MEMORIES OF CLOPHILL FROM THE 1920'S AND 1930'S

Both Jack Pitts and Jack Burgoine had very retentive memories and each could recall in some considerable detail what life was like in Clophill during their childhood days. We often said that it would be a good idea to sit them, each in turn, in a car starting at the entrance (A6) to the village and let them talk us through the High Street, recording their memories as we went along.

Most often these ideas remain just that, ones of good intent – "We really must get this organised" being often expressed but never acted upon. Very fortunately for us we did make the trips 'down memory lane' before it was too late; one on 21st September, 2004 with Jack Pitts then aged 91 and the second on 23rd September, 2004 with Jack Burgoine, 83. Within six months both were no longer with us so we were delighted that the effort had been made.

Since then Gillian Hill has diligently beavered away listening to the recordings, disregarding the irrelevant conversation of others and transcribing the pertinent to form a readable narrative. Many thanks to Gillian for all her hard work.

The resultant 'trips down memory lane' will be published in Spotlight in parts over a period of time beginning this month with Part 1 of Jack Pitts' memories. If these reminiscences evoke memories of your own which you would like to share then we'd be delighted to hear from you. Likewise if you have any photographs of old Clophill places/people/events then we'd love to copy them for 'Spotlight's archive and return the original to you.

JACK PITTS' MEMORIES OF CLOPHILL – Part 1

Earliest recollections

Jack was born in 1913; his earliest recollection of Clophill was during the First World War when the Zeppelin came over one night from Germany and dropped a bomb on Cambridge. He lived in Back Street in a little cottage – there were 4 foresters cottages there where Hilltop now stands – and everyone came out in their night clothes to see the Zeppelin go over. He remembers the soldiers in khaki with putties, not leggings, round their legs and he was taken to the primitive Methodist Chapel (where Chapel Feeds is today) when he was 2 years old. The open-decked bus used to come from Bedford every Tuesday to Hitchin and Ampthill Markets; this was the earliest vehicle Jack can remember. He remembers that Alf and Annie Gobey used to have celery beds in their garden and they had to get up at 3am, collect the celery and take it up to the Green by cart and then it was put onto other transport to take it to Luton. There were slave horses to get the carts up Barton Cutting.

The entrance to the village

The main (A6) road from Bedford to Luton used to turn left at the Flying Horse continue along what is now the boundary wall to the Flying Horse car park and then turn right over the Old Bridge into what is now Old Silsoe Road.

The Wesleyan Chapel, Diggins' garage and the house next to it *(all on the Maulden side of the A6 Junction)* were demolished, when the A6 was changed in 1937, to bypass the Old Bridge and run straight North to South on the west side of the Flying Horse. Diggins' garage was relocated in the Maulden Road where A&F Motors now is. His father moved to Shepherds Path near the Apple Orchard and had a house built there. On the corner where the old Police house stood was a big house surrounded by a wall. Two spinsters lived there, the Misses Moor. The present Moore Close is named after them. Some of the wall remains but it went all the way up to the thatched cottage beside the garage. The thatched cottage was the butchers(Youngs), as there was no butcher in Clophill at that time.



The Wesleyan Chapel, Diggins's garage and the house on the left were all demolished to make way for the A6 to bypass the Flying Horse & old Bridge

Travelling down the High Street from the A6

The first house on the left (2 The Green) was a sweet shop owned by Mr Smith. Jack told a story of when his wife Doris went there as a little girl and he asked if she would like a sweet; when she said yes, he took her round the back of the shop and asked her to take the mouse out of a trap!

The Flying Horse was a coaching inn. The earliest owner Jack could remember was Sidney Chase who had 4 or 5 daughters. Years later when we had green National buses, they were garaged overnight in the grounds of the Flying Horse. The drivers and conductors were local - one from Silsoe, Clophill, Gravenhurst and Ampthill. The Inspector, Bill Charmer, lived in a small cottage at the top of Mill Lane on the junction with Kiln Lane. The Green has not altered that much. When motorcycles became popular the bridge was notorious for accidents particularly at weekends and two nurses used to stay in the lock-up over the weekend to deal with the accidents.

The Bakehouse was next door to the Green Man and that belonged to the Juff family. The oldest boy Bert was the baker and delivered it on a baker's cart. His mother ran the sweet shop which was the meeting place for all the youngsters in Clophill in 1920s. Later on the bottom room became a Gents Hairdresser, run by Bill Smith from Luton.

Next door was the Green Man which was run by Mrs Garton and her two daughters (Mr Garton had died); at the back of the pub was Garton's field where Beverley Court now stands. Every first weekend in September (Thursday-Saturday) the Clophill Statty *(Statutory fair – many places had the statutory right to a fair each year but we understand it lapses if a year is missed. Shefford still has one in its High Street each September)* would come down from Maulden with steam engines pulling the Fair. The fair started at the Flower Show in Sandy on the Sunday, then it went to the White Hart at Maulden village and stayed there Monday-Wednesday. Then packed up and came to Clophill on Thursday.

It was the highlight of the year and so many people came from surrounding villages that you could hardly move. The rides cost 1d or 2d. They would take £100 on the roundabout alone. This was Will Thurston's Fair in 1920s. The horses would be left to graze in Burgoigne's field and take water for the steam engines from the river. Jack and his friends earned free rides helping to get the water from the river.

The Old Forge is the first house on the right hand side in the High Street; it was run as a smithy in Jack's young days by a Mr Cakebread who came from Meppershall to run it. It was a very busy blacksmith in those days because of the number of horses. Nurse Wiley lived in the next house, Forge House (not called that in 1920s) when Jack was a boy. Opposite, now referred to as The Cabin, was Mr Hinton who was a market gardener but later on it became Diggins bicycle shop; again a busy shop because bikes were the main form of transport. Punctures mended at 4d a time.



The Juff family outside their bakery next door to the Green Man



Clophill Smithy, 4 High Street, was run by Arthur Cakebread here with wife Aggie

6 High Street was the village carpenter, Jim Whittermore ran it with his son Arthur and he was also the village undertaker. He had no car for the business so, when someone died in the village, the coffin would be carried from his workshop to the house. If they had a carpentry job, Arthur would take all his tools on his bike – but you never saw him ride the bike, he was always pushing it. The single storey is the old carpentry part of the house, the rest was added later.

Westfield House was built on the land originally owned by Mr Hinton. Sammy Gaylor lived at No 3 in 1920s; he was called 'The Carry' as he used to go to Ampthill Market and Ampthill Station to pick up parcels, also as he passed the doctor's surgery at the top of Station Road he would pick up your medicines at tuppence (2d) a bottle. Dr Beard and Dr Garder lived almost where the Council Offices are in Ampthill now. Sammy was a real character. Then when he died, Mr Cakebread moved from the Meppershall to No 3 and let the bottom part as the Doctor's Surgery. The doctor visited a couple times a week from Ampthill.

Jack said that Charlie Izzard a market gardener lived in the old thatched cottage (Nos 8/10) where later Mrs Grummit lived. Charlie Izzard was a Steward at the Chapel and Jack used to look after the garden.

7 High Street, currently owned by Pete Warner and up for sale, was the Drapers Shop run by Mr Harris. This was when Jack learned about 'Dearmer' money *(Note – we believe this term came about as the result of a trust set up for the poor people of Clophill by Thomas Dearmer in 1630 and which is still part of the present Clophill United Charities)*. Anyone in the village, who did not own a house or a horse and cart, could go on the list and get Shilling 'Dearmer' tickets; so you could go to Mrs Harris with a Shilling Shirt Ticket. You could also get an allowance for coal but it had to be spent in Clophill. Mr Harris drowned himself in a water butt.

Wal Young who had the butcher's shop in Maulden lived at No 22 (now Zac Thole's house). He ran the butcher's shop near Diggins garage with his brother Frank but collected the meat at their house. Eli Fossey had a sweet shop at No 9 and he was the village cobbler with a workshop at the back. From No 22 right down to 34 (latterly owned by Bill and Barbara Constance) there were no houses at all.

No 13, Masters House, was the shoe shop and next door at No15 (where Ray and Barbara Sharp now live) was the Police House and Mr Gibson lived there. Frank Young lived at where the entrance to Cainhoe Road now is on part of the Taylor's land; and this area was all meadows. 19 High Street, now George & Vera Robinson's home was called Taylor's House where Will Taylor lived; and he had 2 sons Wilf and Bert. George's first wife was Flo Taylor. Across the road there were cattle sheds for milking the cows that walked down the High Street from a field where the school is now situated. Mr Appleby would be walking his cows the other way down the High Street at the same time to a field near 55 the primitive Methodist Chapel. Alwyn Ward's mother used to go out and clear up the manure. You could go to Taylor's

House and buy milk, butter and eggs and other farm produce as well as buying it from the cart which Wilf and Bert took around selling milk out of churns.



The barns opposite Wil Taylor's which spanned from 22 to 34 High Street

Lammas Cottage has been altered and there used to be two additional cottages built at the back where the modern house now stands. In one of these cottages Mr Cotton who was also a village cobbler who had his shed in Wootton House garden. Gilberts Yard was owned by a Mr Gilbert who came from Houghton Conquest and he farmed the ground behind the house almost up to Back Street. Then it was Kitty and George Lammas' house.

No 35 was a fish and chip shop owned by Garrett who then moved it to Great Lane; it then became Lashams, the first butchers shop, before it became a private school for about 8-10 posh children; the Misses Gillets went to that school in about 1925. Their Mother was Edith Victoria Appleby who was a schoolteacher and they were also related to the Appleby who lived at the top of Jacques Lane. Edith Appleby married Commander Gillet *(The story of her life was featured in October 2004's Spotlight)*.

On the ground where Howards Mews now stands, two old ladies named Chapman used to keep goats and sell goats' milk also eggs and apples. They were very staunch Church people.

No 34 used to be owned by George Mannings (hat manufacturer) which was the cottage industry. Certain people used to give the work out and Jack's mother used to do straw hats. She had a wooden mill which comprised a wooden screw and two

rollers. The rollers were ribbed and Jack used to help by feeding the straw through this machine and rolling it flat for plaiting. He reckoned he had milled literally miles & miles of plait. They also used to mill a finer material called 'seventy guinea machinists' to produce what was called Teagle, a finer and thinner material used to make the finest hats.

During 1914-18 War, the soldiers were billeted in Haynes Park and came to Clophill to meet the girls; Jack's mother-in-law mother married a soldier from Liverpool.

End of Part 1 – (Printed in October 2005 Spotlight)

JACK PITTS' MEMORIES OF CLOPHILL – Part 2

The second article in a series of memories of Clophill High Street from the 1920's and 1930's.

At 41 High Street there were two cottages and George Young a pork butcher lived there. He did not sell joints of pork but sausages, chops and chitlins; there was an alleyway beside the house to his shop at the rear. The old lady who lived at Rustling Leaves used to frighten the children. Jean Dogget (nee Peck) now lives there.

No 36 Oakley House built in 1854 was where the first gentry - the Rothwells - lived. The single storey part of the building was the children's playroom. Opposite in 45 (now called London House) lived the Misses Goodall, two sisters. *(The roads of the Cainhoe Road estate are named after prominent past village residents – Misses Goodall, Major Tanquerary and Rev Mendham).*

Clophill House had iron gates on the corner of Mill Lane but the metal was taken away for the 1939-45 war effort and the wall bricked up. In Jack's young days the house was owned by a Mr Soundy.

The Mill was very busy as it was the only one in the area; the farmers came from surrounding villages of Haynes and Gravenhurst with their corn to be milled. As a boy, Jack used to stand and watch. The wooden footpath across the river led to the Mill House which had to be demolished in 1980s. The original owner was Frank Course who had a brother living up Mill Lane. It was thought The Causeway may have been named after him. The owners now are Northwood. There were no houses in The Causeway; it was just the direct route to Warren Woods.



Jack saw a photo of part of Warren Wood accessed from The Causeway. There were 3 rides through the wood, two were private and the other was called Lover's Walk – the middle one with beech trees. It belonged to Wrest Park and in order to keep those rides private, one day in the year it had to be patrolled by one of the Wrest Park workers; usually on Good Friday.

The present Methodist Chapel was built in 1936 when they pulled down the Wesleyan Chapel on the A6. The first to be married in the chapel in 1939 was Eva Dunham – one of Norman Dunham's sisters – she married a Tingay from Campton. Jack and Doris were married in 1940, not in the chapel, but in St Mary's Church, Clophill. The reason for that was that the chapel was built more for the Ampthill circuit and Jack knew none of them; Mr Mann was the Minister. As Jack was not able to be married by the Minister he had known all his life and as Doris had been christened at St Mary's in 1914-18 war; they decided to get married in Clophill Church by Rev Gordon.

No 46, Wootton House was the original Post Office and sweet shop. The Post Office was run by Jimmy Wootton (Mrs Wootton had died) and he had a daughter (Edie) who looked after the shop and son, Lyndon, who was a tailor and made men's suits in one of the rooms of the house. Lyndon was organist at the old Wesleyan chapel and when that was demolished, the original organ was installed at the present Methodist chapel and Lyndon continued to be the organist.
In the garden of No 46 there was John Cotton's cobblers shop.
The new houses at 48 and 48a were built in the garden to Wootton House.

Across the road to the right of the chapel, now 49-51, was where Frank Titmus a carpenter lived; he had a workshop in the barns behind the house and he made Jack's father's first wheelbarrow. The first time that Jack had seen a hearse with plumed horses was at Frank Titmus's funeral. After he died Fred Oakley moved there. The grounds of Fred Oakley's house stretched from beside the chapel, up to the playing fields and Jack's uncles used to work it. Fred Oakley came from a pub in Campton to live in Clophill. When he died he left a considerable legacy to both to Campton and Clophill Churches.

The Post Office at 53 High Street, run by John & Beryl Burger from 1975 until last year, was in Jack's youth a shop run by his relations, the Daniels. Jack used to go on a Saturday morning and clean the knives and forks and earn 6d. It was not the Post Office but has always been a shop in Jack's time.

Opposite at Ivy House lived the second gentry – The Tanqueray family.

In the 1920s there was a Primitive Methodist chapel at No 55, where Ralph and Anna Brough now live. The chapel was set right back from the road in order to clear the windows of the nearby properties. It had a huge frontage and had two gates, one leading to the back and a smaller gate to the front. The footpath was originally to the other side of the property but put in its present position when the chapel was built in about 1915. However the footpath did not lead into the playing fields, as the intervening land was private property owned by Fred Oakley. It ran straight up to Kiln Lane parallel to the right hand side of the playing field and joined up with the footpath which leads from Kiln Lane via Butler's stile across the fields and into Little Lane.



Possibly Edie & Lyndon Wooton outside Wooton House



The Primitive Methodist Chapel situated at what is now Ralph & Anna Brough's house, 55 High Street. Ralph has most of the names of those in the picture

Mr Appleby's field where he kept his cattle was between the Primitive chapel and Mr Richardson's (No 61).

54 and 56 were there and at 58 Wal Young lived and kept a small sweet shop; he had a son, Frank, who died in infancy and as the funeral procession passed the school all the children came out and sang the hymn '*Jesus tender shepherd hear us'.*

At No 60 lived Punch Gobey, the village barber, he went round the village cutting men's hair in one style only 'short back and sides'. Next door was Mr Case and then Mr Perkins. The present 62 and 64 were three houses then.

No 66 was Ernest Appleby's blacksmiths shop and subsequently Ray Gobey and Wil Massey used it as a garage for their market produce. The Heathfield (not Frank) family were the first ones to own No 68, then the Bonds; the side extension 66a is much newer.

Frank Asher lived at 63; he was a painter and decorator but his wife ran a Sick Club where people saved 6d a week and if they were sick they could claim 10s a week.

One weekend when he was a lad Jack was walking down the High Street when a man came out of a house; he was the new master at the school and Jack took no notice of him. Come the Monday morning he was in trouble at school and he was spoken to in Assembly and told 'when you see me in Clophill again, you salute me'. The master was Mr Russell of Pedley Wood Farm, Bill Russell's father.

No 65 was Alf and Annie Gobey's house; they moved in their when it was brand new in 1929 when they got married and it cost 2s 6d a week rent. Between 71 and Little Lane was Butler's Field; the only buildings there then were The Compasses, at one time said to be the Courthouse and Bakery and No 81 then owned by Sid Odell who was a market gardener. He gardened all the land up by the Old Church and Pine Hill. He owned one of the first Thorneycroft lorries in the area.

At the entrance to 72-76 stood four cottages, two pairs, the first two belonged to the Dunhams who also had their family house and the piggeries at the back. The second to Frank Heathfield's family.

Dunham's cottage which used to stand at the entrance to 72-76 High St



JACK PITTS' MEMORIES OF CLOPHILL – Part 3

The third and last of Jack Pitts' memories of Clophill High Street from the 1920's and 1930's.

No 78/80 were four cottages with three others sideways to the road where lived Gough the old poacher of Clophill. Next door to 80 was Taylor's Field where Will brought his cows to graze and every year that was where the Clophill Fete was held. At the end of the Show, Archie Roberts, who lived next door to Will Taylor, and Bruce Tuffnell, whose father kept the Stone Jug, did a Marathon. They would go to the bottom of the field, across the two rivers and Hunters meadow up to Warren Farm, down the bottom of the wood, down the High Street back to Taylor's Field.

The old school was close to the High Street, the present school was built on Taylor's Field. The boys' playground was at the front, the girls at the back. There were 144 children at the school then, some came from Haynes and Haynes West End and they walked to school. The headmaster was Mr Cunnington who was also the organist at St Mary's Church. The school was a Church of England school (as it is now) but in Jack's time at the school it was compulsory to learn the Catechism whoever you were. Jack was very upset that the old school was knocked down in the 1960s and the new one was built, designed by Bernard West.

Kings Cottage has been altered, originally it was Bonners Cottage and it was a shop run by Sue Collip. Fred Gudgeon, who worked at the Waterworks, lived there. It was probably renamed Kings Cottage after the King family who lived there after the Gudgeons. When it was Kings Cottage it was used as a visiting Doctor's surgery.
Across the road at 104, was also a shop run by the Shepherd family. Mr Shepherd died during a heavy thunderstorm one night from either a heart attack or he was struck by lightning. In the 1980s the shop was run by Mr and Mrs Stokes.

At the junction of High Street and Great Lane stood the 'cross tree' which was hollow and had a fence round It was removed during the war. Jack's grandparents lived in a cottage, now demolished, at the start of Great Lane.

Bert Taylor used to live in Taylor's Cottage (108) and next door at Dormer House was the Parish Room. It was always very busy place during the war with wedding receptions and many social functions. It was also used for practice by the choral society who entered Eisteddfods in Bedford; their conductor was the daughter of the Gravenhurst Rector – Mercy Collison. They won prizes and on one occasion won 1st Prize with Farmers Boy. The Parish Room was burnt down in 1966.

Church House used to be Verger's house and Mr Willis the Verger lived there before the Jefferies moved there. The Jefferies were market gardeners and had the buildings put up alongside. Beside that was the Reading Room, a great asset for village folk managed by the Dunham family. Every evening it was open for billiards, snooker,



Old St.Mary's School with pupils exercising in the playground. It was demolished around 1976-7 after the new school opened. The bell tower was kept and is displayed in the grounds of the new school.



Bonner's later King's cottage. The gable end with shop on the left of the picture was later removed. The stump of the 'cross tree' can also be seen

cribbage or cards; but never on Sundays or Christmas Day. The original snooker table was moved to Wrest Park where it is still in use. It was also used by the visiting Dentist as a surgery. *(A new house is presently being completed on the site of the old Reading Room).*

Commander Gillett had a bungalow called 'The Moorings' built at 95. He was a Commander in the 1st World War and his two daughters went to the small private school at 35 High St. The Misses Gilletts bought the Reading Room from the Church authorities in the 1950s as there was a rumour that it was to be sold and developed as a petrol station.

Townshott used to be market garden land and allotments; the school had a section of these allotments where Jack used to go on a Friday afternoon to work. There used to be a pathway from the present Church which crossed the now Townshott to the Old Church burial ground. This path was used when a burial was to take place at the Old Church by those pushing the wooden bier as it was an easier route than the road up Old Church path, which was too rough and bumpy. It cut across by the house called Journey's End. It was said to be called Journey's End as the owner (Dillingham) was being chased by the Police because of a so-called 'hood swindle' to do with the hat industry, and eventually committed suicide.

Opposite was The New Inn public house (120) which belonged to Frank Shepherd. All around was meadow and the footpath, still signed, beside it went straight down across the two rivers straight across Hunters Meadow into the Gravenhurst Road and into Castle Hills. When Jack was young they played football down there in the meadows, changing beforehand in the Reading Room.

Miss Robinson lived at Holly Cottage and at one time Sir Stanley Odell lived there. The cottages from 119 to 125 have changed over the years but there have always been four cottages there in Jack's lifetime. From Church Path across the ground where the Council houses now stand up to opposite the Waterworks was Pine Hill allotments. Allotments were a very valuable asset to the village and you were lucky if you could get one.

On the other side of the High Street, there were no houses after the New Inn, apart from 122, a cottage lived in by market gardener Arthur Bone, until you got to Jacques Lane. The cottage is presently being renovated.

Only 4 cottages stood at the top of Jacques Lane, no other houses. In one was a cobbler's shop. The last shop in the village, selling general goods, was run by Cecil Stimpson in the corner of Jacques Lane by the back of what was The Rising Sun pub.

The Waterworks was built in 1906 and pumped the water to Ampthill Reservoir. It had heavy machinery in it. This was the end of the High Street. People had to rely



Fire destroyed the Parish Room in 1966. Residents watch from inside the churchyard opposite



The Old Waterworks, Shefford Road, built in 1906

on well water unless they were wealthy. *(Can anyone confirm the dates when running water, mains drainage and electricity became generally available in Clophill?)*

Handley's Farm at Beadlow later became Ray Gobey's Top Farm and the bottom 'Speeds Dairy Farm' was run by Mossman? and later the Chisolm family.