chain of men passing buckets of water from the river, and thence up a ladder where they were poured on to the thatch.

Held on (?) Pound Field.

Each year a Fair visited us for about a week. ~~It had~~ Switchbacks and roundabouts and ~~was~~ enjoyed by all. Often the ~~families of~~ gypsies who came with it would stay to work in the fields, and their children attended our school. Men played quoits and skittles, and we had a really good cricket team. A horse brake would bring an opposing team from Privett or other villages, and a grand tea would be provided by the women folk.

Floods

There was always plenty of water in the river, especially in the Winter when there were floods. The doorways of the houses were packed up with clay between boards to keep the water out which came swirling down the streets. This happened several times each Winter and the boards remained till Spring. Water for household use came from wells, rainwater tanks or the river, but later a reservoir was built for main supply and we filled our buckets with lovely fresh water from standpipes in the street.

There was no proper sanitation, the "privy" in the garden was still used, and the rumble of the horse-drawn cart was heard in the evenings as the cleansing team were about their work while we children enjoyed our bath by the kitchen fire.

Dr Jones

Until he acquired the first car in the village in 1910, ~~the doctor had~~ Dr Jones drove a gig in route a bicycle to visit patients. (his home & surgery were at the present Vicarage) On one occasion when he was called out at night to a ~~woman~~ confinement, he went in bedroom slippers and lost one on the way, but was in time to deliver the baby. He removed my tonsils in the house where I was about 6. A Petersfield dentist extracted the ~~Doctor was~~ dentist too. You just sat in a chair and your tooth was yanked out without any pain-killer. When people were very ill straw was laid on the road outside the house to deaden the sound of horses and carts.

On Sundays at 10 a.m. we went first to the Institute for

Sunday School, dressed in our best, then marched two by two to Church at 11 o'clock. We sat through quite a long sermon, then home to dinner, next to Children's Service at 3 o'clock, then a walk with parents, and church again at 6.30. All farmers and their families attended Church on Sundays.

The ~~Canal~~ Coral League met on Fridays, where we sewed and made articles for a Missionary Sale in Summer and we had much fun acting in Pageants and Plays which were held at this time. Boys had carving and carpentry classes. Games of Hopscotch, marbles, buckle, tops, skipping, hoops came in their season. Boys would leapfrog all the way to school in Winter.

I mind once the snow being so heavy it was up to the top of the hedges, one could walk on them. The grocer filled a ~~sleigh~~ with bread and food to send to people at Beraleigh and Old Down. Roads were so bad that coal was brought from West Meon by ~~sleigh~~.

One would often meet herds of cows followed by a man with a bull on a pole, and herds of sheep on the main roads, being driven to markets or fairs, all looking very tired and dusty. Several farmers kept Shire horses which were taken for long exercise walks on the road, they were beautifully groomed and their manes and tails plaited and tied with coloured braids. ~~Large pieces of harness hung outside the saddler's shop in the High Street for repair and The blacksmith's shop was a thrilling place, to stand watching~~ the horses shod and tyres put on waggon wheels, with sparks flying upward from the fire and more from the anvil as the shoes were shaped. George Smith (whose home was one of the six cottages destroyed by fire) was hurdle maker, thatcher and sheep-shearer. Hurdles were made from hazel cut at Winter time, when it was about six years old, this was called copsing. Twelve hurdles were made in a day and the rate of pay was 16/- per day. Thatching was done with straw grown on ground where sheep grazed, it was long and cut with a scythe, made wet to use and laid straight, one way, called drawn. Hazel wood was used for spars, long, short and twisted. The tools used were a short-handled rake and shears to cut a level edge. The work was paid for by measurement and said to last twenty years.

On Ash Wednesday we always wore a piece of Ash to School, if not we had our toes trodden on. The 24th May we called pinch-bum day. Sweets were cheap, and were kept in large tins, or glass jars, and sold in paper bags made from squares of paper rolled round the hand, about ¼lb for 1d; shorbet ½d a bag and a yard of "braid" or "bootlaces", (really liquorice) for 1d. "Robin Redbreast" tobacco was 3d per ounce, coal 1/- a cwt., a bunt, or faggot, of wood cost 6d and matches were ½d a box.

Great excitement when army manoeuvres were on. soldiers with gun carriages and wagons drawn by horses would rumble and rattle through the village, and sometimes hundreds of foot soldiers ~~[illegible]~~ marching, headed by their brass bands, ~~these men in red coats~~ and sometimes a Highland regiment in kilts with pipers. Often they would camp here for several days.

Many people kept bees and in Summer one would hear the rattle of fire irons and shovels as a neighbour rushed out to claim his precious swarm. (The noise was to indicate that a bee keeper was pursuing his swarm.) In the late Summer when the honey was taken from the skep (& surplus) bees had to be killed, a hole was dug in the ground and a sulphur match (thermometer from corrugation paper dipped in melted sulphur) struck in and lighted, the skep was then put over the hole and sealed round, so the bees were asphyxiated by fumes. Next day the honey was cleared from the skep and put into a warecloth bag, and allowed to drip from the ceiling into jars, or eaten from the comb in large chunks.

Most of the cottagers were farm workers, and at sheep shearing time a party of 5 or 6 men would leave the village at 2 am or 3 am and walk up to 6 or 7 miles to farms to shear sheep. They used hand shears and would each shear 20 sheep per day. They wore white corduroy trousers, which had to be washed several times a week. The shears were taken great care of and never used for any other purpose.

There was a small "dames' school" at No 4 Westbrook Cottages, High Street, where the Misses Attwood (spinster daughters of Mr. Attwood who had been a coachbuilder of the Village Institute) taught a few children whose parents could afford to pay a small sum for their tuition.

About the time of World War I, Richard Norgate (Dick) the High St. butcher had a lame pigeon that had been rescued by his son Bert & brought up as a pet. The pigeon, named Charlie, became so attached to Dick that it accompanied him on his delivery rounds, flying beside the horse-drawn conveyance. It even sat on the doorstep of the pub when he went there at the day's end, & everyone knew where Dick was.