



*Vale and Downland Museum – Local History Series*

## ***Memories of Hanney***

**by Catherine Taylor**

The recently published article and accompanying photograph of thatched cottages at East Hanney greatly interested me, I presume the article appeared in the 'Oxford Mail' but I am not sure about this, as a relative kindly sent me the press cutting.

I can tell you a little about the cottages and quite a lot about life generally in East Hanney, many years ago. Way back in time about 1918 to 1950 approximately. Yes, "I'm knocking on a bit" as someone told me recently! Although I never resided in the village, being London born, I spent much of my childhood there, where my grandparents, Mr and Mrs Richard Taylor, farmed for many years, as far back as I can remember. They farmed at the other end of the village, towards Abingdon until my grandfather had to take early retirement due to ill health. They then retired to a thatched cottage adjacent to those in your picture. Their house was 'Jasmine Cottage'.

Your cottage photograph was actually three, built at right angles to the road and occupied by three families, each having their own front door. At the street end of the cottage lived a Mr Seymour Tarry, a young man with his wife and three very young and delightful blond children. Also, in the same cottage, at one time, lived a family called Salt. They adopted a boy Terry and he was followed by two 'real' daughters. I cannot remember which family first lived there.

Next door to this house, the middle one of the three, lived a dear old lady, Mrs Fuller, who was always known as Granny Fuller. To me, she always seemed old but was, no doubt, just middle-aged. Granny Fuller was plump, pleasant, kind, spotlessly clean and always wore a clean starched 'pinny'. Yes, and guess WHAT... she made and sold sweeties! They were the old-fashioned, wholesome, boiled ones, such as bull's-eyes, cloves and humbugs. We got a bag-full for one penny, old currency of course. These were sold through her rear window, for she had no back door, overlooking my grandparents' garden next door. Everyone loved her sweets, locals and visitors, children and adults. I presume that such activities would now be prohibited in this so-called 'enlightened' (?) day and age!!! I am sure no one ever suffered from the effects of food poisoning. My father and his two brothers (all living in London) used often to bring their London friends and colleagues to Hanney and as a MUST, they always visited Granny Fuller and took lots of her sweeties back to London, then known as the 'SMOKE!' I do not remember who lived in the far cottage,

Incidentally, we (my parents and I) and our many London friends quite often travelled by the old Great Western Railway - beautiful steam locomotives, often gleaming in the sunlight. They fascinated me as a very small child. It was quite an adventure for me at the end of the journey, be it the old Wantage Road Station (now no more) or Paddington, I always made a point of going to the front of the train in order to read the name of the engine (or class) and also to thank the driver and fireman (stoker) for a safe journey. At the London end we always took a taxi (they were a sort of convertible, a hood could be lowered). I felt like a queen, I was then four years of age. However, amid the excitement

and adventure of travelling the mere sixty or so miles, we always had an extremely long and tedious wait at Didcot - I believe we had to change trains there. Oh, how I just loathed Didcot and the GWR upholstery on my then bare thighs. Father did not have a car until about 1930.

I must tell you about a somewhat amusing anecdote. On our arrival at Wantage Road Station Grandfather would meet us in the 'buggy' or trap, a two-wheeled vehicle drawn by his dapple pony, and with a rear door and step. Mother and I always had to sit at the front whilst the two menfolk sat at the rear, father usually driving. They were both big-framed men and fairly heavily built, I was very small and mother slight and slim. I was terrified should the buggy tilt backwards and the pony rise in the air when they mounted the back step!!! I did not mention this to father until about 1960.

To continue if I may about East Hanney generally and that part of Berkshire as it was then. I think all my forebears would have been good old Anglo-Saxon stock, working on the land, and to me as a small child we seemed to have relatives in many of the villages around. In East Hanney itself, the far end of the village towards Abingdon was known as Tarry Town, as there were, presumably, at one time so many families called Tarry living there. There were also many Hermanns, Cottrells, Belchers, Broughtons, Coxes and Fullers. We knew them all and I played with their children, attending the village school from time to time. The then headmaster and his wife, Mr and Mrs Edwards, ran the school and lived in the old school-house. There was one other teacher. It fascinated me, so different from the London schools. Mr Edwards had a goatee beard, rather resembling the late Bernard Shaw, I must add that whenever my father had to take his holidays in term time, I sometimes attended the village school. I loved school so much, I must have been an 'ODD BOD'.

Now about transport in those far off days. When my parents could not borrow grandfather's buggy, they cycled everywhere with me on the rear carrier, a sort of seat over the rear wheel of Dad's bicycle. How I remember passing Bagley Woods and Besselsleigh after nightfall. I was terrified of foxes and used to sing at the top of my voice, my parents joining in my repertoire - 'Keep The Home Fires Burning!' and 'KKKKaty'.

When we did not use the buggy or the bicycles, mother and I would make the journey to and from Abingdon, where her parents then lived, and yes, we'd go by the 'carrier-man' and his horse-drawn cart. He was 'Old Barratt' and he was also the local builder and undertaker. He lived at West Hanney and he too had a beard, rather like Old Father Time, and was always accompanied by his spinster daughter who was rather frumpish - do you know that old-fashioned word? They were both grumpy and I did not like them at all. Their carrier cart was a sort of covered wagon, with long seats on either side. The Barratts would call at houses in West and East Hanney, also Tarry Town, accepting shopping orders. These needs would range from a packet of sewing needles to chicks. The journey to and from Abingdon was long and tedious, taking all day. On the return journey after dark, the Barratts would stop to light the carbide lamps. There was no light or heat in the dark cold wagon and I was often disturbed by the movements of chicks or rabbits. The Barratts were followed by the Cripps of Charney. Mr Cripps (John) later 'graduated' to a small motor bus. Both carriers took passengers in addition to cargo.

My grandparents' farm towards Tarry Town and just past the village green was Manor Farm, I believe, but their house was known as Abinger. Their house had two staircases and we grandchildren had a wonderful time playing inside the house when the weather was inclement. We particularly enjoyed real old-fashioned Christmases with our many cousins, aunts and uncles, some of whom lived in East Hanney,

Nearby was the village green and annually (in August I think) the fairground people would arrive. It was known as Hanney Feast. The Fair, among other things had a merry-go-round, drawn by a tired-looking old horse, I always felt very sorry for him. The only music ever played at this fair was 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles'. The fair seemed to go on very late and we children could not get to sleep at nights. Opposite the green was an enormous old oak tree, much frequented by children. We loved to sit up in the tree and nearby a maypole, simply wonderful. Also near was a sort of alley which led to East Hanney church and the minute village post office, both then part of the social scene.

Opposite 'Jasmine Cottage' was a large house with beautifully kept gardens. A Captain Budgett (John I think) lived there with his wife and three young children. He used to ride to hounds, a very smart figure of a man. The family was much loved and respected; they had about six servants.

Now for a further somewhat funny story about life in the old days. The Taylors were a very close knit family and one year Dad was pondering what to buy Granny for her birthday, she being then widowed. About that time 'Elsan Chemical' toilets had made their debut and Dad decided to buy one for Gran. It duly arrived but oh dear, it was a flat-pack. It had to be assembled and a kind of cabin had to be erected as well. Dear Father was useless with his hands, all brains instead, so he sent for his brothers in London to come down and cope with the job in hand. It was June and extremely hot. Dad sat in a deck chair in his flannels, open-neck shirt (a rarity then) and Panama hat, whilst my uncles did the work at Father's instructions. They made an excellent job of it and Uncle Fred even hung some pictures on the walls. For many years, we would often say, when reminiscing, "Oh, that was the year Dad bought Gran a lavatory". She was very pleased with it. So many happy memories but what a long walk to the LOO in all weathers!

More about the village. Near to East Hanney church was a village store. It was run by Mr Hedley Shepherd and next to the shop was the village bakery of Mr Lay. The smell of newly baked 'real' bread I remember well. Also I remember the villagers who used to bring their Sunday joints and cakes to be cooked in Mr Lay's enormously deep oven. He used an iron rod, a kind of crook, to retrieve the goodies. My grandparents did not avail themselves of this service but I made sure that I saw what was going on.

On the way to West Hanney, near to an area now called Brookside, was a mill kept by Mr Dandridge. An uncle by marriage worked for him for many years. He and his family lived in a cottage, actually two made into one, and including two staircases. It was set in the middle of an apple orchard, near to the mill. Even though poor, they had a lovely life having a large garden and keeping a pig, chickens, ducks and rabbits. There was always plenty of fresh fruit, milk, eggs, so much space and fresh clean air in those far off days.

Near to the mill was a bridle path, leading to the churchyard and West Hanney parish church. Church was a great part of village life and being in the choir was 'SOMETHING'. Dad had three sisters who had fine voices and they always seemed to be in cantatas. Two used to sing very early on in St. Helen's Church, Abingdon, where they grew up.

Yes, although I am a senior citizen and crippled badly with arthritis, I still have a very vivid and long memory. I taught for almost forty years in state primary schools. At college, I decided I'd love to teach in a village school. My two happiest schools were village schools in Berkshire, with their happy family atmosphere and many kindnesses. I was glad I was born in 1914 and grew up through the twenties and thirties, life was colourful, the people made it so.

It is of current interest to trace one's ancestry but this I am unable to do for I'm confined to a wheelchair. However a relative recently found my name and that of my sister on microfilm at Shire Hall, Reading, recording our christenings at Marcham parish church in 1920. So much for the memories and trivia of an old woman.



East Hanney - 1900s? - church in main street - one man standing in road.(v-hye004.jpg)



East Hanney - 1900s? - 'Manor Farmhouse' - two men in doorway.  
[scratched photo] (v-hye025.jpg)

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