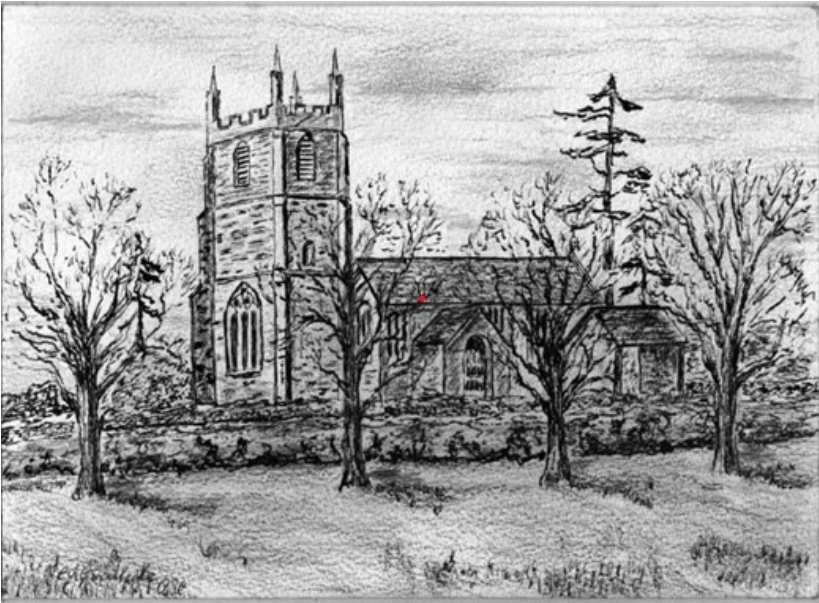


Pennymoor then and now

written
by

John Greenslade



drawings by
John Greenslade

Compiled by Viv Ray
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INTRODUCTION

This isn't a story of my life, but more a history of the vast changes that I have heard of and seen in the village of Pennymoor.

1926

I was born at what was known as Rose Cottage. My father was the local smith. This job in itself was the centre of local life, and he was able to fill me in on many events and stories of his younger days.

Sadly my mother died suddenly in 1940 at that time I was just 12 years old and my brother, Roger, 8 years old. This coupled with the commencement of the 1939 war made it quite a traumatic time for both him and me, and to make matters worse my father became seriously ill, and it was many months before he was able to continue his work in the forge, where my Grandfather, John Greenslade, commenced work in 1908, on his retirement from the police force. But enough about my family for now. Have no fear I shall appear from time to time later in the story.

PENNYMOOR

The origin of Pennymoor is rather vague. Records at the Cruwys Morchard House have a date of 1650 with regard to the smith at Pennymoor, at that time being privileged to have food cooked in the oven at the Cruwys Arms once per week, and the smith in return had to do work for the Lord of the Manor on this day. One would suspect that he would be unpaid for this work.

The village as we know it today is set on a crossroad, the North - South is on what was an ancient pack horse trail, also used by cattle drovers. This track ran from Exmoor to Exeter. Villages on route were Molland, Knowstone. Rackenford, Pennymoor, Cheriton Fitzpaine then over the Raddon Hills and thus to Exeter. In the old forge there was room for the stabling of four horses, thus pointing to the fact that travellers would stay at the adjacent Inn overnight.

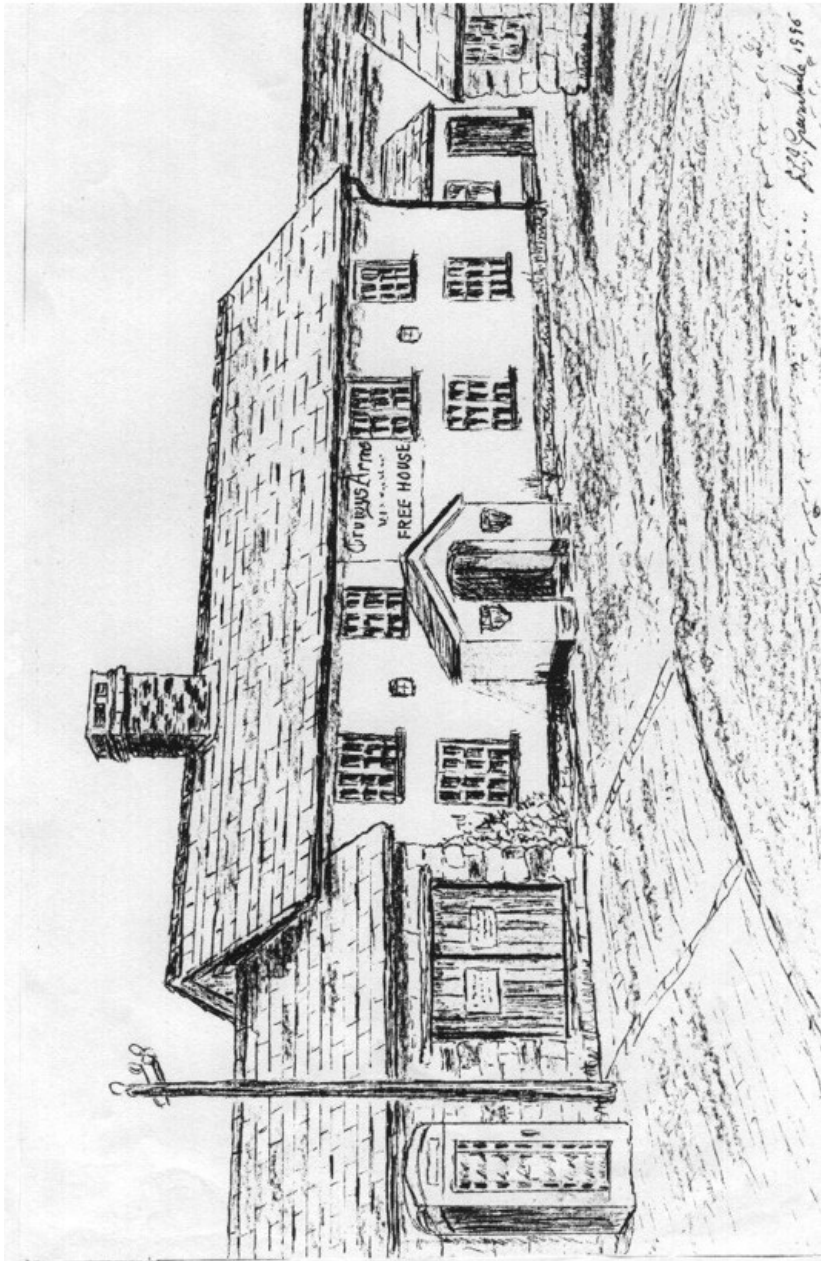
The pub was set back off the crossroads and has a cobbled forecourt. It was always thought that many years ago there was a cottage situated right on the roadside, and if today one examines carefully the layout of the existing cobbling, the outline of the foundations can be clearly seen, with a patch of cobbles suggesting a path leading to the remains.

The actual pub must have at sometime or other been a cob and thatch dwelling. Some years ago the roof was extensively repaired, and it was discovered that there was the remains of a secondary roof structure together with a lot of straw and old reed lying on the top of the lathe and plaster ceilings.

In the early 1900's what was known as the 'Annual Audit' was held in the room upstairs. At the audit, farmers would come to pay for manure, seed and cattle feed, which they had had from merchants in the area over the last year and would order supplies for the coming seasons. As an incentive to get the farmers to come on that day a free meal was provided by the merchants and probably ale to wash it down.

The building has been extensively altered inside. Walls have been removed and the bar area extended, and old beams built in to carry the weight of upper floors. But the old oak screening along with wall bench still remains intact.

The entrance to the building is through a low porch and there are two wall benches set inside, also two cavities can be seen each side, which one presumes patrons could put their mugs of ale etc. in while sitting in the porch.



Cruwys Arms

For many years there was a small room next to the main bar which was actually a private room, not open to the patrons, and this room was used as a surgery by the local Doctor from Cheriton Fitzpaine, who visited twice a week i.e. Tuesday and Friday. Anyone wishing to consult him would sit in the bar and wait their turn. This system was in use until the late 60's.

As mentioned before the smithy or forge was situated next to the pub. This building was of cob, stone and thatch, with part earth and cob floor, which can still be seen. Many years ago, the stables under the same roof were included into the main forge. My Grandfather who lived at Higher Furze commenced work here in 1908. The smith a Mr. Pope had died and there was a need for someone to carry on the work. He had learnt his trade at Nomansland forge in the 1870's.

During his time in business, he kept a meticulous day book which I still have in my possession, along with weather patterns, if one reads of 'Frosting Horse', that would mean that there was snow and slippery lanes, and as farmers had to travel to Tiverton to collect goods and food stuffs, quite a lot of roadwork was necessary. Then again one would read of repairs to scythes and mowers, all an indication of seasons. In other places one reads that he bartered hay for work done, in another, three pigs plus hay in lieu of payment.

During the 1914-18 war, it would appear that they had to make horse and mule shoes for the army, and these had to be delivered to Tiverton factory each week.

My father who had started work in the forge at the age of 13 was called up and he joined the Royal Flying Corps as a smith, also my Uncle Ralph had to go, and he joined the Royal Engineers. There were other lads who did their apprenticeship as smiths in the forge over many years, including myself and my son Martyn. I purchased the forge in 1962 from G. E. Cruwys Esq.

Another business that was thriving in the early 1900's was the cobbler and harness maker. This business was carried on in the building that stands at right angles to the dwelling known as 'New Cottage'. The workshop was in a room upstairs. I can still remember the rickety stairway going up, until the time that the building was renovated in the early 1960's.

The business was run by Mr. Bert Woods who lived in the house, it is possible that he or his wife was the first postmaster at Pennymoor until 1918. From then on the postmaster was Mr. Maurice Lake, always known as 'Mar', and his wife Hannah. He used to do a local postal delivery in the area for many years. I cannot put a date as to when the telephone came to the village, but I do know that the number was 'Pennymoor 1'. The post office business was carried on in this house until 1961. It was then transferred to Rose Cottage.

The Guscott family were all carpenters who worked the business from 'Prospect House', I can just remember Walter the father of William and Alfred. They were all craftsmen of the highest degree, who would make furniture, carts, wagons and gates, windows, all types of doors and they were the local undertakers. They would also do outdoor repairs to cow shippens, stables and farm dwellings and of course wheel wrighting.

In the early 30's 'Alfie' as he was known, gradually turned his skills to motor car repairs. Mr. W. Guscott also ran a form of carriers' business. He had a covered waggonette with seats and would do a collection from Pennymoor i.e., eggs and other goods as well as residents and would travel to Tiverton. Collecting goods people had ordered and delivering them back to Pennymoor later that day. 'Bill' commenced farming and carpentry at Pulsard Farm in the early 1900. But if a parishioner passed away, they would still pool their skills and make the coffin. It was strange contrast to see a coffin being made in a workshop amongst cars and tyres and other spare bits and pieces. I can remember a time when you could purchase a bike for £3. 10/- and petrol was only 2/- a gallon and get your accumulators charged for 6d.



PENNYMOOR POST OFFICE

There was another Guscott, Frederick, who also was a carpenter. I can remember him 'pit sawing'. The method was to roll the tree trunk onto a frame of poles which were erected over a pit, one man would stand in this and the chief sawyer would stand on a platform above and by using a special saw named a cross cut, they would saw the log into sizeable planks.

Needless to say, it was a very time-consuming task and the poor fellow in the pit had most of the sawdust in his eyes and down his neck. Not very comfortable on a hot day.

Fred and his wife Mollie also ran the village store, which is where 'Wanstead Villa' is, they carried on this site until 1938 when the premises were gutted by fire, being thatch and very old the fire brigade had no chance of saving it. They then started up again in the bungalow known as 'Bladen' until they built a wooden shed at the end of the garden, and one had to ring a bell attached to the shed door to get service. Strange to say, but it worked. They then extended the bungalow so that the wooden shed was part of the whole premises later.

The local midwife in the early 1900's lived in a cottage now demolished at 'Pennymoor Cottage', part of the back and sidewalls are still visible. She would also carry out the last rites to the dead in the locality. Why the owner demolished the building is still a mystery.

He also altered a shed, which was out the back of these cottages again in the 1900's. I have heard the older folk talk of these sheds as the wagon works, there were sheds in the back garden used for storing timber. I as a young child can remember these.

The smithy must have been a busy place in those days. As all the metal work needed for carts and wagons would have been produced there, i.e., axles, axle boxes, side irons, tipping gear, shaft work and wheel tyres would all have come from the blacksmith.

I have heard my father say that when a new cart was made the cost of materials used to make one would be split down the middle and as a new cart painted and ready for the road would be less than £10, one can see that there wasn't a lot of spare cash to make any money.

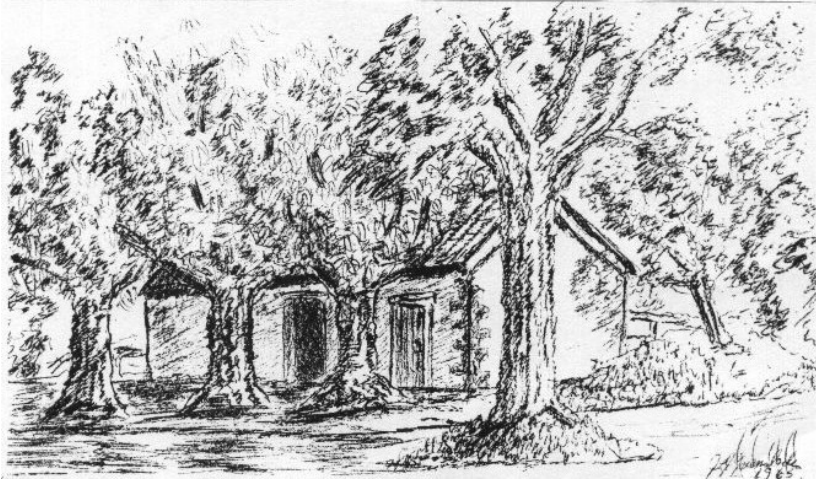
Not so many years ago the tyreing of cartwheels was still done at the forge. A large circular cast iron plate can still be seen on the verge next to the workshop. This wheel tyreing was a very dirty and smoky job. A large fire was needed to heat the whole metal tyre, which was then carried outside the shop and set around the cartwheel, which was clamped down on the metal base. Being hot this expanded the metal and after hammering the hot rim onto the wooden wheel, water was poured on to cool and shrink the tyre tight onto the wheel.

At Chapel Farm many years ago they were digging a pond and at a depth of approximately 12' they found several bodies of pigs, these they called 'Fossil Bacon' and were described as not unlike Egyptian Mummies. It is thought that Chapel Farm was at sometime a monastery. Recently, interior renovations have discovered what is thought to be a 'Priest Hole' where someone could be hidden if government troops etc. came around.

Another farm around Pennymoor that is worth a mention is what is left of the old West Ruckham. For many years this house was classed as a mansion and was owned for several centuries and occupied by the ancient family of the Drakes, as of Sir Francis Drake. In the Cruwys Morchard churchyard, there is a fenced tomb bearing the name of Drake, this person is reputed to be a cousin of Sir Francis. Sadly, this old farmhouse was burnt to the ground in about 1956. Being thatched and very old the fire soon enveloped the roof and bedrooms, this rendering what was a very lovely and original house to a heap of ashes in a very short time.

Another interesting feature is what was an ancient earthwork fort known as 'Castle'. This site is situated just this side of Taylors Hill on the right of the road. I can remember a high bank there, and even today in mid winter when the sun is low in the sky the shadow of the embankment can clearly be seen from Pennymoor. I think this site should never have been disturbed.

Another building, which in my opinion should never have been demolished, was the old 'Parish Stables'. This cob and tiled building was on a site behind the ancient chestnut trees opposite the church. This shed had rings set in the walls, which would be used to tether horses that had brought people to church, either by trap or horseback. Under the same roof was a plastered room, which I understand was used for the parish clerk etc. to distribute alms and charity money to the poor of the parish. Sadly, again all that is left is heap of rubble. There is a sketch in black and white in the WI compiled notes of Cruwys Morchard. This sketch gives a good impression as to how the building looked not all that many years ago. Maybe 30-40 years at most.



Parish Stables

During the plum season in the Vale of Evesham, I have known a lorry visit the area selling plums from door to door. Also 'French Onion' boys with bicycles came selling their onions. Many years ago, Clovelly, N. Devon, was known for it's herring and when they had a glut of fish these would also be sold in the village.

I can also remember a knife and scissors grinder calling, he had a specially adapted bike, which was fitted up with grinding wheels etc. and was jacked up, so that the grinders were operated by the pedals. Another traveller I remember was a gent who bought rags and rabbit skins, he too rode a bike and would travel the village in the area calling "Rags and Rabbit Skins" as he went and would probably give 2d for a skin and a penny for rags.

But the village store still managed to make a living in spite of all this.

Horsepower before the war on farms, was purely and simply horses. All agriculture was geared to this fact. Next question is "How did the farmers replenish this horse power?". Answer, in the district one or two farmers would have a shire stallion. This horse and it's attendant groom did the rounds in the breeding season, starting off on Monday from the stables, they would then travel from village to village and farmers with their brood mares would bring them to meet the stallion as it travelled. Saturday was the day Pennymoor was visited, this was the last stop before groom and horse returned home to start again on Monday.

Also there was no 'A.I.' for cattle. Again certain farmers would have a bull for general service to local farms. The nearest one to Pennymoor was at 'Hill Farm'. Any farmer with a cow or heifer in season would have to take the animal by road for 'service'. We as kids would volunteer our services to help drive the cows there and back, mainly I think it was so that we could watch the mating.

Pigs were bred by the same method. Mr. Lancelles at the Cruwys Arms had a boar 'Simon II', by name, he was a magnificent if not dangerous animal, a 'Saddle Back' breed. This animal had a full time job, being father to many litters born locally. In those days farmers would keep a few pigs mainly for their own use as pork meat, and they would sell off fat pigs to local butchers. Pigs would be killed at 14-15 score weight, not as today with hardly any fat on them.

Many cottagers and farm workers would rear pigs for themselves and would hire the local pig killer to dispatch the animal, scrape and gut it ready for salting the meat, and making brawn, black puddings and hog puddings, nothing was wasted.

At 'Pennymoor Cottage' in the mid 30's on certain days, ice cream was available. Mr. Stn Redwood cycled to Tiverton to collect a block of ice from the railway station. On arriving home some of the ice would be chopped up and put in a special bucket the remainder would be wrapped in old blankets etc. and buried in a hole dug in the back garden. Strangely enough this ice would keep for several days. This ice cream itself was delicious, as it was made from fresh milk and dairy cream.

Another character in the area was a poet, Mr Harry Paine known as 'Blind Harry', he lived in a cottage near Way Village, but as he liked his pint he visited the Cruwys Arms quite frequently. He had a dog, which knew the way quite well. I have one of his poems in my possession, it is written about a gent called Rich, who lived, in the Parish.

Many of the women and girls in the parish worked in service at the rectory and Cruwys Morchard House, others did daily cleaning jobs on farms and took in laundry. I used to bring back to the village on Mondays a parcel of washing for the Head teacher at Cruwys Morchard School. Mrs. Pellew would then launder it and deliver it when she went to do her daily cleaning later in the week.

Steam threshing was the only way farmers could get their corn for feeding etc. These huge steam engines would haul the thresher and then be used to drive the machine. Threshing days were very labour consuming i.e. 2 men to look after the set, 2 men to feed sheaves, 2 men on the corn rick, 2 men on the sacks, 1 or 2 men on the straw and 2 on the straw rick. To shift the sacks of corn the workmen had to be very fit and strong as they weighed 2 1/4 cwt of wheat, or 2 cwt of oats or barley. Today no one has to lift anymore then 25 Kilo's or 1/2 cwt. Manure, slag and feeding stuffs were always in 1-cwt sacks. So there was no room for weaklings on the farm in those days. The farmer's wife would also be busy, as it was tradition the farmer would provide food. This is dinner and tea. Most of the labour came from neighbouring farms. The threshing machines would travel from farm to farm for maybe more than a week. In Pennymoor the threshing site was in the 'Mow Barton' or rick yard on the site of 'High Court' and 'Sandpipers'.

Other events I remember well were the 'Northern Lights' in the mid 30's the night sky was blood red with green curtains weaving across, and every now and then beams of orange and white light not unlike search lights waved to and fro. Most of village turned out to witness this display, quite spectacular.

Also at this time we had quite view of the giant airship. R101 Reg. No. G F.A.A.W., as she circled over Tiverton - Bampton this too was a wonderful sight. Sadly, this airship crashed in France shortly after, on 5th October 1930.

Also almost unheard of in 1935, May 15th we had heavy snow, there was almost a foot of level snow. Trees were out in full leaf, many branches were broken down and grass and garden crops flattened.

Aeroplanes were not very plentiful in the early 30's but I can remember one landing in the field opposite what is now the premise of P.M.T. The pilot was a well-known radio pioneer a Mr. Scott-Taggart. All the children of the village had their photograph taken sitting under the wings. Today one hears of Health and Hygiene. On reflection it's a wonder any of us have survived to this day.

Even in the 30s Pennymoor had no sewerage system. Water came from shallow wells none more than 20' in depth, so one can reason that more than 50% of the water in them was seepage from the surface.

For toilets! They were all outdoors, consisting of just a wooden bench with a hole and underneath a bucket, toilet paper was non-existent, so old newspapers were used, a favourite was 'Radio Times' as these when folded into four was about the right size, these squares would be hung on a string and thence hung on the wall. When the buckets were full, pits were dug and the contents emptied therein. No wonder the nickname of 'Bogs' came about. But by heck plenty of good garden veg resulted.

Milk came straight from the cow. No cooler just strained into a churn and dipped out by a pint measure and delivered by milk jug around the village. Having first been milked by hand into open buckets, in a cobbled-floored cow shed, with a season's dung heap outside.



Sunday School House

This Midden would stay until the cows were 'Turned out' in late spring then it would be loaded in carts, taken out into the grass fields and tipped into heaps about 3 to a load all equally spaced in lines. When the carting finished the task of manually spreading these heaps began. "It wasn't

a case of who flung dung and how far" a certain skill was required so that an even spread resulted. A very arm aching job it must have been.

One wonders how our mothers coped with flies in the hot summer. They must have been magicians to keep the meat etc. from going bad. But they did and no one ever seemed to get sick through eating any tainted food, maybe we were immune. This type of living went on until mains water arrived in 1964 and sewerage mains, which came to the village in 1966.

The only lighting in our homes came from paraffin lights or candles, towards the end of the 30s some homes had Calor Gas but not many had this.

Another feature of the village in the 30s was that most houses had tall poles well away from the house and from this pole an aerial wire would run back to the chimney and a lead in wire would come from this through the woodwork of a window and thus to the wireless set inside. The longer the wire and higher the pole the better reception of signals.

Cooking was still done over open fires, kitchen ranges and some oil stoves as they were called, all of these methods would be rather 'Hit and Miss' as the wind might be in the wrong direction and the old saying "The fire is as dull as ditch water" could be heard or another day the fire might 'draw' and the stove would get almost red hot. Electricity came in 1962. More about that later.

Wood being the main source of fuel for heating and cooking adequate storeroom was needed. There being no room on the cottage side of the village. The bank on the opposite side of the road was known as 'hard wood'. This bank was much wider in those days as the road was very much narrower than it is today. I have spent many happy hours wheeling away logs which my father and mother used to saw up with a crosscut saw in the road.

The wood supply would come from local farms. As each winter hedgerows were made tidy by cutting down all the main wood leaving some to be layered which was a skilled job. The earth banks would be rebuilt. After this was done the hedge wood etc. was cut into lengths and made into faggots any large poles would be left in lengths for logging.

A little known about industry in Pennymoor was the milk factory, the site was where No. 1 & 2 Moor View are situated. When these houses were erected one of the builders pushing a barrow fell down the well, barrow and all, except for the shock of getting very wet was uninjured. This dairy was founded by Mr. J. Webber of Wringsland, the Grandfather of Mr. D. Webber other directors were Mr. H. Beedell of Hill Farm, Mr. J. Gibbons of West Ruckham and Mr. E. Woolway of Cheriton Fitzpaine. The milk for the dairy was delivered from local farmers each day, this milk was then separated and the skimmed milk returned to the farmers for use as animal feed etc. The cream produced was taken to Upham and made into butter at a small factory there. This business closed at the commencement of the 1914-18 war. The building stood until the council houses were built in 1940, the buildings until then were put to good use as a corn and cattle feed store by a local merchant a Mr. C. Manning.

Pennymoor auction was a well-known market in the area. In the years between the wars many small markets existed in the locality, Bickleigh, Cheriton Fitzpaine, Witheridge and Thelbridge. But Pennymoor seemed to be the most popular and apart from Thelbridge carried on until the 1950's.

This cattle market was situated just down the road from the crossroads on the sites of 'The Haven' and 'Market Hill'. The market day was held on the last Thursday of each month. The August market was known as the 'Prize Auction', at this market farmers could enter their stock to be judged, and prizes awarded. Also the Y.F.C. used to show their stock, be it young bullocks or pigs. I think the Y.F.C. started out as the 'Calf Club'. The market site consisted of a series of pens. The auctioneer stood in a small covered hut with an open front and a ledge for his sale books etc. We as children nicknamed it as 'Cuckoos Nest'.

The Cruwys Arms was open all day on Market day, and after the market the auctioneers would use the inside room as their office, also local property was sold on this day in the pub. My father bought Rose Cottage at such a sale and paid £240.00 for them, this was in 1951.

The postal services to the village came from Tiverton. In the early days, a postman rode a cycle from Tiverton carrying letters, these were distributed locally. The Tiverton man would rest in the postman's hut situated on the bank opposite 'Wanstead'. He would then cycle back into town occasionally blowing his whistle and anyone wanting to post a letter would stop him on the road. Later the mail arrived by motorcycle with two pouches each side of the rear wheel, this in turn gave way to motorcycle and sidecar, then onto little 'Morris' vans. In the early 30's Pennymoor had four auxiliary postmen and women, they covered a large section of Cruwys Morchard and most of Puddington, this continued until 1966 when the post office in it's wisdom considered they could do the job more economically by motorising the whole set up. When the local 'posties' delivered everyone in the area had their mail by 10 a.m. at the latest. These days some mail doesn't arrive until midday. Also they have not experienced a really snowy winter as we had in 1963 and previous to that, 1947.

Telegrams used to be received and delivered at the local post office, but as more and more people were connected to the telephone, this service became non-existent. Many years ago the local 'Rate Collector' lived at Chapple Farm, a Mr. Maires. He would be responsible for the Cruwys Morchard rate money. Around 1930 this system ended and the local rates were collected by the Tiverton Rural District Council, who at the appropriate time would send their rate collector to the Pennymoor post office where locals could pay their dues. He would then move onto Way Village in a private house and do the same.

The post office as I have previously stated was at 'Rose Cottage' and I became the Sub Postmaster. At this time there was a vast change in the business carried on. Instead of just selling stamps, 'Post Office' saving stamps and paying pensions, such things as Savings Bank, various licences, Giro Bank, and many other things were done. This business was carried on until the death of my wife in 1977 and owing to pressure of work I had to give up the post office. Sadly no one else would take on the job, hence no post office in Pennymoor.

I can remember the Congregational Church being built, this would have been 1930-31. I can remember going to services in the old building, which was a converted cottage. This cottage was situated on the forecourt of the building we now know as the chapel. This rubble was hauled away by farm carts and dumped in heaps in the field just down the road opposite 'Higher Furze'. The garden wall of 'North Road' is the original back wall of this cottage and one can still see the remains of the old lime and sand floor in the forecourt. I attended Sunday School in Pennymoor chapel for many years. Mr. and Mrs. Foward were the superintendents. When the new chapel was opened I can remember having tea etc. in a large tent in the field opposite.

The building known as the 'Men's Club' was built in 1930-31, this is now the Parish Hall. Prior to this building being erected many parish events were held in the schoolrooms. One annual event being the 'Parish Revel', there is a symbolic 'key' still hanging in the Cruwys Arms, this was the 'Revel Key' and was used in the opening ceremony of 'unlocking the Revel'. This revel gradually became the Harvest Festival, which was then moved to the 'Men's Club'. This was a far more lavish affair than it is today. It would start with lunch for farmers and their workmen, and served by the ladies of the parish. There would be cold meat and pickles and boiled potatoes etc. there was also a barrel of cider and beer on tap all day. In the afternoon the men joined their wives and children for a short service in the church, before a long programme of



Parish Hall

sports all afternoon and then a harvest tea would be enjoyed by all parishioners. This event was always an interdenominational one and as bellringing was one of the main interests amongst the men, many peels were rung well into the night. Mr. Tom Pullen of Way Village Chapel was one of the sports organisers.

ORGANISATIONS

Whilst on parish affairs, strange as it may seem, there was a thriving 'Youth Movement' in the early 30's. The parish had 'Rangers, Girl Guides, Brownies and Boy Scouts'. The guide's leader was Mrs. Cruwys, the wife of the rector. The 'Brown Owl' was a Mrs. Congdon of 'Westland Farm' and the ScoutMaster was a Mr. E. Smith. I can remember one Armistice Sunday in the early 30's when a parade assembled at Pennymoor Cross. British Legion's around the area gathered, banners and all, and led by a brass band marched to a service in the church with all the local youth movements joining in. I can remember a bugler in military uniform sounding the 'Last Post' and the hymns were led by the band who sat around the font. Also a wreath was hung on the 1914-18 memorial, this wreath was there for many years after.



Church of the Holy Cross - Cruwys Morchard

Another organisation that has been going strong in the area is Cruwys Morchard W.I. I believe the movement was born in about 1927 or thereabouts, and many of the founder members were ladies from Pennymoor. I know my mother was Honorary Treasurer in 1940 and my wife Lorna, held the same post for two or three years until 1976.

Another ladies organisation that was active before the war was the Congregational Woman's Guild and over the past years has again held meetings in the Chapel every other Thursday and has several members. They have prayer meetings and I understand some very interesting talks and lectures on many subjects.

During the 1939 war, many local girls joined the Witheridge G.T.C. Corps.

The past few years have seen on August Bank holiday an event organised by a committee at the Cruwys Arms know as 'Pennymoor Fun Day', these events are for local charities. The Devon Air Ambulance, Marie Curie Cancer Care etc. Events on the day were skittles, Its a Knockout with several teams taking part and side shows and stalls organised by local groups the result of 1994 effort was £3,116.00.

One place near Pennymoor that I have not mentioned was the old parish 'Workhouse'. This was about 1/2 mile from the village on the road to the school. When I started school the four walls

and recess for the fireplace, could be clearly seen. The conifer plantation is still known as 'Workhouse plantation'. I believe the poor of the parish probably spent their last days in this building. There is still a recess in the hedge bank where these ruins were.

Another tradesman in the village was Mr. H. Pullen, he was a master thatcher. Everyone knew him as Harry. He lived in the inside house of 'North Road'. He never cycled to his work, but always walked. The main work would be rick thatching and house and barn roofs. On wet days he would stay at home and make what is known as spars, these were hazel sticks 4'-5' long split in a special way and then cut into 3 lengths and then bent to form a staple shape. These would be used to pin the reed into place on the rick or roof. These days thatchers use metal spikes known as 'Thatching Hooks'. He also held classes for the Y.F.C. and taught them rope and spar making. The ropes were made of wheat reed and twisted on a special rope maker, the process was much the same as the technique of wool spinning. Before the 1939 war, the village was served by many tradesmen. There were three bakers who came twice each a week, two came from Cheriton Fitzpaine and one from Puddington. I can remember one of the Cheriton bakers in the early 30's using a horse and covered van type vehicle. They were known by all as Baker Thorne, Baker Elworthy and from Puddington Baker Martin.

Butchers too, were in plenty. Bert, Willis and Cole came from Tiverton twice a week. A fish and fruit merchant called Labbet came from Crediton, he used a van just like the one used in 'Dad's Army' on TV and had a Fyffes banana logo on the side. There were several grocers who also came from Tiverton, one in particular had a traveller who rode a cycle around. He would call on regular customers taking orders and the following Saturday these would be delivered by van. The man who cycled around was a Mr. Webber and on occasions he still visits the pub today.

1885 TRADE DIRECTORY

John Davey – Wheelwright, W. Foxford – Shoemaker, John Hunt – Thatcher, Mr. A. Kingdom – Tailor, Mrs Kingdom – Dressmaker, Mrs C. Mitchel – Nurse, Mr. J. Mitchel – Shoemaker, Mr. Stevenson – Shoemaker, J. Wood -Sub Postmaster and Shoemaker, J. Pope – Inn Keeper and Blacksmith. It would appear that the congregational chapel was instituted at around this date.

POLICE

In the 30s and right up until the mid 50s Pennymoor was blessed with cover from three constables who were stationed at Cheriton Fitzpaine, Black Dog and Rackenford respectively. They were under control of a sergeant at Witheridge. Once a week these three constables and sergeant would meet at the crossroad at Pennymoor and exchange notes, and get further orders from the sergeant, sometimes a Superintendent would attend.

These men had to travel by cycle, the sergeant by car. The constables were always on the move, one could meet them late at night, early morning, or mid-day. They had quite a lot to do really by visiting farms and checking 'Movements of Stock forms and Gun and Dog Licences'. When sheep were dipped, they had to make periodic visits to the dipping pens, there were many of these pre war. Contrary to the rules today most of these pens were situated on the banks of local streams and consisted of a pit lined with galvanised sheet and any run off went straight back into the stream. No way can this method be used today.

During the early 50s the police were issued with light 120cc motorcycles. Then when the new regime controlling policing started, we had no local police and all the police houses in the area were sold off and since then it is very seldom that one sees a police car let alone a constable on foot.

CRUWYS MORCHARD SCHOOL

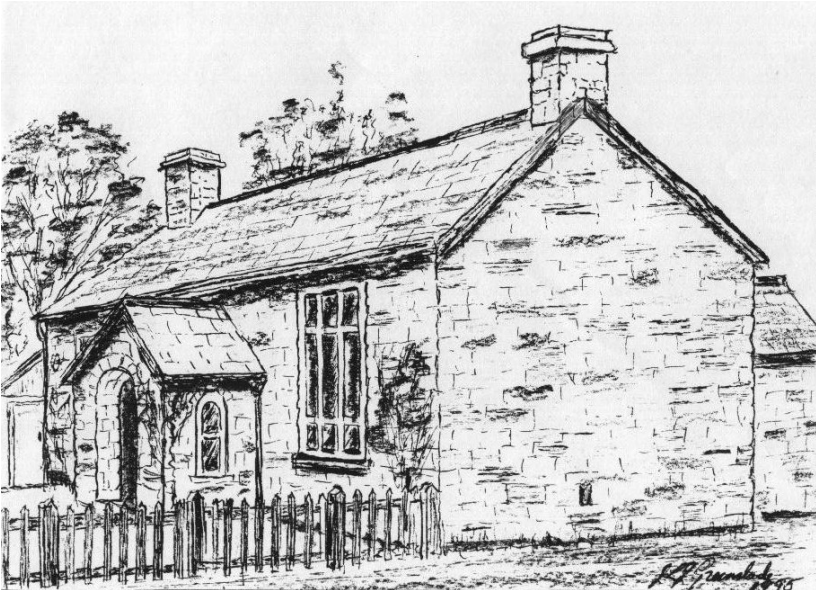
When I was a child there were few children in Pennymoor village, no more than 12 with ages from 5-10 years.

We were all educated initially at the Cruwys Morchard day school. This school was originally known as the National school, which was built by the suggestion of the local vicar in 1844 at the cost of £200.00.

The school being a mile from the village meant we had to walk there and back each day in all weathers. By the time we reached 'Highgate' our numbers would have increased considerably as other children joined us 'en route'. These children would have come from cottages at Ruckham and Yeadbury, Wringsland, Ford Barton, Northcote Farm and Pages cottages. Many of these cottages have long since been demolished. (More about these later)

Our headmistress was Mrs. S. Lisle. She was a very good teacher who ruled with a rod of iron. The infant teacher was Miss Bowen, a white-haired Welsh lady and also there was a temporary help a Miss Howe, 'Ginger', needless to say she had auburn hair.

In the late 30's all boys aged 11 were bused to Witheridge. I believe there was much protest from both pupils and parents on this move. Some children went to Tiverton Grammar School but unless the pupil passed an entrance exam, 11+, the parent had to pay for their education and also the bus fare. Girls were still educated at Cruwys Morchard for some time, but of course all pupils left school at 14 years of age in those days.



SCHOOL HOUSE

In the play yard there was an open fronted stone and brick shed. There is a plaque in the wall, which states that the building was built to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee 1897. This plaque is 'listed' and if any future renovations are done to the old school building this plaque must be placed in the wall next to the road by order of the local council.

Sometime before the school closed, this shed was converted by the Devon County Council into a self-contained cookhouse, where school meals were prepared by Mrs. Pellew each day.

The education of juniors went on under several head teachers until it closed in 1959. Sadly, the building has been derelict for many years and is now falling down. For many years the school building was used as a boarding kennels for cats and dogs until closed down by the council. In early days, till the senior boys were sent to other schools, they had school gardens. Each boy had a plot to plant and care for. The garden runs along side the road and can still be seen.

Mrs. Lisle was quite an 'Empire Loyalist'. On 'Empire Day' we all had to form up and salute the 'Union Flag'. She also encouraged pupils to join the 'Primrose League'. I can remember going to a rally held in Tiverton New Hall when I was a small child.

CRUWYS MORCHARD SCHOOL 1932



Top left: F. Elliot, W. Alford, H. Elliot, W. Kingdom, G. Selly,
R. Thorne, D. Alford, M. Kingdom, I. Radford, B. Thorne, G. Lancelles,
G. Radford, H. Radford,
M. Vinnicombe, D. Kingdom, G. Hopkins, Maunder, A. Reed, G. Alford
H. Pryor, E. Billingham, B. Earl, E. Elliot, F. Billingham, G. Tarr,
J. Greenslade, J. Titt, J. Harris, R. Earl, H. Earl.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

The next question is 'What did we as children do to keep ourselves occupied?' Bearing in mind we had no television or radio to entertain us.

Firstly, we all had our household duties to perform. I myself used to chop up a couple of tea chests full of faggot wood for my mother. What would childcare specialists today say about this? "Fancy letting a young child have a sharp hook". Again I can't remember any of us having fingers etc. missing. Maybe I would then have to clean shoes. This job I didn't like. When I had done my chores I was free to go out and see what other children were doing. As there was the farm at the Cruwys Arms, we would all gang up and help muck out the cattle sheds and in winter the loft had to be stocked up with hay brought in from the field ricks or hay shed. This may seem like work but we really enjoyed it.

In summer we used to play our own game of cricket or go on a hare and hounds hunt across the country and into the woods. Wintertime was rabbiting time. We used to take ferrets and nets and spend Saturday afternoon catching rabbits. No one seemed to worry if we came back late. Times were good. If it snowed we used a sheet of corrugated iron as a sledge and as there wasn't much traffic on the roads we used to toboggan down the hills. Pre-war roads were never cleared of snow and sometimes they would be snowed up for 2-3 weeks at a time.

At corn harvest time in pre-war days all the harvesting was done by self-binders. These machines cut the corn and tied it up into sheaves, then kicked them out into neat rows. These times were a bad time for rabbits. As the binders got near the centre of the field we kids would stand all around the uncut corn, the rabbits would make a break for the hedges with us kids whooping and shouting, chasing after them. We most times won, maybe with 20 or more rabbits in the bag. We then helped stack the sheaves and got a rabbit or two to take home for our trouble.

On wet days we would play hide and seek in the farm buildings. No one ever seemed to get bored.

The Sunday school anniversary was another big day to look forward to. The pupils would learn poems or 'pieces' as we called them, then on the Sunday we would stand before the congregation and recite them. At the close we would all be presented with books suitably inscribed. Then on the Monday evening there would be a tea followed by more recitations. Also there was the old 'Magic Lantern' Show in the chapel. These would be slides of foreign countries and would show missionaries at work among the native population.

Whilst on the subject of film shows. In the years just before the war, firms like Shell Oil, Bibbys Cattle food etc. would put on promotional film shows in the parish hall and just to make the evening interesting they might show a Charlie Chaplin or Laurel and Hardy film. These mentioned film shows would be packed out.

Pocket money was almost non-existent. We used to do jobs for villagers. We have sat on the cobbled forecourt of the pub with knives digging out tufts of grass between them and been rewarded with small bottles of lemonade and packet of Smith's crisps, the ones with blue salt bags in. Jobs for other people would result in sweets or apples.

Anyway, we all got on well together almost like one big family, all brothers and sisters.

COTTAGES IN AND AROUND PENNYMOOR

The pattern of old houses or cottages in Pennymoor differs from other villages by the way that rows of cottages are mostly at right angles to the road, except the houses on the road to Poughill these are set back with front gardens. In Poughill, Puddington and Cheriton Fitzpaine, cottages are mostly facing the road with front doors opening onto the street.

Many of the old cottages have been altered by bits being built on. Some thatch has been replaced by tiles and some have been demolished. One such cottage known as 'Lower Barracks' was down the back road in what now is part of 'Badgers' garden, the cob wall can still be seen.

Other cottages to have succumbed to age etc. were a semi-detached pair known as 'Littlemoor' these were between 'Pulsards' and Ruckham Cross. Just opposite on the corner formed by the back lane to Wringsland was a lovely, thatched cottage. This was 'West Ruckham Cottage' which had a beautiful garden. (see photograph)



West Ruckham Cottage

There were many more cottages, which have now disappeared in the parish. These are 'Prescott', 'Filk Knapp', 'Knapp Cottage', 'Thorne Cottage', 'Cob Castle', 'Wood Head', 'Pages Cottage', 'Little Comfort', 'Lower Park', 'Wortball', 'Hollowmoor' and 'Titheing House' these last two have been rebuilt recently.

So when people today grumble about all the new applications for dwellings in the parish, I begin to wonder why.

When I grew up in the village, I was born among people that had worked and lived there for years along with their families. I grew up with these people respecting them as elders and in turn hoping to gain their respect as I grew up alongside their children.

But times have changed. Houses have been built, lived in for short time and before one gets to know the occupants they have moved on, having sold to new owners, therefore the community spirit is not the same. In fact one doesn't see many of the villagers at all, as they work away and only come home to sleep. Other villages suffer the same. It is possible that we locals are the strangers now. Regrettable, but true.

Another thing I need mention is that we did not have a refuse collection. There was a small plantation of fir trees on the site which is now 'Sandpipers' where all broken crockery, tin cans, bottles, rusty buckets, old oil stoves and many and varied household rubbish was dumped by all and sundry. This went on until the council started a weekly refuse collection in the late 60's.

HIGHWAYS & LANES ETC. 1920-30 TO PRESENT DAY

The earliest I can remember regarding roads, in and near the village 1930 onwards.

The road to Puddington I remember was no more than a muddy track most of the way, large ruts cut by the iron tyres on the farm carts and wagons. It was no wonder these lanes had no surface, as when repairs were carried out it simply meant digging earth from verges etc. spreading it as level as possible and then giving this a coating of coarse stone, needless to say the first cart would cut more ruts in the unmetaled surface.

Taylor's Hill was another section of road or track to be shunned, the steep section was just rough hewn natural rock, some places there were steps 9"-12" high, the only safe way to negotiate this section was on foot.

Other sections of roadway were just tar and chippings, the tar would be brushed on by hand and the chips scattered on top. No rolling until later. When the rollers 'steam' did come, the drivers would park up in lay-bys with their caravans and would live in them all week and week ends would probably cycle home on Saturday afternoon and having to be back Sunday night, so as to 'steam up' by 8 a.m. Monday morning.

We had what was known as 'length men' there were two, Percy Reed and Tom Pullen. In Summer these men would cycle as far as Silverton, Bradninch and Thorverton to help out with the gang tarring the roads. In turn men from these areas would arrive on site in our area, work started at 8 a.m. and they would not leave until 5 p.m. all for 30/- per week, but the condition of the drainage system was far better then, than at the present time. As these men had local knowledge of drains that were liable to blockage after heavy rain.

The main road A373 was County Council, these had a higher standard of maintenance, they still had their length men. In our parish this was from the crossroad at Nomansland pub to the bridge at Lugsland some 4-5 miles, which was proudly kept immaculate. No overgrown verges or banks would do for these men.

Stone and chipping were delivered from quarries at Bampton and Brayford and tipped on lay-bys to await use on resurfacing. Pre-war the lorries were steam 'Sentinal' and 'Foden' wagons.

I can vaguely remember a man sitting on a heap of stones 'tapping' the larger pieces into usable sizes, this would be on the lay-by opposite 'Furze Brake'.

Another thing, which I think is worth a mention, was a scheme set up by the then Rural District Council of Tiverton in the early 30's. It would seem that there were quite a few people in the area unemployed, so as to give them a job, hedge banks on the blind road corners were removed and replaced by metal railings. Some of these rails although in a bad state of repair can still be seen. At the top of Church Hill, at Ruckham Cross and the double bends just beyond on the road to Cadeleigh. The soil was hauled away by horse and cart by the late Mr. C. Guscott.

Just after the war a highways foreman came up with an idea for resurfacing the roads, this was to break up the old metalled road surface with steam rollers with road ripping tines attached, the resulting rubble was broken up into smaller pieces by tractors pulling spring tines harrows over the surface. When small enough the surface was sprayed with hot tar and re-rolled. Many miles of highway were treated thus over the next few years and it lasted quite well.

The roads in our area were as I said earlier only originally made to carry horse drawn vehicles, now although the foundations have not been strengthened or widened, they carry lorries in excess of 20 tons. These trucks have to travel on these roads to service farms etc. and to bring timber to the Pennymoor Timberyard.

These days the state of the roads is deteriorating, as money for the upkeep of highways is restricted. Government spending is being cut back every year meaning that the main arterial roads get beneficial treatment at the expense of the country roads.

Potholes fill with surface water and get deeper, hedgerow gutters become overgrown with grass, so that water runs all over the road, in turn the tar is less adhesive, thus large sections become loose.

The local authority has had to cut back on manpower through lack of funds and many jobs are contracted out to large firms.

AGRICULTURE

As we all knew 1939 agriculture was at a very low ebb. Farmers were just more or less living from hand to mouth by selling eggs, butter and cream at Tiverton market. The market bus came around on Tuesday and had a roof rack and a ladder up the back with a walkway up the centre of the roof. By the time this bus reached Tiverton it would be loaded with baskets etc.

But things changed at the onset of war. This war caught our farmers and agriculturists very short indeed. Orders went out from the newly formed Devon War Agriculture Committee, local agents were given the job of instructing farmers which fields should be ploughed and planted i.e. corn, roots, potatoes, etc. Rightly or wrongly these agents did their best. Some farmers reckoned they didn't know what they were talking about, but never the less work was done. This one could say was the introduction of that word "Control".

The next problem was "How do we get all this done with the clapped out gear we have?" Simple was the answer. Depots were situated in each parish and the necessary implements made available for use by farmers at a hire charge. Tractors were at a premium so people started up contracting businesses and these tractors would work all the hours of daylight available. This meant till 11.30 p.m. - 12 midnight in summer as we were in what they called "Double summer time" and in winter they did move the hour back one, but this meant it was dark until 9.30 a.m. The self-binders that were on loan from the War Agriculture in Exeter were Massey Harris 'Sunshine' binders and were shipped to England in crates from Australia and assembled at

'Dennings' of Chard. I worked there for a week on the assembly lines so as to get conversant with the machines that eventually I would have to service. The implements were doing the equivalent of 3 - 4 years' work in 1 and needed repair. When broken down they were replaced by another, the old one taken to the main repair workshops in Exeter. I myself worked there for nearly two years. Gradually farmers could purchase tractors as available, these were mainly Fordson's at a cost of £175 these were on steel wheels with spade lugs to give grip. So as to enable them to travel on roads between fields a system of road bands had to be bolted on, this was a time wasting job, but the only way one could travel about. Rubber tyres were absolutely non existent.



Old Forge

In the blacksmiths shop we were kept increasingly busy converting horse drawn machinery to tractor power i.e. cutting off wooden and metal shafts and replacing them with wooden and metal draw bars, adapting mowing machines so that the tractor driver could control the cutting bed from the tractor, the same thing was done to horse rakes.

Hay 'kickers' were a different 'kettle of fish'. They were driven by power from the large wheels, which geared the revolving drums. The speed of these was governed by the speed that the horses walked, on fitting draw bars to these machines and tractors moving faster than horses the centre fugal force set up was too much for the machine and bits would start flying off in all directions. It was no fun to be near one, let alone drive the tractor.

WOMAN'S LAND ARMY

Another thing that happened was 'Land Girls' they wore uniforms. A felt trilby type hat, green jumpers. Khaki shirts and green ties, fawn breeches, long socks and boots or brown shoes, topped by a 3/4-length overcoat. Most of these girls came from a hostel in Tiverton on the site of the East Devon College, Bolham Road. They would be delivered everyday by lorry. Some lived in on the farms. The Devon War Agriculture charged 1s 3d per hour for them. I think the girls got about 30/- wages and food and lodgings.

It must have been a big change for these girls who had left office desks, shop counters and other city jobs. Very few of them had had previous experience of country life, let alone living and working there, but they coped very well.

All cattle food etc. was rationed so the farmers gave mangolds, turnips, swedes, fodder beet and a large cabbage called flatpoles, these in a good crop could measure up to 2' 6" across. Most of these roots had to be brought in and either chopped by machine into fingers about 1" square like chips or pulped, this in turn would be mixed with crushed oats or corn and any straw fodder which was chopped to make chaff. The smell when one walked into an old fashioned 'Root House' was indescribable, one felt you could almost eat the mixture yourself. Cattle loved it and cows milked well, though too many turnips could taint the milk.

All calves were hand reared. That is fed from a bucket method, warm milk was put in the bucket the hand placed palm up under the milk fingers raised so as to make like a teat the calves would then suck your fingers and also the milk. This was usually the job of the farmer's wives. Fingers got bitten and knuckle bruised. But that is how it was done. Having said that some farmers who wished to rear calves on a larger scale would let them suckle the milk cows.

But from this time in, agriculture became a far cry from the old pre-war methods. Milking herds became larger. Flocks of sheep appeared on farms that never before had sheep. Poultry was a thing that was left to farmers who specialised in eggs etc. and as farming methods changed the old root crops were abandoned.

These days some farmers buy their milk in the town. All buy their eggs in cartons and most have to buy vegetables. They are too geared up to bother with these things.

Of all the farms in this area only about 5 - 6 milk cows but instead of 10 cows' herds of 150 are not uncommon.

All this change meant larger shed and farms and although output is greater fewer men are needed as all jobs can be done by machinery.

The sight of a labourer making a hedge or trimming them with hooks are long gone. The smith who used to be the main stay of keeping the implements in good working order is no longer required, as most farms have their own workshops equipped with modern tools, electric welders and most of all the know how of how all the modern machinery works. Technical schools in the area have seen to that.

Also many of the smaller farms have been swallowed up to make larger more viable units. Two in the area are at least 400 acres each.

PROFESSIONAL RABBIT TRAPPERS

In the days up till mixamatoxis almost wiped out the rabbit population, farmers were very desperate to rid themselves of this pest, to help them in this mammoth task local poulterers employed trappers who would work in pairs. The farmers would agree a price for them with the poulterer, the trappers would move in and systematically work through the whole farm using the now illegal "gin traps" and wires. I have seen the bar at the Cruwys Arms with hundreds of rabbits strung on wire stretched across the beams. These would be collected daily and sent off by rail from Tiverton Station to London or other large cities.



Lads and Lassies Day Out

WILD LIFE

During my lifetime I have seen many changes in the wild life in and around Pennymoor. As a child I remember flocks of Lapwings or 'Pee wits' as we called them. The name 'Pee wits' was the sound of their call. Curlews were also a very common bird they used to nest in the wet marshy land at Pulsards and Cruwys Arms farm. Another bird still around was the Snipe it was rather fascinating to hear them 'Drumming' in the spring time, they did this by diving suddenly from a level flight and the air at speed would vibrate their tail feathers, the noise made was not unlike the call of a young lamb and we used to call them 'Lamb Rales' because of this. Skylarks not now seen here were quite common too. It was a joy to see them circle in flight getting higher and higher singing all the time until they disappeared from sight into the blue sky.



Summer Sun - Pennymoor

Unlike today any Pheasants around were wild ones, not bred for sport, though I suspect that many of them finished up in the oven. Another game bird was the old fashioned Grey Partridge these as with Pheasants raised large broods of chicks.

Rooks were classed as a menace as there were several large rookeries near Pennymoor. Organised rook shoots would take place in early May usually the first three Saturdays. Only the young rooks were shot, as the old birds would fly out of shot range. Rook pie was a dish we used to look forward to. Only the breasts were used. These would be placed in a deep pie dish with hard boiled eggs with some onion for flavour and covered with pastry, baked and set aside to cool and eaten when cold the gravy was by this time set as a jelly "lovely".

The insect life was much more prolific than it is today. As children we could lie in the grass among clumps of rushes and one could hardly hear anything else but the noise of Grasshoppers, there were two or three species of these. Butterflies were in plenty, Common Blue, Brown Argos, Meadow Brown, Orange Tip, Small Tortoiseshell, Large White, Red Admiral, Peacock and Skipper. Some hot summers as children coming home from the school we could see Large Silver

Washed fluttering high in the woodland trees. At night in summer, Glow-worms lit up the hedgerows. Sadly not anymore.

Animal life was plenty of rabbits, stoats and weasels, badgers and foxes. There were no hares or deer. Moles were in plenty and as children we used to trap these and send away the dried skins to a firm in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire "Horace Friend" by name and would get 4d - 5d per skin depending on quality, this was a source of some of our pocket money. There again one had to work for any money received for spending purposes.

There were no grey squirrels before 1940 only the beautiful red ones, these were very plentiful but shy and could only be seen as we played or walked in the woods.

Another thing that was plentiful were the frogs, lizards and newts. In spring we would get the spawn and watch it develop into tadpoles. Slow worms were easy to catch and we used to love letting them climb through our fingers. Adders too were plentiful and these we had great respect for, but being shy creatures they would slither away unnoticed.

Today we don't hear owls at night, but many years ago when there was a farm at the Cruwys Arms owls lived in and around the buildings and at night would sit in the trees and hoot happily away at one another and as more of the villagers kept poultry they had plenty of food in the form of vermin, plenty of rats and mice, it was a happy hunting ground for them. These rats and mice would also get into the houses, and especially in winter. One could lie in bed at night and hear them scurrying across the ceiling in the roof space.

The wetlands had many flowers, which now are very rare. The beautiful wild Orchid, these were rich mauve – purple, and a white Orchid type flower not as robust but just as pretty, this one was creamy white. Cuckoo flowers too were plentiful and on the really wet patches were tufts of bog cotton, in all a botanists' paradise.



Autumn Day - Pennymoor

WEATHER

Years ago weather influenced country life quite a lot more than it seems to at the present time.

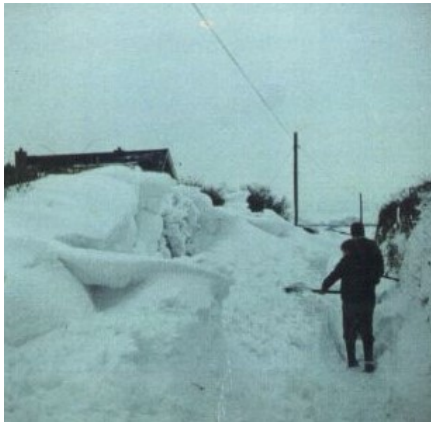
I can remember plodding to school on wet cold days with only short trousers on and welly boots and just below the knee where the top of the boot came, there would be a red almost raw ring round the leg. No one wore long trousers in the days before the war. Snow had the same effect with an added problem, no roads were cleared and if a cold snap set in for a week or two, drifts and icy patches stayed till Mother Nature warmed things up.

We had several cold winters worth remembering, but 1947 the first really bad time I can recall. It started with biting East winds in mid January, followed by blizzards, and this continued until early April 6 weeks all told.

WINTER 1947

This was a particularly severe winter, hard frost and snow day after day. After several days of bitter cold, a milder air came and instead of snow we had rain and fog. The ground was still frozen and this made the rain, as it fell, freeze, this was known as an 'Ice Storm' and every thing became encased in ice. This rain stayed for about 24 hours. The result was all gates, trees, bushes etc. were encrusted with about 2" of ice, telephone wires were brought down and some of the poles were snapped off by the weight of ice, trees also snapped, branches hung at strange angles, some trees still to this day bare the scars.

No one could walk unless they tied bags or sacking to their feet. This lasted for at least 3 days. Then the sun came out and the ice reflected the light and everywhere the ice tinkled just like bells. It was sight that I shall never forget.



As I said weather effected us greatly. Times where corn was cut but could not be dried in the stooks where it would start to sprout and mat together. Hay would go black in the windrows and be fit for nothing, being mouldy. It had been known that potatoes would rot in the soil. Sometimes farmers in a hurry to get hay in before rain would do so too quickly, then the whole rick or shed would overheat and instantaneous combustion occur and the whole lot would burn.

From 1947 - 63 we had several hard winters. But the mother and father of all severe weathers started in late December 1962. Christmas Day was bitterly cold with bright sun. On Boxing Day it clouded over and we had some snow, this snow heralded what was to come for the next 10-12 weeks, this was the Thursday, on the Saturday night we had our first severe blizzard, by Sunday most of our roads were cut off by 10' snow drifts, the main problem was the wind. Although the snow had more or less ceased the wind was still blowing the snow just like fog.

That night a Mrs. Davis decided to have her second baby. Doctor and nurse found it impossible to get through to Pennymoor also, and ambulance had to return to base. But thank God the phone was still working and the district nurse was able to give Mrs Davis' mother instructions, as events required. In the end everything was OK both mother and baby were fine.



We had two or three more blizzards in quick succession each one bringing about 8 hours heavy snow.

Snow clearance teams had to be air lifted in by helicopter, these men and their JCB's worked around the clock but as the gale continued to blow, the cleared roads were very soon impassable again. A Devon General bus had to be abandoned at Pennymoor and its driver walked back to his depot at Witheridge.

This snowy weather was the worst many locals had ever to cope with. We have only had one severe touch of cold weather since then.

We hear today of all sorts of weird things, that are causing our weather to do strange things, but I would argue the point that it is no different now than when I was a child 60 odd years ago.

I may have only been four years old when the Devon County Show was last held in Tiverton. "In those days the show site moved from town to town each year" the particular site that year was the field at Bolham Road. This show was almost washed out. I can remember we had a spectacular cloudburst and although Pennymoor is on top of a hill, water ran down the roads 6"-12" deep. Hedges were washed away and at 'South Linhay Farm', pigs were drowned as water piled up behind the barn and flooded the sties and quite a lot of cattle food was spoiled in the sacks.

At Witleigh where the metal rails are along side the main roads, these rails were put there to replace the hedgerow that had washed away during that storm. I well remember my father carrying me on his shoulders up to the crossroads to see the floodwater rushing passed almost to his knees.

Another day that sticks in my memory was on August Bank Holiday, first Monday in August those days. It was Witheridge Flower Show and it thundered and lightened all day. Many trees were struck and cattle and farm stock killed by lightening in the parish. This was in 1930's 'late'.

During the war, I mentioned before I worked in Exeter, and on several occasions the Devon General bus went through Stoke Cannon with floodwaters washing the bus steps.

Then later in 1952 we had the terrible Lynmouth floods, approximately 9" of rain fell in that 24 hours. I can still see the heavy dark clouds which hung in the sky just like curtains, it was only August, but it was almost dark by 8 p.m., the rain when it came was indescribable, this went on all night. Then there was another wet spell in the early 1960's. After several hours of heavy rain, a surge of flood waters came down the Exe Valley carrying all before it and at least 4' of flood water rushed through Westexe, Tiverton and on down the valley to flood most of the lower valley. My wife's Uncle and Aunt had to be rescued at Upexe by amphibious army vehicles that night from their bedroom. Most of St. Thomas, Exeter was awash.

This last flood was the main reason for the building of the new bridge at Tiverton and the concrete floodwalls.

Then in 1976 we started another weather pattern. Drought. This weather commenced in late May and went on until the end of August, during this time we had no rain and no cloud, thus the sun reached temperatures of 95 degrees most days. Early hay crops were OK, but any garden crops and late silage were non existent, as was the corn. Grass fields died. Hedgerows gave up as did many trees, there was no water in streams so that fish perished as the oxygen got used up. Mains water was rationed and stand pipes appeared in the villages around. By mid August the countryside looked just like pictures of Palestine, the leaves on the trees were a parched green. Many of these trees have not recovered. Fire became a great danger to all.

This spell was broken in the last Sunday in August by a spectacular thunderstorm. The morning dawned hot and sultry as usual, the storm clouds started to build up by midday and by late afternoon the countryside was being lashed by hail which lay inches deep, other parts had flash floods and the lightening which was almost continuous, was of a vivid blue in colour.

Since then we had had one or two spells of dry weather but none like the one I have described. I recall one weird experience regarding weather that happened to me and I would like to record this. We had had a very dry time, this would be in the late 60's, mid summer. It had been very hot and dry for a couple of weeks. I was working in my blacksmith's shop when about mid afternoon a thunder storm developed and as the lightening flashed outside all my metal bars lying on the floor of my workshop started to short circuit, sparks were flying everywhere. This continued for some ten minutes. At each flash of lightening sparks flew all over the place, then it started to rain and all this static electric ceased. I have never experienced anything like this since or before.

I was later talking of this phenomenon and a gentleman said that in tropical climates, he came from Rhodesia by the way, this very often happened before thunderstorms broke.

Gales we have had, this type of weather has had its effect on Pennymoor and area for many years. So there is nothing new in this sort of weather. There have been so many gales that I cannot recall any years in particular.

The last really devastating storm was in 1989, January, whole forests of trees were blown down as well as roofs of property blown off completely. Power lines were brought down.

When a child, I had an Aunt who worked at the rectory and she on returning from an afternoon off work, had a narrow escape when a large tree blew down just missing her. I think she had to climb through the branches to get out.



This record just of weather I can remember at Pennymoor, would point out to me that all the doom and gloom of the 'Greenhouse Effect' is just a lot of 'Clap Trap' generated by 'hot air' from a lot of 'Green Monsters' with nothing else to do or think about.

Weather has been blamed on aircraft, atom bombs, rockets, satellites and many other things, but it still goes on changing.

MODERN FACILITIES

As I have mentioned before, all water used in the village came from wells. Some had to be dipped by means of a bucket on a rope or pumped by a crude sort of suction pump. These old pumps were mainly of lead, with a barrel in which a leather plunger worked, this plunger had a flap arrangement which opened as the plunger went down, water then rushed into the chamber and as the plunger came up the flap would close and lift the water which would go out of the spout. Pennymoor water was very 'hard' as they called it and would soon rust out metal buckets and soap had little effect as to lather.

Mains water came in 1964-65. The then North Devon Water Board laid miles of pipe along roads and across fields to make up the network that we know today. This meant that most of the old wells and supplies were more or less condemned as unfit for use. This network is now more than 30 years old. We still had to use the old toilet system as we had for years. Mains sewerage did not come until 1966-7. This meant we could install flush loos and bathrooms. This was a rather expensive job, but thanks to council grants most people were able to enjoy the luxury of a bath and some being able to use toilets indoors instead of the outdoor 'bogs' at the bottom of the garden.



Outside toilet, Pennymoor Cottage

Electricity came in 1962, lines of poles appeared across the countryside, many months before we had power.

We started to pay for this privilege some years before the actual power arrived. Householders signed agreements and started paying quarterly a surcharge towards the cost of what was to come.

Most of the property in the village was wired up by electrical contractors. I remember a firm 'HRM, South Molton' wired most of the houses at a cost of £10 per room, this would be for one power point and the light socket in each room. My own house cost £40, next door having 6 rooms cost £60. When SWEB had finished the grid, and power made available, a small down payment was sufficient for them to come and connect the property.

This along with mains water and sewerage made life quite tolerable after so many years of living in the past.

Before the mains electric arrived many people had TV this was supplied by power generated by small high rev engines and dynamos attached. Farmers had used larger plants for light and to power milking machines. The plants were known as 'Startamatics', which would start automatically as soon as a light was switched on indoors or in the yard.

1939 WAR

1939 and the war was now imminent. Many of the young men in the parish were drafted into the territorials and used to travel to Witheridge for military training. We as youngsters did not fully realise the seriousness of the situation and still carried on as usual.

When declaration of war did come on that Sunday morning things almost suddenly came to a halt. It meant no one could travel without gas masks for which we had been fitted previously. Parents warned us not to stay away from the village. I don't think they really knew what was going to happen in the next months.

The territorials were the first to go. I think they had to report to Exeter. There were training schemes for ARP., Fire Guards, Special Police and W.V.S. Steel helmets were issued to these people and then uniforms. As Mrs. Huxtable who lived in Pennymoor Cottage was a nurse in her younger days this house became the 'First Aid' post.

At school we would do air raid drills. This to us was a welcome break from lessons. Our nearest Air Raid siren was at Witheridge, which had an Auxiliary Fire Service unit, this unit was equipped with a 'Stork' trailer pump and van complete with extending ladder.

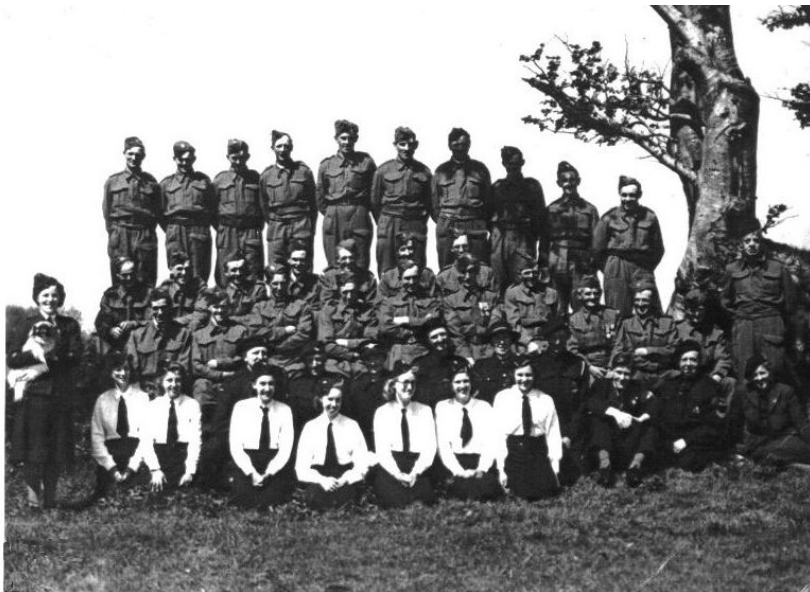
The W.V.S. headquarters was at Cruwys Morchard rectory. These ladies were later responsible for finding billets for the evacuees who came to the area, many other people found jobs in Tiverton. The local 'Food office' these were responsible for the issuing of ration books etc. and many others worked in the Tiverton factory, a lot of parachutes were made there.

The next thing was the 'blackout'. No lights were allowed to show from houses or workshops. The most popular way of doing this was to make a wooden frame from batten and nail roofing felt to fit this would then be pushed into the window recess. The only lights farmers used in those days were old fashioned storm lanterns, so the only way these could be safely used was to cut a slot in the bottom of an old bucket and turn it upside down pass the carrying handle of the lamp through, so the light would only be reflected downwards. Cars and bikes had to have their lights suitably shielded. We were used to being in the dark, living in the country, but this made travelling on the highways very dangerous indeed.

As the war progressed more and more of the young men were called up for military service. Those that were not physically fit or were in what was known as 'Reserved Occupations' were compelled to join the Local Defence Volunteers and were issued with an arm band, they had their HQ at 'Windmill', they were mainly armed with pitch forks or shot guns, their job was to look out for enemy parachutists, but as their training became more intense having been issued with full uniform and rifles, they became quite a formidable army. Mainly because they were conversant with the locality. They knew all the valleys and woodlands in the area without maps etc. Later they were known as the Home Guard.

After the retreat from Dunkirk many regiments were without much needed transport and many local firms had their lorries commandeered for use as supply wagons and buses as troop transport. Many of the troops were stationed in larger villages and towns. Witheridge had several hundred men billeted in the village. Maybe it seems a bit of a shambles but it gave our troops valuable time and space to regroup and re-equip with much needed arms and stores.

Not long after this, air raids on Exeter, Plymouth, Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea started. Pennymoor seemed to be on the route for German bombers carrying out these raids.



HOME GUARD

Top left: B. Parish, E. Sharland, T. Herbert, W. Kingdon, L. Herbert, F. Kingdon, A. Hunt, A. Dapp, G. Gibbons, W. Davey
 J. Maunder, R. Trick, A. White, H. Arscott, J. Crang, C. Burrows, J. Southwood,
 E. Rose, W. Elston, F. Chave, C. Guscott, S. Gibbs, H. Elliott, G. Venn, S. Tarr, E. White,
 R. Chamberlain, L. Cruwys
 W. Chiswell, W. Webber, Mrs Parkerwood, R. Drew, M. Cruwys, W. Crook, E. Baum,
 Mr. Grinam, G. Cruwys
 C. Selly, M. Lake, L. Pearse, B. Kingdon, G. Guscott, M. Norrish, G. Alford, B. Meecham

I can remember watching the awful blitz on Exeter. Enemy planes came in from the sea at Exmouth passed over Exeter dropping their path finders flares, came out over this area to retrace their path over the now well lit target and on dropping their load of bombs would make a quick get away back down the Exe estuary and out to sea. The smoke and glow from the many fires and shock waves from the explosions could be seen and felt by us all. Who said "War was glorious".

Barrage balloons were used as an air defence against low flying aircraft. Exeter balloons could be seen from Pennymoor. Some of these used to break away and would have to be shot down as a safety measure because of the trailing steel wires which could be dangerous if floated near high voltage power lines.

The next thing that altered our way of life was the arrival of the Royal Artillery air defence units. These consisted of units of about a dozen men housed in nissen huts who were to operate searchlights worked by huge portable generators. The nearest to us was at Northcote Farm. There was another at Poughill one at Rackenford and at Westway Farm, Witheridge. All these were roughly in a three-mile triangulation. At night the sky was illuminated by many dozens of intense moving fingers of light.

I think the largest impact on our life was the many army manoeuvres, which took place fairly regularly involving thousands of troops with supporting vehicles, guns, tanks, armoured cars etc. Life wasn't to be the same from then on. At the top of what we call 'Church Hill' there was a wood approximately 3 acres. The trees Turkey oaks and were planted in rows. We awoke one morning to find this wood was under military control with armed guards at the gate on the corner. One could see that the reason for this was that the whole area was packed with field guns, timbers and four wheeled tractors called 'Quads'. The Royal Artillery stayed for about four days before disappearing as suddenly as they had arrived. This wood was cut down some years later and never replanted. In the photograph of the Men's Club this wood can be seen on the horizon. One night while one of these manoeuvres was in progress a stray German plane came over and must have seen more lights than should have been and he dropped a 500lb bomb which blew a great crater in the park near Pages Cross. The blast broke windows at Cruwys Morchard House and a nasty piece of bomb fragment went through the roof and ceiling of the Parish Hall, the hole can still be seen having been patched with a square of asbestos. The fragment was embedded in the floor.

Then the Americans arrived. They soon built a transport camp just at the top of Cruwys Morchard Wood. Water was pumped from the river at Wood Farm. Sewage works constructed and several hundred nissen huts and roadways built. In what is the park behind the church, huge hanger type workshops were created and a perimeter track laid down all the way around the park. In dry summers this still shows up as parched grass. We learned that this unit would be a transport depot here they waterproofed engines of vehicles, which eventually would be used in the D-day invasion. Another job carried out here was fitting of canon gun mountings to the metal lorry roofs.

After the invasion many wrecked trucks were dumped here. The Americans while in our area attended our local dances, church services and many other social functions in turn we were invited to attend their camp concerts. Many of the performers were big names in the film world and theatre in America and of course there was plenty of gum, candy and cigarettes given away.

Well on into the war the Americans abandoned the camp and the perimeter fence was strengthened and more barbed wire put in place. Soon after a unit of the Pioneer Corp. arrived, made the living quarters suitable for the housing of POW's, these were Italian and were picked up each day in lorries and along with armed guards would do gang work on local farms i.e. potato digging and drainage schemes etc.

When the war finished German POW's were in camp but these men were not guarded so heavily and many were billeted with the people they worked for. Many of them did not wish to be repatriated and are still in the area.

One could say that this camp was an instigator of the holiday camps of today. Because during the summer months bus loads of Londoners arrived and would so called help out on the farms. One man and his wife that I knew quite well gave up his job in London, rented a farm cottage and worked on the farm. But summer work and winter work were so vastly different he couldn't cope. But loving the area so much he didn't go back, but took a job as a bus conductor on the D.G. at Witheridge.

The campsite was dismantled. Huts were sold and equipment, plumbing, other bits were sent for scrap. But it was only a few years ago that the whole area was cleared of foundations and access roads and reinstated as a field as we see it today.

Meanwhile village life during the remainder of the war went on much the same.

Aircraft was the main source of interest for us as children. There were incidents of the old 'Dog fight'. One of these sticks in my mind to this day. We were hay making in a field at the top of 'Furze Hill' and heard raid sirens, the next thing we heard was two planes very high having a battle suddenly one plane lost control and started to spiral down, the pilot got out and came down by parachute the other plane circled him and flew off. Of course we all thought that the end of another enemy plane. But it was one of ours, the pilot was OK. The twist to this story is that the German who was flying a new kind of Messerschmitt fighter had a problem with his compass and instead of flying South he went North, crossed the Bristol Channel and getting low on fuel, landed on the first available air field he could find. Thus presenting the RAF air force with a complete undamaged model of a plane that our intelligence had long wanted.

Many times just before D Day, the air would be filled with heavy bombers flying low on their way to France, more than one could count, this happened on many days.

We also had spectacular sights of hundreds of Dakota's towing gliders on practice flights. each plane had two gliders.

By now we were coming up to the end of the war. V.E. I II day on 9th + 10th May I remember quite well there was a hurried dance arranged in the hall. Some people had no cause to celebrate having lost loved ones, some were prisoners of war and many were still battling it out in the Far East, their fate as yet unknown. There was a church service I know and we could ring the bells for the first time for years, as the sounding of these would have been a warning of an invasion by the enemy and of course naked lights could be used. No black outs.

The war with Japan ended by their surrender on the 14th August known as V.J. day I & II, but food and clothing and petrol etc. were to remain rationed for many months to come.

Village life slowly returned to a more normal setting, the emergency services were stood down, the Home Guard disbanded and by now many if not all of the evacuees had returned home to London, Bristol and Plymouth.

By now I was well into learning my trade as a blacksmith. I was now 19 years old and my brother 14 and a pupil at the Tiverton Grammar School having passed his 11+ exam.

Actually this was a time of anti-climax with no hard and fast rules to follow. There was plenty of work for everyone, men were being released from military service to try and pick up the threads of life where they left off. I think it must have been a funny old time for some of them. As I said before it really was a time of anti-climax.

It wasn't until 1952 that things that affected village life started to happen.

Housing was one, numbers 3,4,5,6 Moor View were built, these were specifically council owned properties but to be an occupant you had to be employed in agriculture or allied i.e. forestry timber sawing or building in the country.

Next 7,8,9,10 Moor View were built these had two bungalows No 7, 10 supposedly for older people, these actually housed people from the now derelict 'Littlemoor' cottages just over the road, later on No 11 - 12 were added. The water supply for these 12 houses came from a bore hole in the garden of No 4 this had to be pumped each day to the roof tanks of the 12 houses. The sewerage system was a large septic tank away from the houses.

Other council houses were appearing in other neighbouring villages. Needless to say it was the younger generation that were becoming tenants and many of them were newly weds, as I myself was and all of a sudden as if some strange wind had wafted through the village small children appeared and from a village with no children at all before 1952 by 1962 there were at least 15-20 under the age of 12 years. Since then in spite of several houses being built the numbers of children has been reduced.



Lads Day Out

POST WAR CHANGES ENVIRONMENTAL AND BUSINESS

By now changes were being felt and seen in the village. Farms were becoming very mechanised, this meant that the small fields were not economic to plough and cultivate, so contractors were called in to level hedgerows and all the small fields we played in as children disappeared, also the wet rushy fields at the back of Pennymoor were drained, thus all the birds that habited this wet land left us.

One cannot blame the farmers for the disappearance of the wetlands and all the flora and fauna that went with it. As with all businesses today they had to be exploited to their full potential. The bank managers aren't going to smile sweetly at you when you say "I ain't got any money, but I have plenty of sky larks, pee wits, curlews and rushes".

Mechanisation meant less labour on farms, so that the main source of employment in the village changed.

The smithy that had up till now been mainly dependent on agriculture for its work had to find other outlets. In about 1966 I was more or less at the cross-roads i.e. should I concentrate on the wrought iron side of the business which I had been trying to develop gradually, or try and cope with all the new types of machinery. Being a very poor mechanic, I hated oil and grease, I decided on metalwork design, and I started to exhibit at the Devon County Show, this gained me the much needed publicity to launch me into the wrought iron business which I carried on with till my retirement.

People today complain with regard to delayed deliveries of goods ordered or spares for machinery. I remember my early days working in the forge. Spare parts being needed say for a broken down mower. I would be sent down to the post office to the only phone, Mrs. Lake would put me through to Messrs. Huxtable of Barnstaple. I would tell them about the piece we needed. They in turn would 'post haste' to the railway station. The part would then travel the GWR North Devon to Dulverton, thence to Tiverton via Bampton, at Tiverton the local bus to Witheridge would collect from the station. I would meet the bus at Mudford Gate at 4.30 p.m. and we would work till late to fit the new part which would be ready by next morning. Dr. Beeching I am afraid put a stop to all that.

One business that did well after the war was a local builder a Mr. Bert Radford he started up on his own after his demob from the army R.E. I think, he employed his nephew and it is thanks to him that many farm buildings in the area were built. His nephew Brian is still in the trade around these parts. Another local builder is a Mr Jim Lake he too has plenty of work and he has trained his son in the business.

The Pennymoor garage also found difficulty in keeping up with modern trends the first thing to go was the garage then the petrol pumps. The premises were purchased by a Mr. Charles Beel who with a friend set up a business known as Pennymoor Second Hand Timber. Timber and building materials from demolition sites in and around London were delivered to his works, nails etc. would be pulled out, the timber re-sawn and sold on. In fact some of this timber was much better than some of the unseasoned new timber. From then on the business went from strength to strength, new sheds were erected and concrete yards laid down and this in turn gave much needed employment to the area. I am pleased to say this business although having changed hands is still going great guns.

In 1961 a Mr Graves having bought the village shop from Mrs. Mollie Guscott decided to build a much larger store, this was a DIY job and took him some 12-18 months, but when he did

complete the work he had a rather modern looking premises. But this in turn caused problems as with two shops in the same village and large super stores coming to Tiverton. The village shops found they were unable to compete price wise and after the death of Mrs. Pellew, who ran the smaller but very successful store, this closed down, and not long after the new one changed hands, but the new owners could not make a go of it against the super giants in town and he too closed in 1978.



Rebuilding of village shop by Mr Graves

This as I have said before also coincided with the closing of the village Post Office.

In 1977 all that was left of the old village business except for the smithy was the Cruwys Arms though many changes have been seen here since Mr. & Mrs. Lancelles retirement in 1969.

Since then there have been seven landlords. Previous to the present landlord, the premises were closed down for twelve months. Three-ply wood was nailed to the windows and everyone feared that this was the end of a pub in Pennymoor. The Lancelles family came to the pub in 1930 and ran the pub and farm for approximately 40 years. There were five children in the family and I can say that they were more or less an addition to my family. When my mother died Mrs. Lancelles more or less took over her roll. In fact I even called her "Mother". Mr. Lancelles also helped keep my father's business going during his long illness. He was a blacksmith by trade, and if any one wanted a horse shod or an implement repaired he would stop what he was doing and go to work in the forge. It was not unknown that if he was out working with his team of horses, farmers needing work done would take over while he did it. In fact I always knew Charles as a 'Rough Diamond'. If he had anything to say whether good or bad out it came. Nothing was said behind your back. He held nothing back, but was always there when help was needed and that was quite often.

The interior of the Cruwys Arms as I have mentioned has changed. Years ago the stairs to the bedrooms used to go up from the public bar. Beer came from a row of barrels in what was known as the 'Cellar'. There was no bar as such only a large table with a bell on it, which you rang for service, and if no one came you just took a mug and filled it from the barrel. 'No beer pumps' and by the time one had drunk it, someone would have come in and then you paid. You see besides looking after the pub, they had a farm to run, so in summer things got a little hectic with thirsty people and their own hay to make, not many spare minutes were available. Still I have many happy memories of the pub as it was then.

Today the pub is much more commercialised in that they have pub meals and special evenings with various entertainments, this tends to draw people in from further afield and the friendly atmosphere seems to have disappeared.

They also run skittle teams and pool teams. These activities are run by members of the teams, the landlord has very little to do with this side of events. But it all helps to keep the pub open. This isn't a thing peculiar to Pennymoor but is the same throughout the district.

I can remember many years ago at the pub at Black Dog the family sitting down in the main saloon to have their Sunday lunch amongst the clientele. So vast changes have gone on over the last few years.

PENNYMOOR RE-MAPS

Many years ago the late Mrs. M. C. S. Cruwys of Cruwys Morchard House was editor of the 'Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries' a magazine type publication. She was a very knowledgeable local historian and she told me that the name 'Penny Moor' could possibly be derived from an ancient spelling of 'Pen O Ye Moor' meaning an 'Enclosure on the edge of the moor'. This she said would tie in with the name of Cruwys Morchard, which meant a 'Clearing in the Forest' owned by the Cruwys family. This forest many hundreds of years ago stretched westward from Tiverton - Eggesford. Hence 'Morchard Bishop' the 'Bishops clearing'. Comments on a recent program on Radio Devon on Cruwys Morchard would back up this theory.

On studying map No. 1 the first thing that makes an impression is the number of hedgerows and the many small fields which surrounded the village. This was, as I knew it as a child. Moving on to the map No. 2, the absence of these small plots is very evident, also the drainage schemes have done away with all the real wetlands, which as I have mentioned before was a paradise for wild birds, reptiles, mammals and insects.

One will notice too that although planning permission has been granted for many more dwellings and buildings i.e. workshops and cattle sheds, the road network has not changed over the last nearly 100 years.

There have been many applications for large development schemes in Penny Moor, which if had been allowed would have doubled the size of the village. Two of these applications resulted in public meetings in the parish hall and the end result was that Penny Moor was already bursting at the seams and could not take anymore housing, the sewerage system was full to capacity, the road network could not cope with the increased volume of traffic. These comments were passed to the local Planning authority who agreed. So I think our village will stay, for the foreseeable future, as it is now in 1995.

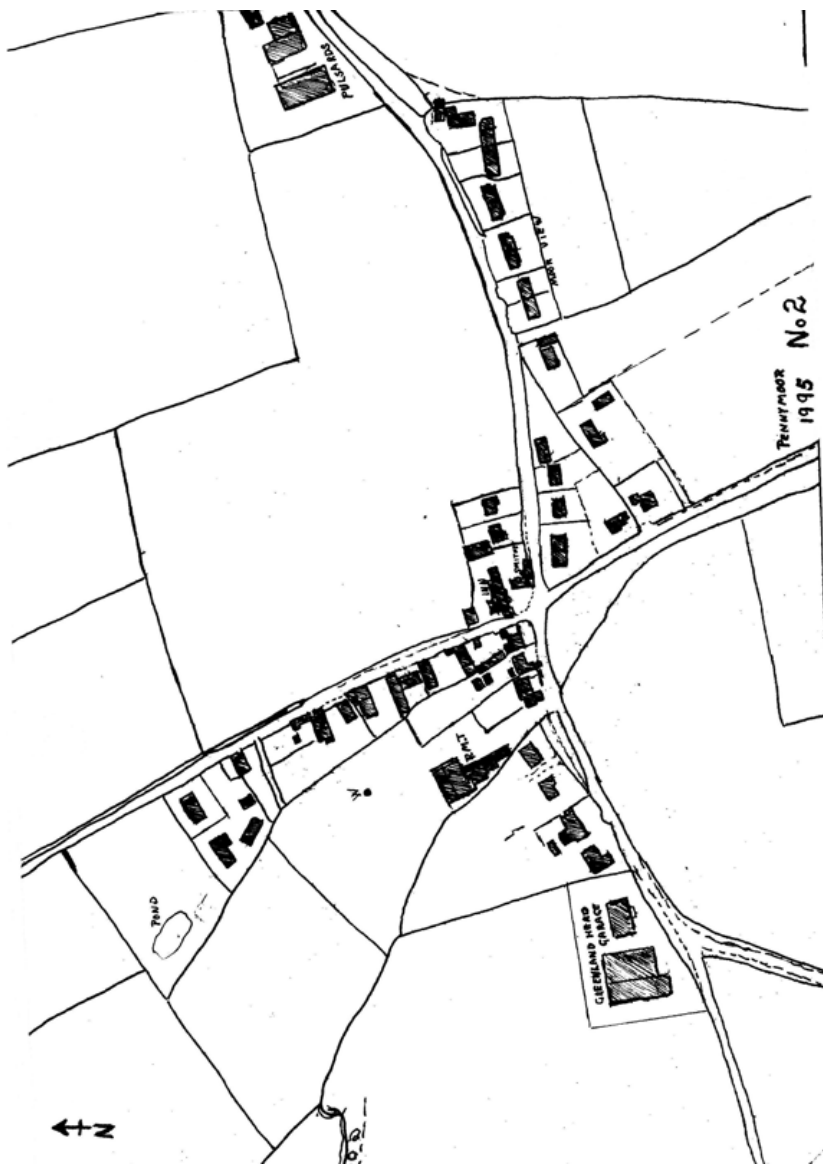
But as I have mentioned previously all this development has to be serviced by full lorries and many forms of bulk transport of cattle feed and milk collection.

On map No. 1 another notable feature is the network of footpaths or 'Rights of way' to the main well in the village, this field was known by all and sundry as 'Well Field'. I have marked as per the OS 1904 map all the other existing wells in the village as you will observe there are not many and again as I have mentioned before, not very deep ones.

The small 'Natural Pond' in the field at the back of the pub was there when I was a child and I have sailed toy boats on it, but over the years it has disappeared, first as a muddy pool and then gradually it has filled in, been ploughed over, and there is no longer any trace of it.

The building at the rear of the pub was once the old skittle alley. These skittles were in three straight lines of three and wooden balls were used, the floor would be of clay. Vastly different to the diamond formation, rubber balls and concrete alleys of today. I can just remember this alley being in use.

This photograph of the Penny Moor Post Office would be dated late 1800-early 1900. Note the thatched roof. This cottage is now 'New Cottage' and would indicate that most of Penny Moor dwellings were thatch. As I mentioned before the old shop was thatch before burning down. 'North Road' was thatch till retiled recently. The Blacksmith's shop was thatch till 1962 and I found traces of reed etc. when I renovated and put new ceilings in Rose Cottages and also the pub was probably thatch.



MAY 1 1961



This morning the village of Pennymoor was rocked by a very tragic happening at about 3.30 a.m. Mrs. Pellew awoke to see the reflection of flames on the inside of her bedroom wall. On looking out of her window she could see the source of the fire, which was at Greenland Head Cross, Mr. Pellew dashed to the scene and on arrival he discovered that a car was ablaze and a person was trapped in the passenger seat and was enveloped in flames. No way could he help the victim.

The mystery of this incident is still unsolved and I think the case was never cleared. The victim was an Exeter man.

The inquest held in Exeter heard statements from many local people who passed the crossroads that Sunday night.

The cause of death was that he himself or someone doused the interior of the car with petrol and set it alight with the victim in the car.

As a result of the tragedy the village was overrun by police CID and not only the local press but also reporters from the national newspapers.

PENNYMOOR NOVEMBER 5TH BONFIRES

I don't really recollect how we came up with this one. It was probably talked about either one evening in the pub or on a Sunday afternoon when as youngsters we meet at the crossway on our bikes.

Anyway we organised this event in the early 1950's for November 5th, Mr. Webber gave us permission to use his field at Market Hill (no houses there then). We made it known that anyone with combustible material could bring it to the site or we would collect.

A couple of weeks before the 5th we started to build our bonfire, a 20' pole up the centre and then props all round, then the brushwood and old furniture, car tyres etc. diameter would be 10'-12', then on the day we would pack the centre with paper, old lino, roof felt, cardboard.

At night we made torches from old cocoa tins etc. by nailing them on the top of wooden stakes, these would then be filled with a mixture of T.V.O. sump oil, and sawdust and a bit of old rag for a wick, there would be 100 or more of these torches, they were placed in the hedgerow in an avenue to the bonfire and when lit made quite a sight. We also made up stands and platforms so that any fireworks could be let off safely.

A Mr. J. Sanders who had a radio gramophone provided music, hot potatoes were to be had in plenty. There was never any charge of admission and this went on for many years as an annual event. Sometimes there would be probably 100 people there to enjoy themselves and most would go back to the pub after.

I use to what was known as 'Fire the Anvil'. This was an old tradition that many smiths did to celebrate the Coronation or Jubilee or any national event. It meant taking an anvil outside and turn it upside down, on the bottom was a large 2 1/2" square hole used when the anvils were forged. This hole would be filled with a explosive powder, a wooden plug driven in and a hole bored in this, then a length of fuse would be lit and the resulting explosion was rather ear shattering and would echo across the countryside. This would be done two or three times during the evening.

I can only remember one, not too serious accident. This occurred when someone had their fireworks in an open basket, the woven type with a metal handle. What happened was a Jumping Jack, did just that, right into the basket, and after a couple of bangs set the whole lot off, there were Roman Candles, Golden Rain, Catherine Wheels, rockets, the lot shooting in all directions, when the sparks had ceased flying, all that was left was the metal handle. Moral to this story is keep your fireworks in a container with a lid. I think the last bonfire was about 10-11 years ago.

JACOB DREW

This was a character if ever there was one. Jacob was not a 'roady' as is generally known, but was a 'Gentleman of no fixed abode'. He was well known in the area and would spend his time on local farms doing odd jobs for a few coppers and a meal. He never did what one would call heavy manual work, but would saw a few sticks or hoe turnips etc. and he always had his walking stick and a couple of old cornsacks, the 21/4 cwt variety and except in summer always had one, cape fashion around his shoulders. No one ever turned him away when he called. His method of sleeping was to get into the cornsacks and bury himself in the hayloft. One thing he never openly begged for food or money and before anyone got fed up with him he had moved on. When he needed new clothes he would make his way to the Workhouse in Tiverton, this is now the Belmont Hospital, there they would clean him up, let him out with fresh clothes and he would stay for a few days then make his way back to his old life. It was said he had a fairly well off sister somewhere.

One afternoon during a terrible blizzard, 1947, he got caught out. The snow was churning like a fog and temperature well below freezing, he decided that Pennymoor would be the best place for him so he started to walk. We were in the blacksmith's shop working when we thought we saw someone pass the window, it was just getting dark. Mr. Charlie Lancelles was in there at the time and went to the door to have a look and as he opened the door Jacob fell in, he looked just a picture of an Arctic explorer. He was a mass of frozen snow, his beard was stiff with ice, as was his eyebrows etc. We stoked up the fire in the forge got some boxes and lifted him up onto the forge to thaw out.

Charles went into the pub to get a stiff whisky and we had to work hard on him to get him warm, which we did, later he had some warm food and we tucked him up in his sacks in the hay. Next morning he was his old self again.

He went on for several years after this adventure and I think he died in hospital in Tiverton.

'SQUIRE' WALLER

Here was a totally different visitor compared with Jacob. He resided in a large castle type home near Monmouth on the River Wye and owned several farms in the area. These were Furze Farm, Weeke Farm, Deptford Farm, Down Farm and Great Bradley in Withleigh and Crandle and would come and tour these properties two or three times a year. He used the chalet type building in a field at the top of Furze Hill on the left, it is still there today. He as I can remember was always immaculately attired, tweed jacket, yellow waistcoat and knickerbocker type trousers tucked into long socks, brown boots and topped by a deerstalker hat. He always had two gun dogs with him. Mrs Lake at the post office was his housekeeper while he stayed.

After his death someone called Mr. Bruce (I think it was his son-in-law) took over this property and in about 1959 all the farms were sold to the tenants.

For a time this chalet was let as a holiday home, but I think it was a little bit too rural for most visitors and in the end it became derelict.

CHURCH BELLS



A rededication of the church bells was held on May 11th 1905 at 11 a.m. by the Lord Bishop of Crediton, see the copy of complete order of service sheet.

The bells had been rehung and turned by Messrs. Stokes of Woodbury, this was done by parishioners in memory of G. J. Cruwys who had been a ringer for 30 years.

In 1971 the bells were again refurbished by Francis Lancelles and myself, we fitted new leathers to the clappers, lifted the bells from their bearings, cleaned these up and tightened up all the bolts and frame fittings, treated the timber and rustproofed the metal work about 3 weeks dusty work. see photograph.

Year by year the steeple music
O'er the tended graves shall pour ;
There the dust of saints is garnered—
Till the Master comes once more—

Till the day of sheaves ingathering,
Till the harvest of the earth,
Till the saints rise in their order,
Glorious in their second birth.

Till Jerusalem beholding
That His glory in the east,
Shall at the Archangel trumpet,
Enter in to keep the feast.

Christ to Thee, the world's salvation
Father, Spirit, unto Thee,
Low we bend in adoration,
Ever blessed One in Three.

Amen.

Hymn after the Sermon.

Hark, hark, my soul ! Angelic songs are swelling
O'er earth's green fields and ocean's wave-beat shore ;
How sweet the truth those blessed strains are telling
Of that new life where sin shall be no more.

Angels of joy, .. angels of light,
Singing to welcome the pilgrims of the night.

Onward we go for still we hear them singing,
Come, weary souls, for Jesus bids you come ;
And through the dark, its echoes sweetly ringing,
The music of the Gospel leads us home.

Angels of Jesus, &c.

Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea ;
And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee.

Angels of Jesus, &c.

Rest comes at length ; though life be long and dreary,
The day must dawn, and darksome night be past ;
Faith's journey ends in welcome to the weary,
And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last.

Angels of Jesus, &c.

Angels, sing on, your faithful watches keeping,
Sing us sweet fragments of the songs above :
Till morning's joy shall end the night of weeping,
And life's long shadows break in cloudless love.

Angels of Jesus, &c.

Benediction.



The Church of the Holy Cross,

GRUWYS MORCHARD.

SERVICE FOR RE-DEDICATION OF THE BELLS

— BY —

The Lord Bishop of Crediton,

MAY 11TH, 1905, AT 11 A.M.



1st LESSON—2 Chron. vi., 16 to 22.

2nd LESSON—Hebrews x., 19 to 26.

HYMN (A. & M.) 242. After the Third Collect.

The Clergy process to the Belfry say:—

MELAND, 177.
MELAND, 177.

THE LORD'S PRAYER. Amen.

- V. Sing we merrily unto God our strength.
R. *Make a cheerful noise unto the God of Jacob.*
V. O God, make speed to save us.
R. *O Lord make haste to help us.*
V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
R. *As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*
V. Praise ye the Lord.
R. *The Lord's name be praised.*

PSALM CXXII.

I was glad when they said unto me; We will go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand in thy gates; O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built as a city; that is at unity in itself.
For thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord: to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
For there is the seat of judgment: even the seat of the house of David.

O pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love Thee.

Peace be within Thy walls: and plenteousness within Thy palaces.
For my brethren and companions' sake; I will wish Thee prosperity.

Yes, because of the house of the Lord our God; I will seek to do Thee good.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

V. Every one that did offer an offering of silver and brass.

R. *Brought the Lord's offering.*

V. They offered them before the Lord.

R. *Therefore they are hallowed.*

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord;

R. *Who hath made Heaven and Earth.*

V. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

R. *From this time forth for evermore.*

V. The Lord be with you.

R. *And with Thy spirit.*

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who by the mouth of Thy servant Moses didst command to make two silver trumpets for the convocation of solemn assemblies, be pleased to accept our offering of this the work of our hands, and grant that through this generation and through those that are to come, it may continually call together Thy faithful people, to praise and worship Thy Holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, that whosoever shall be called by the sound of these bells to Thine House of Prayer, may enter into Thy gates with thanksgiving, and into Thy courts with praise; and finally may have a portion in the new song and among the harpers, harping with their harps in Thine house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, that whosoever shall, by reason of sickness or any other necessity, be shut up, so that he cannot go into the house of the Lord, may in heart and mind thither ascend, and have his share in the communion of Thy saints, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, that they, who with their outward ears shall hear the sound of these bells, may be aroused inwardly in their spirits and draw nigh unto Thee the God of their salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Grant, O Lord, that all they, for whose passing away from this world the bell shall sound, may be received into the paradise of Thine elect, and find grace, light, and everlasting rest through Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The Ringers will have six or one short peal.

Hymn before the Sermon.

Now again our bells are mounted
To their holy place on high,
Ever to fulfil their mission
Midway 'twixt the earth and sky.

As the birds sing early matins
To the God of Nature's praise;
This its nobler daily music,
To the God of Grace shall raise.

And when evening shadows soften,
Chancel cross, and tower, and aisle
It shall blend its vesper summons,
With the day's departing smile.

Christian men shall hear at distance,
In their toil or in their rest,
Joying that in one communion
Of one Church they, too, are blest.

They that on the sick bed languish,
Full of weariness and woe,
Shall remember that for them, too,
Holy Church is gathering so.

MY GRIPES

After living in Pennymoor for nearly 70 years. I feel that I have a certain right to have a few moans. Having moved from the horse and cart era through to the present way of transport.

The older locals and myself welcome the transition, having had to put up with the rather antiquated transport of our younger days, look on the way things are today as progress and welcome it.

If those that complain as to how things are today traffic wise, would only stop and think 'If I had no car how or where would I work?' We had to walk to the main road to catch the service buses to get to work in Tiverton each day.

People today complain about noise made by cockerels early in the morning so when there was about 10-12 just in Pennymoor alone, we had quite a dawn chorus everyday. I can never remember anyone getting hot under the collar about it and making a complaint to the council or whoever was in charge in those days. Cattle too, with a farm right on our doorstep, were quite restless during the night, especially if the farmer had taken away a calf from its mother. I maintain that if one lives in the heart of the country, animal noises must be tolerated or "If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen".

We the locals have I feel, adapted much better than many of the new residents who have recently migrated from noisy towns and cities in their later years.

Therefore I think their picture book idea of living in the country is one big illusion to them.

Standing on the touchline of life now, having played my game, this is how I see it all.

NOISES OFF

Sounds not heard anymore are the hoot of railway trains, one could hear these trains as they left the railway station at Bickleigh, and Coplestone on the Barnstaple Southern line. Another frequent sound was quarry blasting at Bampton at regular times 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. also the factory hooter at Dulverton sawmills. This hooter meant cold weather, as the wind would have to be N.E. At times gunfire from the artillery ranges at Okehampton could be heard when the wind was favourable.

CONCLUSION

In spite of all this, Pennymoor to me is a place, which I would not change for anywhere else. Being 800' above sea level the views of Devon are spectacular. I never cease to enjoy them, from Dartmoor in the SouthWest to Woodbury in the East on looking West to Torrington, Molland moors, Winsford and Dunkery Beacon looking North. From the top of Church Hill a good view of Wellington monument is had, also the whole range of the Blackdown Hills can be seen from the back lane at West Ruckham.

The view of the moors is ever changing. Some days in winter the high tops are dusted with snow, at other times in September the hills are a beautiful purple as the heather blooms. Some mornings with the valleys full of mist you could imagine the sea has come inland. At other times the outlook is very foreboding, dark blue almost black, as clouds lower heralding a very wet and most times windy spell.

At night, these days, Exeter has a huge orange glow depending on the cloud cover and on clear nights one can trace the A30 by its many lights along its length right up to the junction at Sourton Cross. Also the lights of the Battle Camp army barracks at Okehampton can be seen. The flashing navigation lights on the 700' mast at North Hessary Tor are quite clear as well.

To look North at night there are no visible lights, only sky glow from South Molton and Barnstaple and occasionally the glow from the Welsh Coast show up. On very clear nights the red lights on the TV transmitter aerial at Torrington are visible.

At Burrington Moor there is a very large Radar station, which is used to monitor all aircraft approaching from the West, there are two large dishes and two revolving receivers, these can be seen on the skyline quite easily on clear days.

As I have mentioned I have looked on this ever-changing scene for the last nearly 70 years and have fallen in love with it all. Local material changes cannot effect my feelings in this at all, and I still have many of my school day friends, which tells me to thank God for my days happily spent in the village. Trusting and praying that I have many more to come.