

MY VILLAGE OF ~~MEMORIES~~
MEMORIES BY HOLBETON
JEAN PEARSE nr PLYMOUTH

Coming back to Holbeton, the village where I was born 50 years ago, to the Flete Estate for the funeral of yet another character of the village. As I stood in the village church yard looking down at the row after row of graves and I thought to myself that these people in their graves are going to be forgotten for ever if someone doesn't put pen to paper and write about their lives.

My story starts at the outbreak of war around 1940. My mother, Mrs Ackland, tells my sister and I that the war is getting really bad and we were going to the school to have an evacuee from London to come and live with us. We arrive at the school and were met by Mrs Stenning from London who said to my mother "You take that child". She was a girl of about five with a name pinned on her coat. Her name was Mary Brickley. Mrs Sloman was also there and she took home a girl by the name of Julia Harrington. Mrs Pengelley took home another girl whose name was Betty Crowther. Mrs Treeby took two sisters whose name was Littlewood. Violet Cause took Tich and Derek Price.

We were a lovely community during the war. The village had their own fire engine which was kept at the top of Vicarage Hill. The village also had the Home Guard, ARP and WVS.

The Home Guard was just like "Dad's Army", they used to practice with tear gas and also used blanks in their guns.

My sister, Ruth Ackland, got caught up in the firing and was hit in the head. She had to go to a treatment room that had been set up at the back of the Union Inn.

Holbeton was a very busy village and there were three shops. One kept by Mrs Penwill which was later taken over by Mr and Mrs Riley and their daughter. The second shop was run by Mrs Steer and then later by my father's cousins, Mr and Mrs John Sherrell. The third shop was run by Mrs Steer and then by Mr Lane and Mr William Brown. The Post Office was run by Mrs Harding. Mr Laphorn was the Postman and delivered letters to all the village on foot.

The two village Inns, The George and The Union, were run by Mr Bert Sherrell and Mr Fred Rogers.

There was also the wheelwright's shop which made the carts for the village. The children used to love watching the wheelwrights at work.

Most of the men of the village worked on the Flete Estate and also on the surrounding farms.

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There was no electricity in Holbeton village until around 1952. I remember the excitement when we had our first street lights.

The lovely old church was a very busy place and Mr Breeley was the Parson. It also had a lovely choir. Mr Wilton of Ford always led the singing. At harvest time the service used to be the best of the year, it was something special. Mr Furzeland played the organ while Dick Pearse blew the organ bellows.

Mr Breeley, the parson, had a housekeeper called Kate Chilston who used to wear very high brimmed black hats, even when working in the vicarage

The Methodist Chapel was also a busy place run by Mr and Mrs John Squire of Ford farm. The great event of the year was the anniversary in June when about fifty children took part.

Rent day was a special day in the village. The village people used to go to the George Inn to pay their rent. They always had a rebate, which could be spent in a room at the back of the Inn, where Mrs Sherrell sold biscuits etc. The rents were very cheap thirty years ago and were about two shillings a week. The rates were also paid quarterly at the reading room.

The British Legion Hall took a great part in village life with concerts, Christmas parties and also dances where a lot of the young people of the village met their marriage partners

Mr William Potter was a great Character in the village and used to run the Boys Club which is now a carvery at the Mildmay Colours. He also ran a lot of the village dances with a lot of good dance bands, Frank Judge, Meridians and Cyril Warren.

Harvest time was a very happy time with the village children going into the fields to help stand the sheaves of corn. Drinks and food were taken out to the farm workers.

Threshing time was a big day. Each day the thresher used to call at different farms and all the farm workers from all the surrounding farms would help and then go in to the farmhouse for a mid-day roast meal. I remember the meals that Mrs Annie Sherrell and Mrs Elma Sherrell, my father's cousins, used to put on the table. There were great platefulls of home grown vegetables.

There were a lot of apple orchards around Holbeton and the farmers used to take their apples to Minchanie farm to have them pressed for cider by Mr Hannaford. Mr Hannaford was also on the Parish Council.

We had up to six buses a day going through the village to Mothecombe.

Mr Clifford Gill and his cousin Mr Jack Ackland, my father, used to shoe all the horses of the village in the blacksmith's shop in Fore Street.

It was a great time in the village when it snowed. Children from 11 to 15 had to go to Modbury School and the bus could not get into the village at times, especially in 1947. During this time all the children ended up in the Furze Field by Brownswell Farm. Mr Bill Sherrell did not mind and we all made sledges from wood to old bath tubs.

Flete Castle on the Flete Estate was a maternity hospital during the war and still carried on for many years after the war. A great many babies were born there, some famous.

Lord Mildmay, senior, lived at the Castle. Even when it was a maternity hospital he had rooms in the Castle.

Jean Ackland now Pearse *I started work nursing 15 years old*

For a few years Holbeton used to have a gymkhana which was held at Henry Cross. Later it was moved to Minchanie Farm. The village farmers used to enter their horses and carts. They used to dress the horses in brasses and spent many days cleaning them. There was always great competition between John Sherrell of Bakers Holden Farm, Bill Sherrell of Brownswell Farm and Mosey Rolf of Coombe Farm. You could not believe that in the weeks before the show that the carts had carried straw, vegetables and even coal.

The corn harvest was a great time for all the children. We all used to go into the cornfield and help put up the sheaves of corn.

One of the village characters was Rose Foss who lived in a cottage in Fore Street. She was like a witch and had a chilblain on her nose. When she died the downstairs rooms were turned into a doctors surgery and was run by Dr Leney. Before Dr Leney arrived Dr Taylor came from Yealmpton to visit patients.

There were only two cars in the village during the 1940s. One, ATA 607, was owned by Mr Clifford Gill. The other, AJY 200, was owned by Mrs Elma Sherrell.

Father's Cousin's

Member of Parliament was Mr Hesatine. He lived at Pomflete House. He won first prize for his cucumbers in our cottage garden show which was run every August. The cottage garden show

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was a big event with most villagers growing lovely flowers and vegetables. Mrs Ackland won many prizes for her cakes for many years. Mr Albert Gilbury always had a prize for his selection of vegetables.

my mother
Mr Gilbury's grandson

Ruis
at
Nigel Gilbury
Foyel Maunder
Butcher's
King's bridge

Many of the cottages had no running water so we had a lot of outside water taps, about two in each street. We also had a water pump at Gibb. Also in the village were two horse troughs, one at the beginning of Gibb Road the other near Brownswell Farm.

We had a Dramatic Society and about 30 of the villagers took part. We did a Pantomime each year. Mrs Collinson who, lived at Flete Lodge, used to write the music and the scripts for the Pantomime. "Cinderella" was one of the best with Iris Perring playing Cinderella and myself as Prince Charming and Mr Dennis Collinson as Buttons. Albert Street and Bill Richards were the ugly sisters.

We used to go to the Flete Maternity home to sing Carols. One Christmas a baby girl was born so her mum named her Carol.

Lord Mildmay, junior, lived at Mothecombe House. He used to love riding horses and rode in the Grand National.

Came 2nd

The Royal Family used to come for short visits to Mothecombe House and the children of the village had a chance to see them. We saw the Queen when she was Princess Elizabeth. We also saw Princess Margaret who was on the private beach at Mothecombe.

The Queen Mother has stayed at Mothecombe House and she used to go to Newton Abbot races with Lord Mildmay.

Mrs Mildmay-White used to love taking part in the village social events and she used to belong to the Womens Institute.

The village school was very good. Mr Reese was the headmaster during the war, then he left and Miss Robbins took over as headmistress.

There was a Miss Chadder who used to teach the infants and when she left a Miss Parker took over. Miss Robbins used to teach about 30 children every subject and we were all different ages. Many did very well from the teaching at the school.

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This is a poem which was written by Barry Pearse for Holbeton Show. It won third prize.

Holbeton Show.

*My Son
age 9 years*

It's time to go to
To Holbeton Show,
To see what others have to grow.
There is fruit all soft and ripe
And vegetables looking a pretty fine sight.
Then the cooking looks so nice
I expect the women used plenty of spice.
It must have taken many hours
To grow such lovely, pretty flowers.
I glance across the room and see
Women helpers making tea.
Holbeton Show is a sight to see
I hope it will for many years be
A successful show for all to see.
This I know you will all agree.

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A scissor grinder used to come around the village every few months, a little old man and his wife who used to push a strange looking cart with a big wheel.

The Gypsies used to come around for rags and rabbit skins. A rabbit skin was worth 2d.

Forty years ago, on the day of my marriage, there was also the death of Mr Walter Lugger and the birth of Josephine Light. This was quite unusual for a small village.

Also forty five years ago people did not like changes. When the three quarter length trousers came into fashion, Iris Perring and myself used to put our trousers in our bicycle bags and rode out of the village where, in the nearest field, we would take off our skirts and put on our trousers.

Mr Charlie Rogers of Modbury used to thatch all the lovely thatch cottages in the village.

Mrs Torr and Miss Henwood lived at Gibb. They were elderly and died within a short time of each other. Their house was cleared out and £4,000 in £1 notes were found all over the house. Some notes were found stuffed in drawers, some under mattresses and in cupboards. This was an awful lot of money in these days.

There were lovely walks around the village. Yarnald Wood's was a great walk. At bluebell time the bluebells were a carpet of blue. Lady Grass also grew here.

50 years ago there was a very bad fire at Vicarage Hill when three cottages were gutted. They were all thatch. Mr and Mrs Fred Steer, Mr and Mrs Ned Netherton and Mr and Mrs Dyer lived in them. They lost nearly everything they had and there were many tears that day.

There was always a lot of work in the village on the farms. The Rogwell Works, building firm was started up by Mr Tom Rogers and Mr George Welling. They employed a lot of men, some coming from neighbouring villages. They even had their own Football team.

Mrs Libet, in Church Hill, had a woolshop in her sitting room. She used to sell every colour of wool that you could think of.

Before Mr Brown had the shop in Fore Street he used to be the village carrier. He went to Plymouth three times a week. He also used to take passengers and bring home shopping from sausages to furniture.

Mr Brown also ran a taxi business and used to taxi all the teenagers to different village dances at Yealmpton, Ivybridge and Lee Mill.

Mr Brown also had a dog named Sport, a black retriever who was drowned in sewerage works near Holbeton Point.

In the old days whole families used to live in very small cottages. Some families had up to thirteen people in a three bedroom cottage. Mr and Mrs Rogers had eleven children and Mrs Holly Dimmick had nine. A lot of grandparents lived with the families.

If the people of the village went to Plymouth for the day they would leave their doors open. My mother, Mrs Ackland, used to leave her key in a hole in the wall beside the front door where

everyone could see it.

In the old days every child in the school had milk which was brought to the school in buckets by Mr John Sherrell. The milk was poured into beakers and given to the children.

We had a lot of young lads of the village who had to go to war. Arthur Burdock, Charlie Rogers, Tom Rogers, Cyril Rogers, and Edwin Dyer were Prisoners of War.

In case we had any bombing in the village the Fleet Estate decided to build a concrete tank in the builders yard which they then filled with water from Efford fish pond using canvas tanks. When it was filled with many gallons of water it burst and Holbeton Fore Street resembled a river. This happened on a Saturday night.

The Boys Brigade used to come from Plymouth and have a summer camp at Mothecombe. They had a lovely band and played as they went through the village on to church on Sunday. My sister, Ruth Ackland, married one of the boys in the Brigade.

My father, Jack Ackland, cut the hair for the men and boys of the village at our house. In his spare time he would ride his bike around the farms and cut the farmers hair. He rode a very old fashioned bike.

Ern Netherton also cut hair in his garden shed. He cut my hair once and it looked as though I had had a basin on my head and he had cut round it.

David Light, who always had a bad leg, used to work in Plymouth. When he came home he would bring the Evening Heralds with him and deliver them on his bike which had only one pedal.

When it was the Queen's Coronation we had lovely celebrations in the village. We all decorated our houses. We also had a fancy dress parade. Mary Potter dressed up as Edmund Hillary who had just conquered Mount Everest. I was dressed up as a Coronation Flower Girl, I was dressed in red, white and blue. Mary had first prize and I had third prize. In the Coronation year Roger Bannister broke the four minute mile record. We also had a huge bonfire in the hut field near Minchiny Farm, the biggest bonfire the village had ever seen.

I remember the people who lived in the Alens Houses. There was Mrs Veal who used to keep her house as neat as a pin. Mrs Chadder who used to keep herself to herself and no one saw much of her. Mrs Scobbow would chase you with a red hot poker if you stood near her door. Mrs Pollybank always wore a long black dress with a white apron and white bonnet, she could charm warts away and she was like a witch. Then there was Mrs King. She had bad legs and used to sit in the doorway of her house and talk to everyone who passed.

Maureen Gilbury, now Mrs Williams, and myself would fetch milk for people. We collected jugs from different houses. I would fetch 90 year old Mrs Vanstone's milk in two very pretty antique jugs by today's standards. She gave me a three penny piece a week and I was so thrilled that I had

twelve shillings and sixpence a year.

Mr Chambers of Church Hill ran an annual rabbit show; nearly everyone kept rabbits in those days. Mr Chambers himself kept a lot also Ern Leak who lodged with Ron Luggar's mother at the court at the top of Fore Street.

It was a great time when the filmstars came to make films in our pretty area. I remember Bill Owen from "The Last of The Summer Wine" came to the village to make the film "Treasure Island" on Pomflete beach. One day he was sitting on my mother's garden wall when Mrs Elsie Pearse came up the road. He said "What are you doing mother?" and she said that she had forgotten her bacon. He said "Going baking, mother, what are you going to cook?"

Lord Mildmay, senior, came to the village to meet a bus from Plymouth. He had ridden his horse from Flete Castle. He shouted to the conductress to ask if there was a Mrs Jones on the bus and the conductress told him to ask himself. He got off his horse and onto the bus, my friend and myself held his horse. When ^{we} told the conductress it was Lord Mildmay she had been rude to she felt ill. We never saw her on the buses again.

Mr Clifford Gill sold oil to the village. We all took our cans to be filled. When Pink oil came onto the market everyone was thrilled as pink oil looked lovely in our glass lamps.

When there was to be a General Election the MP's from all parties would come to the middle of the village in a car with loud speakers. My mother, Mrs Ackland, always gave them a cup of tea. Conservatives, Liberals and Labour men.

My mother's house looked over Town Hill which at that time was the middle of the village.

It was not unusual for the ladies of the village to shopping in their slippers which always had tassels on.

Saturday afternoon was always a big shopping day in the village. Mrs Sloman and her daughters Florrie and Claudine carried lovely baskets. They used to go into all three shops, In those days you would patronize all the shops.

I think in this short little book most people and their lives have been covered. Many I have written about are now dead, some are still with us. I hope by putting this down on paper their memories will live on for ever.