

Interview with Jenny and Frank Wheeler,

Petersfield, 17th June 2014

by Michael Blakstad



00.00. The Witts move to East Meon. Jenny's childhood. Petersfield School for Girls. Her dad's shop and East Meon High Street

Michael: I am at the home of Frank and Jenny Wheeler. Jenny, tell us about your early days, your dad.

Jenny: I was nine-and-a-half when we moved to East Meon. We came to East Meon in the spring of 1955. We had left Southampton, my father had managed a shop in Petersfield for two years while he looked for somewhere to buy in the vicinity., and it was either going to be Selborne or East Meon, and East Meon won.



GH Pink's store



Corner Cottage when Mr Witt bought it.



He bought a shop from Mr Pink, now known as Corner Cottage, and a shop no more. Being nine-and-a-half I went to the local primary school which was underneath Park Hill. As I call it, the 'old school'; I still refer to the other one as the 'new school' – it has probably been there forty or fifty years. From there, I passed my 11+, I went to Petersfield High School for Girls. I'd been there a couple of years, and the property has been demolished, it had been the Dolphin Hotel, hence that new flats (says she, I don't know how long they have been there ...) now known as Dolphin Court. So anyway, the Dolphin Hotel evolved into Petersfield High School for Girls, and I've just said, it closed after I'd been there a couple of years, and I then went to Purbrook (?) Park Grammar. Petersfield High School for Girls was small, a lovely county high school; there was Churchers College for Boys, there was Petersfield High School for Girls, and my goodness never the twain shall meet! A good old grammar school that you went to if you passed your 11+. That's controversial, the old 11+, but I sat there with people who perhaps (??) all over their paper, but I sat there with people who totally excelled. But everybody had a chance.

Michael 2.24secs. When you got in there from the National School, was that unusual?

Jenny. It was very unusual particularly, if I may say so, in a smallish village. The only two people I really remember was someone called Jocelyn Page, they lived in the White Cottage, opposite, was it Brooklyn House, her father was, was it captain in the Royal Navy?

Frank. He was a commander

Jenny. Yes, Ronnie Page. And the other person who had gone to Petersfield High School was Olivia Woodfield, Olivia Tottle as now is. She is three or four years older than me, and Jocelyn has turned 70, I would say, and is a couple of years older than me.

Michael. Tell us a bit more about your Dad and his shop.

Jenny. Yes, he bought the shop and it was an interesting little shop, to say the least. As you looked down from the Izaak Walton, it was only the left-hand side of the front that was the shop. The right hand side was our dining room. My father, who was a butcher by trade, decided to buy the premises because he was happy to be a grocer, and have a grocer's shop. We had been there a very short time when the existing butcher died, that would have been Mr Wyatt, who lived up at Riverside. My father then decided that we didn't need a dining room anyway, so the wall was knocked down between the dining room and the existing grocer's shop, and the right-hand side became a butcher's shop.

Michael. And the grocery kept on?

Jenny. Oh yes. So therefore, it almost doubled in size. I mean, if you look, it was one of four, five thriving shops – Post Office opposite the George, Mr & Mrs Brooks had the Country Stores; the Post Office was also a haberdasher's and whatever, Daddy was a grocer and butcher, and then there was a funny little shop which was in the garden of the Tudor House, as you come up Workhouse Lane – Beard, they were people called Beard there, Mr & Mrs – Colonel and Mrs Beard, and they had a son called Nicholas. I don't know where Nicholas went to school – he didn't come to the local school.

Michael. And it was a shop?

Jenny. It was a little shop, and the day I passed my 11+,

I was allowed the morning off, and I went back, and my father gave me half a crown, and why on earth, because there wasn't an ounce of tomboy in me, I bought a penknife – what did I want a penknife for? But I did, that's what I did. How exciting is that? And Beards was absolutely amazing, because there was absolutely everything in the world in that shop, and it was jumbled up. I mean, you had bed sheets and packets of pin-up perm lotion and, oh I can't tell you, it was just absolutely amazing.

Michael. And presumably Goddard's Garage was working then?

Jenny. Mr Goddard had a garage, and sold petrol. So we didn't have to leave the village, the only thing we didn't have was a chemist's shop. East Meon was self-

sufficient. And on a Friday afternoon, Bert Roberts would come round with a van, and he sold fruit and veg and fish.

Michael. Was there then still a building at the end of the Post Office garden next to Glenthorne to which a fishmonger came?

Jenny. I don't remember it, that was before me, but it wasn't there.



The shop at Corner Cottage during 1950s flooding

Frank. Can we just go back to what Jen was saying there about why her father came to East Meon and not to Selborne? And that's because they had fixed the flooding in the village. Had they not fixed the flooding in the village, he would have gone to Selborne, and it would have been a different story altogether.

Michael. This would have been in 1955? When they did the work?

Jenny. Yes.

Frank. '54 I think they did it.

Jenny. They had done the bit by Corner Cottage and the George, and they were working their way down. There was no way, obviously, he would have bought the shop before then.

8.45. Frank moves to East Meon. Meets Jenny. Leaves RAF and becomes a deep sea diver. Bought the Post Office after heart attack.

Michael. So how did you meet?

Frank. I was abroad in the RAF and my father had died and my mother had decided to move from where she was to Petersfield, to be near friends, old school friends, and she found the place in Temple Lane, which was called Laureldene and it had been one of the bungalows that was built for Lady Peel, for her workers. There were three bungalows there and – I can't remember the name of the man who was there before she bought it.

Jenny. Mr Blackman, wasn't it?

Frank. No. Mr Blackman had lived there, and the bloke who came there had done a lot of renovation to it. She bought it and move in there in 1971, and I came back in September to this village, which I thought was fantastic. There were all these things happening, all these clubs, everything happening, which was far, far different from the village that I had lived in.

Jenny. And the fact that there were shops.

Frank. There were shops, there were so many societies and things happening.

Jenny. Guides, brownies ...

Frank. Everything. It was a real thriving community.

Michael. Tell me, the chapel in Temple Lane, what sort of chapel was it?

Frank. It was a Roman Catholic chapel and it was working as a Roman Catholic chapel. And the Methodist chapel was still running. So you had those, and the church of course, and there were so many different things happening in the village.

Jenny. You have strayed off from how you met me, Frank ... obviously, not worth recording!

Frank. Well, of course, chance meetings in the village, you know, where we chatted. The night in question was at a dance at the George, upstairs in the function room, and Jenny came with somebody ... and left with me!

Jenny. I am not sure I like that sort of reputation!

Michael. And that was 197....

Frank. That was 1973, I should think. I came back in 1971, but spent a lot of time – I was in the RAF – until '73, I spent a lot of time away. I was in (?) Dunkerswold, up in the hills above Honiton, and I was also at Henlow.

Michael. How did you then come to be a deep-sea diver?

Frank. Because, when I was abroad in Akrotiri, in Cyprus, I became very involved with the sub-aqua club, and became a BSAC member, and spent a lot of jolly times diving, and in the clubhouse down there, and I suppose when I left there, I had eighteen months to two years before I came out of the RAF, and I thought, this is what I want to do with my life when I come out, and I went off down the west country, and I toured all the way around, looking for a good place to breed lobsters – but it was a jolly good holiday! And I was latterly writing away to Conox (?), who were down in Marseilles, down in France, who took skoobydos like myself and trained them up in six weeks and sent them out saturation diving ... and killed them, a lot of people got killed in '73. I also used to play rugby, so I played rugby for Petersfield when I came back, and I got crocked, and coming out of that, I had to go to the job centre to come off sick benefit, or whatever I was on, and they had a job there which was actually Vickers Oceanics, St Muswells (?). So basically, I applied and joined them.

14.16. The Post Office.

Michael. So, you were a deep sea diver, until you went to the Post Office?

Frank. I had a heart attack in ...

Jenny. '94 ... 1994.

Michael. You had just had it when you went to the Post Office?

Frank. Yes, 1995 we took it on. I was very ill after the heart attack, it was a major one. It took me a long time to get myself together, and I took a long time lying on sofas in our conservatory and things and I couldn't do anything. I slowly got better, and then the Post Office came up for sale, and I thought, at my age, I didn't want to be on benefits for the rest of my life, and I couldn't really see what else I could do, because I wasn't very well even then. So we took that on, much to Jen's ...

Jenny. My horror!

Michael. Let's come back to that, because ... '73 you were married. '74.

Jenny. We got married at the United Reform Church in Petersfield, because I had been married before – I had been married in East Meon church in 1966 and I didn't even ask if I could be married there again, because I am very much against people having two marriage ceremonies in the same church, because you know we've broken vows a little bit and I don't think you should even ask, so we didn't. Because Frank had never been married, he didn't want to be married in a registry office, so we went to the Congregational church, the United Reform Church in Petersfield and we were married there.

Michael. And the reception?

Jenny. The reception was at the Toby Jug. The wedding breakfast was at the Toby Jug restaurant, in Dragon Street, a lovely lovely old building which is still there but not a restaurant, the wedding breakfast was there, and in the evening John and Margaret Tosdevine very kindly lent us the barn at Duncombe., and we had a rip-roaring evening there, it was first class.

Frank. The Meonaires played for us, the Meonaires were the local group **(Both)** Les Blackman, David Goddard, Tony Purney..

Michael. Dennis Colbourne?

Both. No, Dennis Colbourne used to sing with them occasionally.

16.52 Transition from Institute to Village Hall

Michael. Anyhow, that's an indication that by then the Institute had been demolished and the other thing you were very involved with was the fund-raising and the transition from the Institute to the new Hall.

Jenny. That's right, and that was mainly due to John and Pam Sparrow who were very social people, and we had all sorts of cabarets, even in the old Institute.



Village ladies as bunny girls, Jenny Wheeler on right of line



Sheila Newbury, Joyce Colbourne, Joan Blackman, Jenny Wheeler, waitresses and singers



The troupe as serving wenches, on cricket pavilion steps



John Sparrow with William Douglas Home and Lady Dacre, judges of beauty competition



John Sparrow as MC, Jenny Wheeler as beauty queen



Jenny at May Fair as Beauty Queen

We had evenings when we would dress up as bunny girls or serving wenches or whatever. Food was provided, we served them supper, they sat round in tables, we danced, a little bit of a cabaret, and you'd have, the Meonaires would perform, Dennis Colbourne would sing, Tony Purney would play his guitar, all sorts of things .. there was only one thing I absolutely refused to do, there was a stupid song called 'My ding-a-ling', and we were supposed to walk around the tables, with triangles, singing this ridiculous song, and I said to Pam and the rest of the girls, 'I am really sorry, I can't do that, I really can't...' They didn't think it mattered, they let me stand at the side and watch them, but that's the only thing I ever refused to do.

Michael. The rest of the fund-raising was an enormous undertaking.

Jenny. Oh, seriously, yes, absolutely. I think Daddy and Mrs Ross, I think it was Mrs Ross, did a Then and Now exhibition, and that took place at the Village School so maybe that was around the time when there wasn't a ...



Michael 1973

Jenny. Indeed, indeed. It was very similar to the work you are doing now, it was East Meon old and new. .. isn't it awful, I was busy, I had a daughter, and I didn't get involved in the Then and Now, it was my daddy's thing, not mine.

Frank. You were hairdressing weren't you?

Jenny. Yes I was, I hairdressed in the village,

19.41 Royal visit and hairdressing.

Michael. Tell me about the episode where Margaret Pelly ...

Jenny. Yes, yes, yes. We're rolling on a few years now. Adrian and Margaret Pelly were two people who came to my kitchen to have their hair cut, and on this particular occasion she said it would have to be an extra special one this time, and laughed. And I said 'Oh, you're going to meet someone important?' and she said there is someone important coming to tea ..' And I thought absolutely nothing of it, and I didn't question it at all, and we went on to something else, and all the rest of it, and it turned out that, because Adrian had been, was he ... estate manager at Windsor, in fact it was the Queen who was coming to tea. Of which I was told at her next haircut. I'd obviously realised in the meantime, because rumours spread in a village, don't they? "Did you know that the Queen went to the Pelly's for tea?". I didn't, but I knew that something was happening.



*The Queen visits East Meon (on another occasion ... the closing of HMS Mercury).
The George made a place mat ...*

I remember saying to her “What on earth do you give the Queen when she comes to tea? I forget what the sandwiches were but it was (?brown Britons), it was Victoria sponge cake. What seems like five years ago was probably fifteen. I’m almost loath to say the early ‘90s, because I am not convinced.

I didn’t work after I married Frank. We consequently had two sons, and he was made redundant, twice, and the second time he was made redundant, we had Deborah at the convent, so we had school fees, albeit pretty small, we had school fees, we had a mortgage &c &c, and I said to Frank, I guess I’ll do the odd haircut in the kitchen. Well of course, twenty two years later, I had to stop. It was like Topsy, it was absolutely ridiculous. It grew and it grew.

22.05 Abattoir

Michael. I’ve got down here ‘Temple Lane’ abattoir – is it something I’ve made up?

Jenny. I know nothing about an abattoir in Temple Lane. I used to go with my father to the abattoir in Petersfield. The abattoir was where Tesco’s now is, and the Grange surgery. Tesco’s and Grange surgery combined, it was an enormous abattoir, known as the Petersfield Hotel Meat Company.

Frank. If you look at the Riverside Stores, and on the right-hand side it used to be a butcher’s...

Michael. Where the hatch was ...



Butcher's shop originally at Riverside



Outbuildings beside Riverside

Frank. Where the hatch was, yes. Then there’s a little gap, then there’s the barn. Then there’s the place where Leal Wyatt drives his car in, and parks it in the garages, which goes through to a paddock at the back, or his garden. They used to drive in sheep or cows, or whatever, into the paddock, and they would bring it into what was basically a slaughterhouse there, and they would kill the beast in there. There was a run-off for the blood and everything inside there, and outside the left-hand side of the barn as you look at it, there was a pit underneath -there is gravel there now, where the blood used to soak away into. And then, there’s a door, on the side of the barn, nearest the butcher’s, and they used to carry the carcase through and into the butcher’s shop.

Michael. Leal’s father was a butcher, was Leal a butcher too?

Frank. No.

Jenny. He worked at Barnsley, he was a wood craftsman.

Michael. Oh was he?

Frank. As did my cousin, strangely enough. My cousin was an apprentice, a paid apprentice at Barnsley.

Michael. And Mr Bray, of course.

Jenny. Dear Mr Bray.

Michael. And his father before him...

Jenny. Yes, yes.

Michael. When did you actually move to Laurel Cottage?

Jenny. July 3rd 1977.

Michael. Was that for any particular reason, except for a larger house?

Jenny. We rented a farm cottage from Michael Atkinson and we didn't want to rent a property, it wasn't the way to go.

Frank. We were in Michael's for three years. We were up by South Farm, in one of those cottages by the side of the road.

Jenny. Yes, we were up there.

Frank. And we were paying seven pounds a month.

Jenny. A week, darling.

Frank. A week.

Jenny. Because by the time we left we were paying £40 a month. For a little farm cottage.

Michael. By the way, do you remember much of all the shenanigans involved in Ruth Blackman selling the land for the Village Hall?

Jenny. No, I don't remember, I wasn't involved, I didn't get involved, but I knew - there are so many things that I have always likened to Clochemerle in East Meon., and it was a Clochemerle moment, put it that way.

Frank. Certainly the land was owned, after she died, by descendants, nieces and nephews, who lived down Brighton way, or Hastings, somewhere down there.

Jenny. And one in Italy.

Frank. Yes, and they had, basically, no interest in East Meon whatsoever. And they wanted to build, 76 houses I think it was, on that land. I think they wanted a hundred and something, to begin with.

Jenny. As I say, Clochemerle., all over again.

26.41 Domesday Village, mediaeval banquet

Michael. You were also involved, when East Meon was declared the Domesday Village? Did you organise the mediaeval banquet?

Frank. That all stemmed, really, from the fact that a committee was formed because, in Domesday Year, Winchester was holding an exhibition and, as part of this exhibition, this village of East Meon, the time of Domesday, was created and then people were going to be pointed to this village of East Meon, in terms of what was there now. The general consensus was, that we were going to make some money out of it. So this committee was formed, and there was talk about having jousting, and there was talk about having Morris dancers, &c &c.

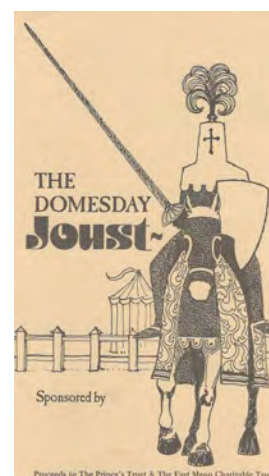
Michael. Denys was going to have a joust at Queen Elizabeth Park, wasn't he?

Frank. Basically it didn't happen. However, the headmaster of the school at the time, Wynn Lewis, put together an absolutely marvellous event, whereby the school was transformed into a castle. They had old lorry canvasses, hanging down from the front of the school, with castellations above, and the main hall was full of straw and straw bales, and around the back they had knights' tents and things and what-have-you, and all sorts of things going on. The older children were knights and ladies and the younger ones were serfs and what-have-you, and we had visiting schools coming all week, who were Saxons – ours were Normans, and they were Saxons, and they had to pay homage to our school. And then they had great banquets around the back and in the hall.

Jenny. And Wynn Lewis had chain mail.

Michael. The banquet itself was in the village hall?

Frank. I then got rather annoyed – I shouldn't way that, in front of this! – but nothing was happening. Nothing was happening in the village other than the headmaster, so I borrowed the shields, and I borrowed the flags that they had, and went down to the village hall and put them all up there.



Leaflet promoting mediaeval joust.



*The mediaeval banquet. R to L,
Terry Bell, Kim Bell (pregnant nun)
Eddie Goldfinch, Sheila Goldfinch
(lodgers) Peter and Margaret
Davies*

Originally it was a fund-raising event, but we didn't get enough people – but it was just right for the event that occurred. Because everyone sat round in a horseshoe-type-thing. We found this marvellous group called Machine without Horses who juggled and ate fire.

Jenny. Threw fire!

Frank. And music, taking part, you know, and what-have-you. And we have five or six courses, and we had serving wenches – Greta Tubbs and Julie Canning and two or three others – again, we have photographs of them.



Flame throwing at mediaeval banquet

It was such a marvellous evening that everyone wanted another one, so we did another one without trying to make any money or anything like that. **Jenny.** Peter Wadsworth was Lord of the Manor. That was the following year.

31.10. Sexton's Charity

Michael. OK, so which comes next? The Sexton or the Post Office?

Frank. The Sexton. I'd been heavily involved in looking after a portion of the churchyard. It had been set up by Chris Brough, and he'd got a number of people from the village to look after small bits of the churchyard. I used to go away for two weeks, three weeks at a time, and during the growing season I used

Michael. When you were a diver?

Frank. Yeah ... I used to get really annoyed because it would be almost waist-high, and I'd have to start all over again. My bit was the new grave area, which was a bit smaller in those days, down the west end. Anyway, I had my heart attack and finished working off-shore, and about the same time, things had gone very lax in the churchyard. Chris Brough, I think, had gone away – he'd lost his son – and he and his wife had gone off to France, and it needed someone to look after the churchyard. Not that I was capable at that time, but a year or so later, the churchyard had just gone to a wilderness, there were trees growing – they had decided it was probably better to let it go to nature, which to someone who doesn't know anything about the land, sounded like a good idea, I guess! They just did a little billiards table in front of the church. Then I suggested to Peter Wadsworth that it actually needed looking after, so we set up a charity to collect the money, to pay somebody to cut the grass. So we still had some volunteers around who were volunteering to cut odd bits, and we also paid to have those bits done which needed doing.

Jenny. The (?) were John Rendle and Susan Delmar Morgan.

Frank. Yes. Someone came down on us and said ‘what are you going to do with the money you are collecting? Are you going to start a charity. So that the money’s put away safely?’

Jenny. Quite right, too!

Frank. And I hadn’t thought about this, so I thought we had better do, I suppose ... so that they all know that the money’s not been put in my pocket and down to the local pub! So we set up the Sexton, with John Rendle to represent the church, Susan Delmar Morgan to represent the wildlife side of things, and me to represent the village, as it were.

Michael. So there never was a Sexton?

Frank. There was a Sexton, in Jen’s time.

Jenny. I remember a Sexton, Frank Collyer.

Frank. So he must have lived opposite you, in Heycroft.

Jenny. He did.

Frank. Very surprisingly, we had this art exhibition and the first one raised an enormous amount of money, well, we thought it was enormous, at the time, well over £1,000.

Jenny. Plus, plus ...

Frank. £1,700 of something like that.

Michael. These were paintings by villagers , hung in the village hall and sold.

Frank. It was supposed to be local artists.

Jenny. It also included a couple of our friends, Gordon Rushmer being one.

Frank. Gordon Rushmer helped me to start it really, because I went to him and I said, what do you think, can we do this? Would it be a viable thing to do, and he said, yes it was. And he did a few pictures, and he came along and helped me set it all up – he sold quite a few pictures, on that occasion. I always remember the first picture we sold , Bun Roper was an artist in her own right, and had started going to art classes at the age of 70 or something, and she gave us a picture, which didn’t really mean too much to us, it was a scene, and as it turned out, it was looking down, across to Selborne, and Mr Hewitt, who lived in Temple Lane, and was a friend of Jen’s father, lived in ?Braemar Terrace, and he was an AI man, and he had retired but he was keeping his hand in, as Jen’s father liked to say, doing AI for Mark Beech, who owned this farm there, and he walked into the hall with Mr Hewitt, Mark Beech did, and he looked across the hall and said ‘I’ll have that picture!’ And it was his farm! It was from high up on the hill.

Michael When did you give up the Sexton’s Charity?

Frank. It sort of gave me up. The church became more involved in what it was doing . It was set up to help the church, but to keep it out of the hands of the

church ... who would be very happy to do their billiard table bit around the church, but leave everything else; we'd set it up as a village charity and not a church charity. But most of the effort went into looking after the churchyard. Then they became more involved in what they wanted to do in the churchyard and what-have-you, and they wanted to manage what they wanted to do, so it became obvious that it was better for them to pass on all their monies to them, and all our equipment and stuff .

Michael. So it wasn't when you came to Petersfield, it was before then?

Frank. It was before then. Yes.



Susan Delmar Morgan (left) and John Rendle (right) with Frank W and HCC official at grant of award.

*The Church Wardens and Parochial Church Councils of
All Saints' East Meon and St John the Evangelist, Langrish
invite you to the
Institution of the Reverend Canon Terry Lowden, M.A.
as Vicar of All Saints' and St John the Evangelist
by the Right Reverend Dr Kenneth Stevenson, Bishop of Portsmouth
and his Induction into All Saints', East Meon by
The Venerable Graeme Knowles, Archdeacon of Portsmouth
to be held in All Saints' Church, East Meon
on Sunday, September 22nd 1996 at 6.30 pm
followed by Refreshments in the Village Hall*

*RSVP Mrs Judith Perkins, Forge Sound, East Meon, Petersfield GU32 1QB
Telephone: 01730 823667*

*Invitation to annual art exhibition in aid
of Sexton's Charity*

38.10 The Post Office

Michael. And then the Post Office was '95 as well, they started at the same time?

Frank. Yes, October 1995 was when we took on the Post Office.

Michael. From Judy Barber?

Frank. From Judy Barber.

Michael. Had she set up at Riverside already or did you move it there?

Frank. No, she worked for Mrs Emptage, and when the Post Office closed there, and it became a private house, and East Meon was without a Post Office, Judy Barber went up to Leal Wyatt to see if there was a place there that she could use. She went into the sitting room in the front bit, which was a house in its own right. If you look at Leal Wyatt's there are two houses there., sort of joined together.



Mrs. Judy Barber (left) and Mrs. Jean Emptage (right), holding her certificate of service from the Post Office. Photo: Tom Smith.



Judy Barber, left, and Jean Emptage, the previous Post Mistresses, outside the Post Office when it was located opposite The George.

The Post Office at Riverside

She set up there as a Post Office, go in through the front door, go down the steps into the Post Office,. Harold Bennett bought the milk round, and he came up and started his milk round, and the fridges for the milk round were down in Riverside Stores, really. Just to the right, by the old barn. And he decided that he wanted to take out some goodies on his round with him.

Michael. This was when, 1980s?

Jenny. Yes, it would have been, late '80s?

Frank. He went to Leal and asked if he could open a shop, as a dairy shop, as it were, with a few bits and pieces and what-have-you. He then utilised that to take stuff out on his rounds, and people got used to the fact that he could bring them things like bread as well as the milk – all sorts of bits. Hence that started. A number of years go by and Harold had a heart attack, and I actually ended up going out on the round with Dennis Eames ..

Jenny. And Alastair. Alastair was there, it was Alastair that contacted us. He was earning money because he was at college.

Frank. And I can remember going round these houses, and it would be 'the house with the green door ...' and the next house would be 'the house with the black dog ...'

Jenny. In his milk book.

Frank. In his milk book. So I am looking and trying to work out where the black dog is. So he has a heart attack and Judy Barber then takes on the whole shop. From Harold.

Michael. In the early '90s'.

Frank. Yes.

Jenny. The Post Office having closed in the meantime.

Frank. So we then take over the Post Office and the shop.



*Farewell to Judy Barber as postmistress.
(L to R, Tina Stapley, Diana Chadwick,
Monique Aldridge, Jeff Wheeler, Thelma
Hoare, Jenny Wheeler, Jackie Wilson,
Sheila Blowers, Judy Barber, Frank
Wheeler, Charlie Dowson, Malcolm
Barber.*



Michael. Can you remember whether there was any question of the Post Office going to East Meon Stores?

Both. No. there was no question of it ..

Frank. No, it was just going to be lost.

Michael. So you took it over from Judy in '95. And ran it 'till?

Frank. 2002. Basically, Leal didn't want us there any more, he just wanted to sell. That's what he told us, anyway. And he pinned us down; we had a five-year lease, and he pinned us down to a six-month lease. We had to pay for Christmas things nine months beforehand, &c, so consequently, it just wasn't workable.

Jenny. Let's be honest, it was almost a financial disaster. We took it on to give you something to do, you didn't want stress in your life. Denys, of course, did a video for the Millennium of a working day in the shop, and it's wonderful. It has villagers, and (?) Wilson Atkinson who called me 'duck'. Just fantastic! Fantastic stories, lovely video.

43.10 Other villagers. Clara Fisher, George Kille

Michael. Are there any other villages who made an impression on you?

Jenny. There were two sisters called Clara and Dorrie Fisher – Clara and I think she was Dorothy, but known as Dorrie, Fisher. Clara and Dorrie Fisher. And they lived in Templar's Brow, and their father was alive, I can still remember their father, Bob, Bob Fisher, and he rang the bells, literally until just before he died. I can imagine he rang them on Sunday morning and died on Sunday afternoon. He was an amazing elderly man, he really was.



Dorrie Fisher, to the left of her father Robert, cutting cake. Clara is to the right.



Clara Fisher

I'm not sure what he did – I'd be guessing, and I don't do guess. But Clara and Dorothy, Clara Fisher in particular had a fascinating life. She had been a nanny...

Frank. Of the King of Siam.

Jenny. Not the King of Siam, the Governor, she was nanny to some of the children ...

Frank. Something to do with Siam!

Jenny. Anyway, definitely involved with Siam. So, from East Meon, she actually ended up in the Far East, and I don't think Dorothy, her sister Dorothy, probably left the village, more than six times in her life.

Frank. She wasn't quite the four shillings ..

Michael. And the Killes, you knew ...?

Frank. George Kille I used to talk to over the fence in the evening, discussing people he knew and things that had happened in the village in bygone years ..

Jenny. He'd lived in Laurel Cottage when he was young.

Frank. That was their family house. The Killes, back then in the '30s, and '40s, owned our house, they owned the field that went all the way up Temple Lane, the barn that was up on Temple Lane, where Belmont Terrace is now built, only it was nearer the road if you follow what I mean, where Mr Kille ended his days, in the bungalow which is next to Laurel Cottage, that used to be a tumble-down cottage, and I forget the name of it now ... and they owned that, which George eventually knocked down – they were made to knock it down by the Council, it was very unsafe, but he built his bungalow there when he got married.

37.00 Workhouse Lane and Chapel Street

They owned across the road, a big house there, opposite Laurel Cottage, it was a big house called Kilburn House, I've got a picture of it in here, it was half as big, again, as Laurel Cottage. They owned what was the old Angel pub, down The Cross, which was three cottages, which they were renowned for being very shabby and very poor owners.



Laurel Cottage, with fruit and veg man from Portsmouth.



The Cross, Bryden print (1905), showing what is now Cross Cottages.



Cottages in Workhouse Lane, now named Kews and Paupers.

Kilburn house

The cottages that were down Workhouse Lane, the thatched ones, they were given to the Portsea what-have-you, sort of council houses type thing.

Michael. Tell me, your road, Chapel Street, gets its name from what?

Frank. There was Kilburn House, and there were three or four terraced cottages, and at the end of it, there was a chapel. It was a very, very severe, Puritan chapel – I can't remember the name of it.

Michael. Is that where the school now is?

Frank. No, it was where the lay-by now is, so if you went up the lay-by... where the school is was a field.

Jenny. Do you know, I didn't know that? That there had been a chapel there ...

Frank. Yes – that's why they called it Chapel Street.

Jenny. Yes, indeed. So why was it called 'The Alley'?

Frank. Because that's what it used to be, it was 'Halley's Street'. Chapel Street used to be called Halley's Street.

Frank. When I came, I don't know about when Jen came, because you can remember the cottages, can't you?

Jenny. No, they'd gone ... the cottages had gone.

Frank. Because Arthur Newbury's father used to live in one of them, and also, where Flint Cottage is, you know, where John Davies is, and you come past, and there are two bungalows, there were four terrace houses, cottages, running inwards, going in - so they weren't running with the road, they were running in ... so their gardens came along the back. So there's a well in the middle of ...

Jenny. Shelley Peter's mother lived there, and her grandmother, and Mary Crockford's mother-in-law.

39.20 Herbie Goddard

Michael. And good old Herbie Goddard?

Frank. Herbie, he was nice. I told you the story before that he had come up with the army, he'd come up through Italy in the war, and he managed to get an audience with the Pope, which impressed him so much that he decided he would bend his life towards East Meon for the rest of his life, and do everything that he could. And I think, in the main, he did. He was called "The Mayor", and I think he lived up to that.



Michael. He was chair of both the Village Hall and Parish Council so he was able to ensure that some funds were made available ...

Jenny. Was he? Interesting. I didn't know ...

Michael. At the time when the Village Hall was being developed. The other name I've got down is Ethel Lambert.

Jenny. She used to live in the almshouse that, I think it's the one that Mrs Butler is now in, next to Nuneaton, that side, the first one. So you've got the Post Office, as was, then you've got Nuneaton House, where Ruth Blackman lived, then you've got the two cottages on the right, bungalows really, single storeys, and Mrs Ethel Lambert, I am sure, live in the first one, there were people called Merritt who lived next door. Ethel Lambert was the dearest, dearest person. It was her daughter, Margery, of course, who later became very well known in the village for her altruistic ways.

Frank. And she had an aunt as well, so it's Ethel Lambert's sister who lived in the same house as Margery lived in, Miss Roach, and she was blind, but she knitted the most amazing ...

Jenny. Alastair had a most wonderful shawl ... like a cobweb.

Michael. And before them, way before your time, there were three Lamberts who were farmers in East Meon.

Jenny. There were, and I know nothing about them at all.

End of first recording.

Second recording ...

00.00 Ghosts

Frank. There's the old adage, that children, you know, run round the room, one, two, seven times and you say 'Is there anybody there?'. And this has been going on in the village for any number of years, I don't know if it happens today, in the age of computers.

Michael. This is where, in the churchyard?

Frank. In the churchyard, round the Bonham tomb. There's the boiler shed, and there's a nasty person who lives down there.

Michael. Where's the boiler shed?

Frank. Down the back of the church. Now, between the new hall and the church. And you have to ask Abby about that one, because he had a very bad experience. The Angel Inn, there's a cavalier who comes in one wall and out the other. (?) Funny Pond, which is going out the village on the Clanfield road, on the right there, you'll be able to hear the clip-clop of this horse which .. well, these are stories which have been told to me. Sarsen Stone, opposite the old forge, there's supposed to be a black dog, if you see the black dog around there, I'm sorry, that's it for you ...

Michael. If you see a black dog, you're doomed!

Frank. And the lady who walks down to Frogmore, who is always that much in front of you all the way. If you quicken your pace, she's still ... in an old dress. Langrish, there's a man who walks in the middle of the road there, up by the Deadmans' house ... Lots of problems in the George, there was. Where the store room was, where you go in the door there now, there used to be the old store room there, there were lots of problems there.

2.30. Railway at Forty Acres

Forty acres, we've gone on from ghosts now, there was a railway, you know the concrete path which goes down towards Whitewools, I guess it must have belonged to Whitewools at one time, but apparently, this is from John Cannings, who said there used to be a railway down there, he said the bloke at Whitewools was an enthusiast, he used to run his milk ...

Michael. It didn't join up with West Meon or anything?

Frank. No, no, it was just a private little railway, type of thing. Bungalows? You know Spion Cop? At the top of the hill, in Mercury? In Mercury, there's a house there now called Spion Cop, but in my time on the Parish Council, they asked if they could knock it down – an old bungalow – and put up a house there. And we all agreed that it was alright, because it had been built back in 1905 or 1910, after the Boer War, and I said they ought to keep the name, you know, historically, which they were quite happy to do. But then, if you come from Mercury towards Warnford, there's a lane which goes down to Coombe there, and about half-way down there, there was another bungalow down there, called after one of the battles of the Boer War, and if you come down into Coombe, back up to Coombe Cross, you can turn left there and walk as if you were going towards Halnaker, and the lane goes fairly straight and then goes off to the right towards Halnaker, well at the end of that there was another bungalow, there, and there was another bungalow, and it was either Adrian Pelly's bungalow, or I think possibly where that car park is, that they all use now ...

Jenny. For Coppice Cottage ...

Michael. For Radian ...

Jenny. Yes.

Frank. Sot it's either there, or it's Pelly's, there's a bunker, on Sir William's Hill, it's one of the secret ones where they were going to come out and attack the Germans from the rear, all stocked with munitions and that sort of thing, now I haven't got a clue where it is.

Michael. Do you know where there were tanks in the wood, up Greenways, during the second war?

Frank. Well, the Canadians were here, so they would have been all over the place, wouldn't they?

Old tips, to the back of the church, on the right, because the cottages were in the eastern churchyard, up the back of them there, as you go round the corner, there's an old tip there, which I've got some bottles out of .. There's plenty of people buried there now. Down Workhouse lane, down the bottom on the left there, where there's that big ditch, there is a tip there, that used to be there, with bottles and stuff ..

Michael. Are we talking ancient tips?

Frank. No, probably marble-top bottles, you know the sort of thing I mean? And also up the lane that goes up to Chalk Dell, we call it Booky Boo

Jenny. We call it Booky Boo Lane, but I don't know what it's called now ...

Frank. If you go up that lane to Chalk Dell, if you look as you're walking up there, there is like a hole, a big tip with bottles and all sorts of things there. Southern Copse, If you go down to the sewerage works, it's up behind there, up on the hill behind there, looks like a ???, and the Germans apparently used it as a marker,

during the war, they used to turn over Southern Copse, and come in over Portsmouth and drop their bombs.

Ends.