GORDON LOTT’S STORY

*About three years or more ago I started to write about my life in Woolsery and someone suggested that in this time of being in lockdown due to Covid19 and housebound some people with time on their hands may wish to read about it. We are all obviously very concerned as to what is happening in this country and the whole world and I with everyone else give an enormous vote of thanks to every one in the health service and other services who are working so hard to keep us as safe as they possibly can, and also grateful thanks to those locally who are looking out for us oldies .We can only hope and pray that this scourge will soon be beaten* .

 How I Remember my life at Woolsery (Wooshry) from the  early 1930's onwards until the new Woolsery was started .

                       For some time now members of my family have said that I should put on paper my memories of Woolsery over the years but I kept putting it on hold until Martyn Souch finally persuaded me to do it .He said that he had tried to get Ivy his late mother to write her memories but to no avail, Ivy was one of the more senior pupils when I started school ,so as I believe that at the time of writing there is only one person living in the parish longer than me it is incumbent on me to try and recall how things have changed over the years, some for the better others perhaps not so. Probably I am showing my age. I shall be asking others who are just a little younger than I am when I get stuck about certain happenings, so hopefully we get it right, I will write things down as things come into my  head .

        I will start with a few of my earliest personal happenings .My parents used to have a stall in Bideford Pannier Market on a Tuesday , so one day I was put in the car, an old Austin 12, to be out of mischief , I was about three I guess, and I let the brake off and it ran down the slope into the barn door , but no damage was done because that Austin was built like the proverbial and looked a bit like one as well . I write about this mainly because farming was at such a low state that my parents who were farming in the traditional way had to do anything to earn a few coppers ,they used to sell cream ,homemade butter ,eggs ,oven ready poultry ,potato's and other veg. and anything else that was saleable at the time ,they also took cream and butter to Powlers  and met someone from the Sandford family who I think helped to  start the Torridge Vale Dairy, for many years the dairy served North Devon farmers well.

           About the same time on a Sunday morning my cousin Ted and I who was 10 weeks older than I were walking to Sunday School at Alminstone (Ompsom) Chapel and we stopped to inspect a pit that the roadmen had dug out and Ted fell in and could not get out, then Mr. C J Andrew the Sunday School Teacher came along in his car and lifted Ted , who was covered in clay and mud, out and sent him home, I write about this because we were only around three years old and were  walking the roads and very rarely had any cars passing , not like these days .

           A lot of things have altered since the early 1930's besides Woolsery itself ,I think of the cost of various items ,petrol was 1s4d gall (1.5p litre) ,pint of beer7d (3p) 6eggs8d (3.25p) ,pint of milk 1.5d (0.5p) 2 week Mediterranean cruise £36 ,not that anyone could have afforded one ,average men's weekly wage £2-17s-4d (£2.87) women's wage £1-8s- 0p (£1.40) this just shows how a lot of things have changed since then .

           After Easter 1936 I started at Woolsery School ,my Dad took me the first day and I met Mr Boundy the Headmaster ,but after that I used to walk with others the mile to school ,and it was the accepted thing to do .Muriel Andrew walked from Leeworthy (Lewry)Mill ,Louise Johns walked from Ash Mill, the Bragg family walked from Huddisford (Uddsferd),I cannot recall any child that was overweight, three boys came from Putford for some reason, they came by pony and bicycle as I did later. Mr Boundy left soon and we had several heads over a short spell including Mr Street, Mr Durling whose sons later farmed just outside Holsworthy also one or two others including a lady whose names I cannot recall, then Mr Cyril Griffiths came in 1938 and stayed until 1972 .Other teachers were Miss Badcock from Shebbear who taught the infants until she married Walter Perkins from Venn and then left ,she was my first teacher and was very good. The middle class was taught by Miss Cora Parr who later married Roy Fisher a postman from Clovelly, she used to walk to Woolsery. She was a very good teacher I thought but she had a very short fuse and things would fly across the room, she was also fairly handy with the ruler on the knuckles , one day Leonard Ackland who was in the top class was delivering the milk bottles to our class which was the daily job and Miss Parr was having a go at him for some reason and Leonard said "shut up Parry "Miss Parr went for him and he gave her a push or a poke and being small she went back over a small table ,soon after we heard the sound of the cane swishes coming from the hall outside our class ,but I still think she was a good teacher and helped me pass the scholarship to get to Shebbear. When Miss Badcock left Mrs Griffiths became the infants teacher and she was well liked and respected by her class .The junior classroom was heated with a grate and the other two had a type of stove that would heat up any pasties children brought for their dinner and lighting was with oil lamps ,the school had electricity fitted in 1943 ,the senior and middle classrooms were partitioned with a curtain which was later replaced with a wooden screen that could be folded back if desired so that was an improvement and we could not hear any goings on in the other room unless the teacher was really having ago at one of us ,I expect we probably deserved it .It was because of Woolsery school that I am here today ,in the 1920s my mother (Mary Trigger) who came from Beaford was appointed to be the teacher for the infant class and then met my father and the rest is history.

           School was a lot different in those days , the three R,s having top priority and of course there were no calculators or computers so things were all done the hard way .At the time there were one or two pupils who we thought were a little dense ,but now would probably be diagnosed as dyslectic .

          The games at playtime were different , one being 'strong horses' ,two lads would stand against the wall one in front of the other and four. or five boys would bend over as in a rugby scrum but in a single line and the front one would put his head between  the legs of the post boys against the wall , then the other team would run up one after the other and leapfrog on the backs of those bending over and land as hard as they could trying to get the horse to collapse ,and when a fourteen year old landed on a nine or ten year old the horse would often collapse ,so then the jumpers would get a point .It probably got banned because of the risk of back injury ,rounders was another game ,and that did not need a good pitch .The girls would go Maypole dancing and make various patterns around the pole whilst dancing to music played on a windup gramaphone .The girls would have sewing and knitting lessons  and the boys would have gardening lessons ,the school had quite a big garden to work on ,it was in a field opposite Green Cottage .One of the traditions still being observed when I started school was Oak Apple Day and we were supposed to have a sprig of oak leaves preferably with an oak apple attached, failure to do so would mean that the older ones would strike the back of your legs with stinging nettles and everybody had short trousers in those days .I don't know why it died out but it is still observed , not the stinging nettles ,in some parts of the country on May29,th it was all to do with Charles 2,nd hiding in an oak tree away from the Republicans. If we had some frosty weather, we had more in those days I think ,we would go to a pond in the corner of a field near the auction field and go sliding on the ice ,most of us wore 'naily'boots in winter ,this would be in the dinner hour after we gulped down our pasties ,no health and safety in those days thank goodness ,just common sense and a bit of luck .At weekends and evenings after school would be a time to check our mole traps and when caught we would skin them and nail the skin behind the barn door and when dry send them of to Horace Friend ,a firm who dealt in skins of various sorts and earn a little pocket money.

                      After one school holiday I had nearly reached the school steps when l saw Jim Vanstone arriving on his bike from Burford with someone on his crossbar and that was his brother Dave coming for his first day at school, I think most of us then had ridden 'sidesaddle' if our bike had broken down or we did not own one.

                     Soon after Mr Griffiths came the school went on a trip to South Devon and had a trip on a paddle steamer up the River Dart , there were children from other schools as well , I don't know if one of the councils sponsored the trip because in those days I doubt if many parents could afford it ,and most of us had not been much further  than Bideford  so it was very exciting .

                 When war broke out in 1939 nothing much altered for a while at school until the bombing became worse in London and children from there were sent to various parts of the countryside ,and the first of them came from Peckham ,the next group came from Bristol and finally a group came from Kingston On Thames .I cannot think what it must have been like for them ,terrified I guess ,leaving their parents and going on a train to somewhere they had never heard of and knew nothing about and arriving at Bideford station in the dark and then on to Woolsery and then put with strangers to be taken to strange homes , as I said probably terrified . The thing I remember is getting up in the morning and three girls were waiting on the landing outside their bedroom wondering where to go, I doubt if they had much sleep. Mr Griffiths was the billeting officer, it must have been quite a task to get people to take children especially as some had no children of their own so that would have been a steep learning curve .Imagine getting up in the morning and having to talk to someone who was talking in what must have sounded nearly like a foreign language the Devonshire dialect was very prevalent in those days ,also the London accent was strange to us .

               With so many more children at school it must have taken some organising ,  In Mr Griffiths booklet If These Walls Could Talk it states that in the 1930,s  I believe the numbers went from 85 to 123but the list shows that more than 150 came so some went home or to other parts so two younger classes were held in the old village hall where there are now bungalows adjoining Andrews garage ,the teachers were Miss Moon and Miss Davis who both came with the evacuees ,life must have been a lot different for them .Around this time a taxi service was started for children who lived quite a way from school which must have made it a lot easier for them especially in bad weather, I think three trips were made morning and evening and the taxi was packed  full ,l doubt if it would be allowed now .Also about this time a school canteen was started and was held in what was the Parish Room, it is now converted to a house , the cooks were Mrs Sherbourne  who was local and Mrs Nowell whose family were evacuated here ,we no longer had to bring our dinner bags and thermos flasks every day and it most likely helped with food at home because food was rationed by then .Ration books were the order of the day then ,everybody had to have ration books which meant that everybody was allowed so much sugar and so much butter  ,meat , bread and so on  ,and bananas and oranges were rarities so it must have been difficult and a garden was essential and a rabbit or pigeon was a big help and lots of rabbit and pigeon pies were made and were very good .Having more boys at school meant that our sporting activities increased and I remember being chosen as a nine or ten year old to play against Parkham boys and tackling a large fourteen year old and being flattened but unlike the professionals of today pretended it did not hurt ,we also used to make up our games, for instance we used to pretend we were soldiers ,we made pretend guns and uniforms and Alminstone army and Woolsery army would attack each other .One Saturday afternoon Alminstone were attacking Woolsery and it was down to one man left on each side ,Charlie Thorne was creeping up a gully near the village when he spotted Alan Johns high in a tree and shouted bang Johnsy and with the same Alan came crashing down through the branches frightening us to death but luckily landed on his feet to our great relief , those of us still around still talk about it .Another bit of fun was playing with trolleys made with old pram wheels or iron wheels from an old sheep's hay rack ,and we used to career down the lane and on to the road ,it was unlikely that a car would be passing ,and it would be impossible now due to the state of the road ,and one day Eric and Alan were riding down the lane and got into a speed wobble with obvious consequences .

                     In the early 1940's two sisters Christine and Connie  born and much to my embarrassment I sometimes had to push the pram up and down the road and try and get them asleep, I always hoped that none of my mates would come along , after all it wasn't a boys thing to do ,a baby would never get to sleep now with the pram bumping along the potholes ,my sisters went away later to become nurses in London and  brother Eric went to India and remained stuck in the mud .

                    Some very good friendships were formed and I remember going to school and joining up with Ken Allin and Charlie Thorne and their evacuees Jeff Titcombe, John Bellairs and the Windsor brothers and enjoying the company on the way home ,if it was hot and dry we would stop and have a drink at a spring of water that came out from the hedge by lying down in the road ,it was halfway between Lane Mill bridge and the lane to Lane Barton where I lived ,not much chance of doing that with the traffic on the road now ,some of the older people told me that in the early 1900's Ladywell was drying up and villagers fetched their water from this spring .Some evacuees never forgot their time at Woolsery and would occasionally revisit and in 1996 Roy Brushett wanted to arrange a reunion and floated the idea with me, I contacted the then head Mr John Crossman who was delighted to help and a small committee was formed ,we contacted people whose families had been involved with the evacuees and others and all agreed to offer accommodation .The weekend was a tremendous success and included a  wonderful evening at the school organised by John with a lot of the old pupils there and all were delighted to meet with Mrs Griffiths again who came up from Brixham .On the Sunday morning a service was held in church led by the vicar and my brother Eric , Roy Brushett read the poem An Evacuees Farewell which he found very emotional because John and his brother had been very happy billeted with Mr and Mrs Prouse at the Laurels .The poem was written by Mrs Clutterbuck, sister of Miss Moon ,and had moved with her two children to stay in Woolsery during the war her husband being in the forces, Mrs Clutterbuck and Mary and John had two rooms at our farmhouse but she had died so was not at the reunion with the rest of her family.9

The poem was first read on the day the majority of the evacuees left for home when the war ended. Not all the children had happy memories of Woolsery, two sisters  had returned with poor memories but after meeting the real Woolsery they went home very happy and with others sent letters of thanks and I have exchanged Christmas cards with some ever since .The weekend finished with a meal at Manor House with Mrs Griffiths rounding things off .

                         In Sept 1942 I was away at Shebbear  boarding school for five years so missed out on some school activities but some things can be seen on Google , Woolsery School  Griffiths Archives, and it shows that Woolsery School was very active in all sorts of ways.

                          During the war there were many events to raise money for the forces such as Warship Week, Wings For Victory and Salute The Soldier and a lot of the parish was involved in the work ,In the school records is a poem written by my brother Eric who left Woolsery School at 9 or 10 and it goes.

                               Salute the Soldier.

                              Give all the savings you can spare

                            And then the war will soon be won

                            And you can go and shoot the Hun

                           For he is a coward

                           And you can hit him jolly hard

                          On Salute the Soldier Week

                          Salute the Soldier

                          Everybody hear the call

                          Every adult child and all

                           And they like it very much

                           So that every one will try

                           To reach the target

                           On Salute The Soldier Week

    So  even the children were encouraged to get involved in the war effort and everyone was expected to save and salvage paper ,rubber and metal of all sorts because so much of it came from overseas and ships were in great danger of being sunk by U Boats .Eric tells the story of how he and an evacuee ,Kenny Cornelius ,(Bushey),went around with a horse and cart picking up salvage and taking it to the storage depot ,I have forgotten where it was ,they could not have been very old because Eric was sent to Shebbear when he was 9or10 .In my early days at school a lot of the playground had not been covered with tarmac so it was just stone .Because we were in the country side a lot of the children helped on the farm in various ways such as milking a cow or two before and after school or helping with hay and corn harvest because mechanisation had not yet arrived ,I remember having the afternoon off from school and turning the hay or raking it up using a quiet horse, and this was when I was about ten years old ,because I had left Woolsery school when I was just eleven , but this was allowed to help the war effort and many children did the same especially at potato picking and when I was at Shebbear we were sent potato picking on various farms and also for the War Ag who had planted potato's on Beaford Moor and Thonhillhead Moor .Living in North Devon we were a long way from air raids but at night we could see the glow in the sky when Plymouth was attacked ,and I remember one day hearing an aircraft coming very low hedge hopping and it passed low over our yard and the German markings were plain to see ,I expect it was making for Plymouth .One night a farmer at Atworthy heard a dog  fight going on in the sky and went out and left the lights shining out and the plane dropped its bombs and they landed near his rickyard ,.In a field  near Irene (old Pound) a searchlight battery was stationed for a while and from my bedroom I could see it searching the sky for German planes.

       In the early years of the war the LDV(Local Defence Volunteers) was formed and some of the First World War veterans took a major part ,they soon became known as the Home Guard, before rifles were issued shotguns and pitchforks were their weapons, but not for too long .There were different sections and Uncle Arthur Lott was one of the signallers so he was one of those who learnt morse code .A group used to regularly spend the night on duty in a hut at Mouth Mill,and one moonlit night had a bit of a fright because they saw what seemed to be lights flashing on the water quite near to the shore but turned out to be a shoal of fish surfacing ,a good job it wasn't Cpl. Jones on duty ,but I know that they took their job very seriously and in the early days of the war anything could have happened , and some of them were very annoyed when Dads Army was first broadcast .My father was in the Special Police and would be on duty around the village and area a couple of times a week checking that vehicles were immobilised and that lights were not showing and that the few cars that were on the road had the right blackout hoods on their headlights, one night he was on duty in the village and had to knock on a door because a light was showing and he was nearly speechless when the lady of the house opened the door and was wearing breeches and smoking a pipe, the family were not local. Mr Griffiths joined the ARP when that was formed after serving in the LDV, these men had to do a job of work the next day. Early in the war everyone was issued with a gasmask and would have trial runs at the start ,smaller children had a mask that looked a little like Mickey Mouse I think ,babies had one that they partly fitted in ,thankfully they weren't needed ,we are all issued with identity cards my number was WHEH 72 3 don't ask me for any recent number or password .

It is interesting to recall how the village looked before any development took place , I believe that between the two Great Wars only two or three bungalows and a couple of houses were built in the village and two council houses at Cranford .Starting at the east of the village Church Park now Magnolia was occupied by Mr Westaway  he had a car , one of a few in the village he also had a pony and trap ,next was Highfield with the Hockridges ,retired farmers ,it had a few small fields attached so at some stage It was a small holding ,they also had a car ,my uncle and aunt ,Mr and Mrs Bert Mitchell, lived at South View with daughters Dorothy , Inez and Avice which was a small holding and also ran a taxi service with his fairly large green Hillman car and collected the school children between milking a few cows .Next was Sunnyside ,in the first cottage lived Mrs Burrow who was the school caretaker, in the next was a Mrs Prouse who boarded a school teacher or two, adjoining Sunnyside was the Parish Room which was used for meetings and is now a private house .Starting at the east again the first place was Lodden Lodge with the Mullards who built it ,Mr Mullard was the surveyor for Bideford and district rural council ,he also built the adjoining garage ,it took ages because he built it by shuttering and it had a flat roof which was different and also a tennis lawn , he also had a car . Next was Fairholme occupied by the Perkins family, Mr Albert Perkins was the road foreman for the district council ,in those days the roads were kept in good order and woe betide a roadman who passed a ditch or drain that required attention and didn't fix it, now of course it has to be on computer and photographed ,so much for progress , the roadmen would go to work with their forks and shovels strapped to their bikes ,I recall that around the early 1950's our neighbour said to my father that the road was getting a little rough ,nothing like the roads are now , and father said that he would have a word with Albert and about a week later the tarcrock and steamroller and chippings arrived and the job was finished in no time ,Albert used to travel by motorbike, he also had a herd of Devon cattle   he milked .Greenaway was the next house ,occupied by Mr and Mrs Charlie Peard ,Mrs Moore and Vera ,Mrs Moore was the ex-wife of Mr  Richard Moore and before the 1st world war they used to live next door to the Peards and when Charlie and Richard were called to war Mrs Moore moved in with Mrs Peard and when the men came home Mrs Moore stayed where she was .Mrs Annie Peard used to sell Dartmoor Boots a really heavy boot ,occasionally a dentist would see patients there. Charlie  was a Farm worker ,I believe Annie was the 'boss' because wages went up whilst Charlie was working for my father and a little while later Annie berated my father for not increasing Charlie's wages, apparently Charlie had been keeping the increase himself ,and one day John Raffe was passing the house and Charlie beckoned to him and pulled out a stone from a wall and showed him a tin ,inside was some cash, Charlie said 'they don't know anything about this'. Next door ,Belle Vue was a small shop run by Mrs Johns  the mother of Beryl ,Alan and the late Royston, she sold cigarettes and other items ,my brother recounts that he and a couple of friends bought a packet of Woodbine cigarettes supposedly for Mr Dunn who worked at the garage ,they knew that Mr Andrew of the shop would not sell to them ,

 Opposite was an old petrol pump that Mr Richard Moore had when he used to live at Belle Vue previously and he sold ROP (Russian Oil Products) and one joker who worked in the shop said it stood for Richards Own P.' Back Street 'was composed of cottages with various families living in them and the men doing different jobs ,Mr Wonnacot was a chimney sweep and Mr  and Mrs Wonnacott had two girls living at home Phyliss and Jean ,Mrs Nell Beer and family  ,her son Freddie used to work in the grocery shop ,Mr and Mrs Jim Cook ,Ivy Jack ,Frank and Margaret ,Jim  helped on farms and later on the forestry ,Mr and Mrs Glover who took on looking after several evacuees who really loved them both ,next door was Miss Rosie Hooper ,Mrs Glovers sister, Miss Hooper was always first in the queue at elections ,she could speak Esperanto which was most unusual ,she thought nations would get on better if there was a common language .Others who lived there included Mr and Mrs Blight and Chrissie who had some problem ,probably a form of autism and worried us children , but we didn't understand , and no support or help was available in those days ,next was Mr and Mrs Jack Babb ,then Mr and Mrs Short  and families and at the bottom Mr and Mrs Eddie Brent and Marjorie ,he was a carpenter with his workshop at the end of Straight Lane ,it is now the Shot Blasting business. Next to Mr  Brent's house was LadyWell which supplied the water for many houses in the village as there was no running water and a lot of houses had their toilets in the garden ,and everyone had to have a vegetable garden in those days and had to use what was in season ,no fancy veg then .

                        The grocery shop at top of Chapel Street was owned by Mr and Mrs Cyril Andrew and daughter Lysbeth who helped in the shop after she left school ,Lysbeth later married Jack Jenn from Clovelly ,Jack served in the war on Merchant Navy ships as Captain and survived being torpedoed ,I remember how smart Jack was in his navel uniform and I had never seen black shoes so highly polished . Mr Andrew was  the third generation to run the shop ,his family had built the shop many years earlier. I was told by one of the older villagers that  when the Parish Council was considering the application to build the shop a Mr Short who was the father of Grenville Short (who was quite a character) suggested that the corner should be cut back because he foresaw a time when wagons would be so big that they would have difficulty in getting around the corner ,I guess he was talking about horse wagons ,so that is why the entrance door is set back .The shop was very important to the parish because very few parishioners had cars and the nearest bus stop was at Bucks Cross ,but Jimmy Lee (Barbara Stevens father) from Meddon had a small bus and would take people to Bideford on market days and an evening trip to the picture house sometimes ,so most shopping was done in Woolsery and it was surprising the range that was held there ,and if not Mr Andrew who used to go to Bideford on Tuesday's would get it ,and it was surprising what was on his list ,in fact I still have some bedding that was bought many moons ago, and I have recently seen an old receipt with the heading C J Andrew grocer and draper ,also  a member of his staff would cycle around the parish and take orders ,I think every fortnight, and a day or two later the items would be delivered , the shop also used to supply meal etc. for feeding to pigs and poultry ,this was stored in a room on the second floor ,the access has now been bricked up, and a hand winch was used to get the bags into the loft and would later be delivered to farms by horse and cart , there were also two petrol pumps selling Shell petrol .In those days things were weighed off in the shop into paper bags and didn't have a load of writing on them , such as  best before or use by date ,but in those days we didn't have the nanny state and I don't recall that there was a lot of food poisoning .On one of the counters sat a bacon slicer and all the sweets were in large glass jars ,and on Woolsery Auction days if I was lucky I would have a penny to spend and would have a pennyworth of toffees .The shop as now was also the Post Office and Savings Bank and the telegrams used to come to the Post Office and someone would deliver it ,There have been several different grocers since Mr Andrew retired but thank goodness we have been well catered for so that people like me haven't got the hassle of pushing trollies around supermarkets. There were telegraph poles in from Bucks Cross with just one wire on the top of the post until the mid to late thirties and another. two wires were added for the telephone to the shop soon to be followed  by two more wires to Higher Alminstone for Mr Norris who lived there ,it's now the cheese factory. Mr Andrew liked Rover cars and had a fairly large van for those days for delivering and collecting groceries .The family had a terrier dog called Jacko and was top dog and would sort out any dog that came near his area ,I saw many a dog fight from the school playground ,I can only recall one non-farm dog and that was my Uncle Arthur Lotts terrier Spot ,it was a brilliant ratter and if it heard a threshing machine working in the distance it would be away for the day and would be much welcomed.

                             The next house Hillside was occupied by Mrs Andrew the mother of C J ,as he was known, it was a very nice house with bay windows and metal railings outside ,she was the great grandmother of Mr Peter Birch who is restoring various parts of the village ,her widowed sister Mrs Pickard lived with her ,Mr  Pickard was not very old when he died ,the Pickards used to run the farm at Bucks Cross ,the sisters were from the Davey family who lived at Lane Mill and ran the water mill .The next  house down Westonia  was occupied by one of the men who helped in the shop I think his name was Gilbert later followed by Herbert Thomas. and family ,he also worked in the shop until he joined up in the war ,Mrs Mabel Thomas delivered the post for a while .In the first of the three cottages lived  the Baker family, Mr Baker was a farm worker ,the next door was the home of the Coad family ,Mr Coad was also a farm worker .the bottom cottage was occupied by the Tremeer family, later Arthur and Ivy Souch and their six children lived there for several years .

                        At the top of Chapel Street ,opposite the shop ,now the fish and chip shop, lived Mr and Mrs Bert Ackland and their son Leonard who died tragically on his bicycle by colliding with a van whilst going to work ,it was the morning after the Woolsery Show and dance ,so perhaps he was running late .Mr Ackland was a farm worker and was helping my father at the time .Bert was a very good farm worker and he loved hedging and I remember on one Saturday we had nearly finished our dinner and Dad was getting worried that Bert had not come in from the field and it was leave work time, when  he appeared he said that he had just started another hedge and did a bit more to see what it would look like. The  next house was Rose Hill and Mr and Mrs Jack Cardew and daughter Gwen lived there, Gwen worked in the shop and Mr Cardew was a blacksmith and farrier so a lot of horses would go into the blacksmith shop which was between Rose Hill and the chapel ,and it was quite a sight to see the red hot iron being fashioned into various shapes and the sparks flying from the anvil .Mr Cardew drove a Riley car Mrs Cardew was involved in an organisation called Hospital Aid which helped towards hospital fees, Mrs Cardew  also let the Bradworthy Doctor use a room for a surgery once a week .Doctor Henry Betts was the first one I remember and if it was fine weather would sometimes do his rounds with a pony and trap and occasionally riding on a horse , he was the doctor who brought me into the world, how he was contacted in Bradworthy when there was no telephone system I do not know , my father told me that soon after I was born he was comparing notes with my uncle and he found that Doctor Betts had charged him more than my uncle when Ted was born ten weeks before me ,the only thing my father could think was that when the doctor came my father was bringing in a bunch of bullocks and the doctor was running his own health service .Many years later I was talking to his son Doctor Norman Betts and he said that his father’s old account book pointed to that conclusion .Before my brother was born a few years later Doctor Henry stopped travelling late at night so my family switched for a time to the Hartland doctor .Later they moved back to Bradworthy with Doctor Norman Betts and later his son Doctor John Betts ,so the area was well served by the Betts family .The house at the bottom of Chapel Street for a while was a butchers shop run by Mr and Mrs Codd ,later Mr and Mrs Oke who was a daughter of the Wonnacott’s .Turn left at the junction and where there are now bungalows used to be the old Village Hall or The Working Man’s Institute as it was once known and was used a lot ,skittles ,WI meetings , show meetings ,concerts ,plays , and dances for various organisations and other activities and the site was sold to help towards the new hall , my father told me that when it was being built a lot of the work was done by parishioners and my Grandfather sent a horse and cart to cart stones etc ,but when he heard that dances would be held there he pulled the horse away ,I don't think he approved of such frivolity, but when he retired to Bideford he spent his time playing bowls at the Strand Green and on the town council ,perhaps I don't know the meaning of frivolity .Next was and still is of course Andrews Garage, built by Mr Gilbert Andrew and has been extended a few times ,at one time there was a sign advertising Armstrong Bicycles The Better Bike ,I had a couple over the years and served me alright , later Mr Andrew also sold tractors I think at first it was Allis Chalmers and then it was David Browns ,those really took off and many were on farms over quite a big area .At the bottom of the garage car park was Wade Pond ,not very big but children used to play games around it ,and that was then the last of the buildings in that area. Turn right at the bottom of Chapel Street and the house was Walnut Cottage it's now called The Woolsack  and Mr and Mrs Andy Moore and Greta lived there and also son Pat who worked in the garage ,he amazed us youngsters because could ride his bicycle sitting backwards on the handlebars ,he was in the RAF during the war and later moved to Australia .The next property used to be a shippon and Andy kept a few cows .The farm opposite the bottom of Chapel Street is still Lower Town and Farm and was farmed by Mr and Mrs Joe Burrow ,Catherine and young Joe who was later the sixth Joe Burrow to run the farm , I and my family had a good rapport with them and we used to help each other at the various harvests as had the previous generation ,it was the largest farm in the village itself and in common with most farms in the area was a mixed farm, Catherine later married John Raffe and they together with young Joe ran the farm ,now it has been developed and the stone buildings were the barn the stables and the round house ,round houses were like farms engine houses and horses would be hitched to a pole and  would walk around and drive mills and chaffcutters using a system of gears. The buildings that held the cattle etc. and the Dutch Barn were demolished and houses and bungalows have been built on the site, Mr Burrow also ran a car. The farmhouse was noted to have strange happenings occurring ,such as one evening the family were having their evening meal and Bonty Johns was visiting and was talking to them when he suddenly stopped and stared at their staircase and it seems he saw an umbrella move from one side of the staircase to the other and Catherine said it was always put in the same position from which it had moved, there had been other instances similar as well at Lower Town .About the same time several people saw at different times an apparition at Cranford Bridge ,I think the first persons were Mrs Maggie Perkins and her daughter and Bonty Johns pulled her leg and suggested that she put more water with her drink but she was not a drinker ,however she had the last laugh because after one Harvest Festival Bonty and his wife were driving over the bridge  and he had to swerve to avoid this apparition and other people saw it at different times and all were sane and sober people ,one story is that there are the remains of a little cottage just off the bridge and an old man reportedly spent his time sitting in the chimney corner. When all this became became common knowledge Norman Gorrell joked that he probably was to blame because not long before he had be searching the remains with a metal detector and had most likely disturbed the old man. A little while later my son Derek and Angie ,his wife were walking their dog and on approaching the bridge it would not move and had to be carried over the bridge and after crossing the dog walked on perfectly normal ,a friend of theirs had the same experience with their dog.

                  Moving on towards the school the next house , Westcroft ,was occupied by Mr and Mrs Frank Dark and  son Fred ,Frank was also a farm worker  and for a time the Doctor Sawyers of Hartland held a surgery once a week there ,and it is thanks to him that I am here today ,when I was six years old my parents called him one evening because I was getting worse after being poorly for a while , it was appendicitis that had burst so  he rushed me to hospital in his car and apparently. the surgeon was not very hopeful as to the outcome but was persuaded to operate ,and Dr.Sawyers stayed until it was over and explained to my parents what had been done and helped them cope , so I am obviously so thankful that he was our doctor at that time .Dr Sawyers also sent Eric and me to the Isolation hospital with scarlet fever ,where we contacted it I have no idea as it was no longer a common disease ,Ted was quite happy because he had to stay home as a contact .

 The bungalow on the corner Fernlea was built by Richard Moore and he had various interests ,I remember he had a cattle lorry and two of the drivers were Bruce Lock and Frank Richards ,and you could hear Frank yodelling as he was cleaning the lorry ,Frank and his family lived at Fouchole and it was a fairly large family and in common with other large families at the time it must have been tough going because there was no social help in those days ,Tony Vaggers was a grandson of Frank .Richard Moore then became agent for Levers livestock feeds and this after a time outgrew the premises and the stores moved to Bideford station but the haulage side still operated from Fernlea,and was run by Messers Reg Bowden and Bill Peard.In one of the buildings Cyril Piper ran a repair garage for a while before building a new one adjoining Eddie Brent's carpenter shop at the end of straight lane .

 The bungalow next door was the home of Mr and Mrs Gilbert Andrew, Margaret, Peter, Michael and Norman. Opposite was Green Cottage and Mr and Mrs Martin lived there ,Mr Martin was a cobbler and were followed by Mr and Mrs Jim Perkins ,Mrs Perkins was a daughter of the Martins ,and Jim farmed the land that ran up behind Sunnyside and the adjoining cottage ,he also farmed the County Council land on the left just beyond Irene Bridge ,Jim was also a licensed slaughterer so was in demand when the pig or lamb was fit to kill. Moving on to around the next corner was the home of Mr and Mrs Cecil Perkins and Elizabeth ,Cecil was a carpenter and undertaker and he built the house next door later for his father Albert who then moved from Fairholme .Cecil was an impatient man who didn't suffer fools gladly ,I recall once being a bearer at a funeral when he was the undertaker and   knowing he liked things to go well I asked to clarify a point and was told I could not have been listening ,at another funeral John Raffe was a bearer and the coffin had just been lowered and the bearers stepped back and one bearer stepped on to Cecil's bowler hat ,and John said if looks could kill there would have been another funeral, but Cecil was an excellent craftsman .

                           The Manor House next to the Church was the home of Mr and Mrs Heal and Mrs Heal's brother William Elliott ,the Manor was always kept in top notch condition and the front lawn was always kept cut with a lawnmower fitted with an engine ,unusual for those days, they owned the land above the Manor and opposite by the school and Mrs Heal used to deliver milk in bottles to the school every day and took in visitors in the summer, unfortunately Mr Heal died at not a great age ,he had an accident with a horse and it was after that he didn't have good health. I understand that previously The Manor was owned by a Mr Ridd who was a butcher and there was a small slaughterhouse on the premises. At the entrance to The Manor is Ivy Cottage and was occupied by Mr and Mrs Lew Nicholls ,Queenie and Sheila ,Lew was the driver of the steam roller and with others kept the roads in good condition and a pothole was something to hold pot's in , the steamroller would also pull the tar rock and a wooden caravan ,which was for the driver when  working too far from home , because it took quite a time to get the steam up and the tar hot .Lew was a tall man and I remember him carrying two big buckets of water and striding it out from Ladywell ,the Hartland Doctor used a room once a week for a surgery after Mrs Dark stopped There were a lot of tall trees ,mainly beech ,around the Manor and in late spring or early summer at school we would hear several gunshots as Mr Heal and one or two  others would be thinning out the young rooks ,and I guess that rook pie would have been on the table that day.

                                The Farmers Arms when I was attending school had a sign that it was a Starkey Knight and Ford pub ,I believe they were Tiverton Brewers ,and one of the beers was called Tivvy and a sign on the wall which said Guinness is good for you ,the pub was run by Mr and Mrs Bill Dark and Miss Crocker who was Mrs Dark's sister, the previous landlords being Mr and Mrs Crocker who were the parents of Mrs Dark and Miss Crocker and had moved away to run another pub . When the Dark's retired the Moore’s from Walnut Cottage took over ,Andy was an Irishman who had come over in the First World War and was not too careful in how he expressed himself ,on one occasion some visitors were at the bar and one of the ladies who was standing with her back to Andy turned and said 'excuse my back landlord' to which Andy replied 'don't worry I'd just as soon see your back as your face ',the visitors disappeared. The next landlord was Percy Chapple and when he died Mrs Chapple and son Ron ran it for a while and after one or two changes a Welsh couple Ron and Lana Daley bought it and they developed it and installed the restaurant and other things and at this moment In time we await with interest to see what the latest developments are like .I did not know too much about the inside of the pub in the 30s and 40s coming from a strong Methodist family and had only been inside when my father went to pay or collect a cheque with Messers Seldon &Cory after the auction .

 Once or twice a week in the spring we would hear horse hooves and a big cart horse stallion bedecked with ribbons would pass the school and we would see it disappear into the pub yard and a mare or two would be held in there as well, the stallion was owned by a Mr Bartlett of Meddon and led by Mr Archie Hill who later married Gwen Cardew ,this was how Woolsrey Show started but more about that later. The pub had some fields belonging to it so the landlord was able to keep a few cows in the buildings that belonged to it, so cows would often be seen walking through the village.

                  A little way up the road to West Town on the left was the entrance to Woolsery Auction Field which held an auction the last Thursday of every month ,it was run by Messrs Seldon and Cory of Bradworthy .It was a busy day with cattle ,sheep and pigs and the occasional batch of poultry.

A lot of the cattle and sheep would have been driven to the market , imagine doing that now with all the traffic and open plan gardens ,but sometimes we would have fun and games because cattle and sheep don't always do as they are supposed to do. Some would be brought by hauliers such as Messrs Ayres Hardings, Hopkins, Glover and Uglow ,Richard  Moore ,because no farmers had lorries or boxes and the farmers with cars would perhaps bring a calf or pigs in  their car trailer so you can imagine even then it would be jammed up at times. Several dealers would attend the market and I remember Fred Cook from Shebbear and Johnny Parsons from Holsworthy  ,Gordon Lewis and a couple of May's and another Parsons  who always wore a bowler hat and one of the main sheep dealers was a Mr Withycombe from Littleham , the main cow and calf dealer was Harry Jones and he used to go to Taunton and other places and buy cows and sell  the cattle locally . On some days a sale would be held on a farm after the market and one or two of the dealers would have over indulged at The Farmers and would try to outbid each other so that was a bit of luck for that farmer. Sometimes if a small lot wasn't selling well Mr Cory would quickly say Jack Arnold five bob ,Jack lived at Arnold's Cottages and ran a small farm .

If cows in milk were sold at the auction the buyers would let Annie Peard and Bessie Moore milk them as they used to turn up with their buckets also Annie's sister who married Jack Peard and lived just outside the village towards Venn .Mr Jack Babb would be very busy on auction days getting the wooden hurdles put up ready for the sheep to be penned up for sale .The local policeman ,PC West was usually in attendance and he used to arrive in the village once a week on his bicycle and  sometimes Sergeant Bolt from Hoops Inn would be seen as well but I don't think they were kept very busy unless things untoward were kept from us youngsters

                Just above Auction Field was Church Park Cottage the home of Mr and Mrs Arthur Beer Ida and Edna ,It is now Copper Hill ,Arthur worked on farms and in common with other farm hands used to keep a cow or two .Further up the hill is The Laurels and was the home of Mr and Mrs Frank Prouse ,Mr Prouse had lost a leg after being wounded in WW1,he had built The Laurels and was an excellent carpenter ,and he had trained Cecil Perkins so at one time Woolsery had four carpenters because Mr Bert Stevens of Hurley Meadow was another who later built a house and workshop at the top of West Moor hill ,but at the time a lot of farm equipment was wooden or had wood attached such as shafts or poles because horses were the main source of power ,Mr Prouse owned a car .During the war Roy and John Brushett were evacuated to The Laurels ,Roy was the instigator and did a lot of the work to make the evacuees reunion such a success, and Roy spoke very highly of Mr and Mrs Prouse. On the other side of the road at West Villa was a Mr and Mrs Andrew who was a brother in law of the Mr Westaway of Church Park , both Mr Andrew and Mr Westaway owned cars ,so there were not many cars in Woolsery so roads were very quiet In those days ,a little further up the road at WestTown Farm lived Mr and Mrs Frank Cloke ,at Yeo's farm was Grenville Short and Hammets was a cottage occupied by the Pengelly family ,it later was derelict and was developed by the district nurse, Nurse Osbourne ,she was a direct speaking person because when  my son Derek was expected I rang her at 2 .30 in the morning and said "I think the baby is on its way" she  said "what do you mean you think it's on the way I'm not not coming if you only think it's coming ",but she came and she was well thought of in the area.

                 Farming in the 1930's and early 1940's was completely different than now and before the war things had been fairly tight but with the setting up of the Milk Marketing Board things had begun to improve a little .Most farms were family farms and several had been bought by tenants when the Walland Carey Estate had been broken up in 1920, and were farmed in the traditional way with a mixture of corn grass and root crops. A lot of the wetter ground was infested with rushes mainly because the land had  been allowed to 'go back 'in the depression and it was around that time that a lot of the poorer ground was taken over by the Forestry Commission and covered in fir trees ,I remember a Mr Wilkinson cycling past the school going from Huddisford Forest to Melbury ,but it gave a lot of work to the men ,but they had to cycle a lot to get to work .On the farms most of the work was with horses ,my father had three horses Rose ,Dolly and Tommy ,and two of the helpers were Ernie Jeffrey who was the horseman and Henry Squire who was more general farm work ,they both lived in the farmhouse and almost became part of the family .I recall that if Ernie took the horses to the village he made sure the horse had a few ribbons on ,and sometimes when my parents went to Bideford on a Tuesday he would get them to buy him another horse brass or two .One winters night  a concert or lantern show was being held at Alminstone  Chapel and Henry decided to go ,what else was there to do ,and Ernie decided to have some fun ,so he took a sheet from his bed and some plough chains and stood in a gateway and when he heard Henry coming he started rattling his chains and moaning ,unfortunately for Ernie it wasn't Henry but my uncle who grabbed him, Henry would have run a mile ,in those days you had to make your own fun .Another that I recall is Ernie saying to my mother "which is wuss misses I'm a vool and nawt and Enery's a vool and doane nawt. ".

                 A lot of the work was manual work ,the cows were milked by hand and were tied by the neck in shippons and were cleaned out with a wheelbarrow and prong it was mainly Red Devons  which did not give a lot of milk and was more of a dual purpose breed than the Devons of today which have been bred solely for beef. and there is no better ,but later in the 1930'sother breeds were beginning to get in the area ,my father had opted for Dairy Shorthorns ,and around 1940 a bucket plant milking machine was installed so there was less chance of being kicked or having a cow put its foot in the bucket and one man could milk two or three cows at a time , the milk produced was collected by Mr George Norris driving a big Armstrong Siddeley car with the back seats removed and pulling a trailer ,he also collected milk from Mr Daniel at Kennerland ,I think those were the only farms in the parish that were TT and Accredited and the milk was taken to Bideford Dairies ,a little different from the huge tankers of today. One day Ted and I were cycling to school and Ted was sailing on in front and met Georgie Norris on the corner at the bottom of the lane and finished up spread eagled on the big headlight of the old Armstrong Siddeley but luckily was not hurt but missed school that day . In the  fields the corn was cut with a self-binder although there was still the odd reaper used ,before the binder went into the field someone would cut all around the field with a scythe ,and most workers would have put Poldark to shame as his technique as shown on the telly was awful , and the cut corn would be tied into sheaves using a wisp of straw to bind it up when the corn was cut the sheaves would be set up in shocks or stooks as they were called in some parts of the country ,wheat in eights or sixes if it was oats or barley .After ripening then for a while the corn would be carried to the mohay and put into ricks and in the winter would be threshed .The threshing  tackle was owned and operated by Mr Bill Glover and his son George from Venn ,threshing days was quite an event because  the neighbouring farms would help each other and it took quite a number to keep things going, two men would be pitching the sheaves to the thresher and two would be on top of the machine ,one would be cutting the ties and passing to the other who would feed it into the fly which would be spinning at a terrific rate and knock out the grain ,one of the Glovers would do that job because it had to be done suently (smoothly) , one or two men would be looking after the bagging of the corn depending on how far away the granary was from the machine ,sometimes the corn would be put into West of England Sacks which held four bushels ,which was a measure of volume ,and a bushel of wheat was 63 lbs and barley was 56lbs with oats at 42lbs so a sack of wheat was 2.25 cwt , so a struggle up the granary steps ,another man would be looking after the trusser where the straw was bound into wads ,he would then pitch the wads to the man making the  straw rick  , and someone would be taking care of the douse and riddlings ,so quite a number involved ,it was also a social occasion as well because the ladies would put on a good feed ,so a lot of catching up with local news would take place and of course a little banter at mealtimes .When combines started to be used on the large arable farms in the eastern counties a lot of local farmers thought that because of our rainfall and later ripening the combine would not be suitable for this area ,but time has proved otherwise. The thresher was originally pulled and drive by a large steam traction engine and was a wonderful sight to see ,it was replaced by a Marshall followed by a large Massey ,it was large for those days and was also used to pull a baler .

                 During the war the Women's Land Army was formed and some were employed on our farm, two of them stayed in the area afterwards , Joyce Dunn and Elise Johns  and to this day I don't know how Joyce managed to pour the milk into the top of the milk cooler as she was not very tall, but they were very good workers .but I cannot recall if they ever drove a tractor .The first tractor was an old Fordson  and then my father used to borrow a Massey Harris Pacemaker from my uncle at Fairy Cross if he wasn't using it ,then Mr Gilbert Andrew managed to get a Minneapolis Moline which came from America and the make hadn't  been heard of ,it came on iron spade lugs and it was ages before rubbers could be fitted because of shortage of rubber In the war, it was bright Yellow and it went well and after the war and rubbers had been fitted it was fast for those days and would go at 20mph, it was very basic like all tractors then ,no batteries so a starting handle to start it and of course no lights and Ferguson had not developed the hydraulic lift ,but the MM did have a power take off but no implements were on the market with that fitted ,but it was a great advance on the Fordson ,I remember hearing Mr Bert Moores tractor at Stroxworthy starting and the gears .would be grating as Douglas Vaggers tried to get it in gear and this would go on until the old Fordy warmed up.

                      In the fields a lot of the work was done by hand ,if ploughing was done by horses a man could do an acre a day and that was about an eight mile walk ,the dung would be put in the fields in heaps about eight or ten paces apart and spread using a prong (fork) and a day's work would be about forty heaps , and one buttload would be three heaps , the first two would be unloaded with the prong and the last by taking out the tripstick and tipping the butt. The corn would be tilled mainly with a drill but some farmers still broadcast it by hand ,even so it meant walking several miles behind the drill ,and the grass seeds were always sown by hand ,that was quite a skilled job  getting the right thickness and making sure that it wasn't left in strakes (streaks) because your neighbours would see it and if they didn't see it someone else would tell them .The corn was weeded using a weeding iron ,a thankless job, no sprays in those days .the root fields would have several sorts grown, cabbages would be dug in by hand with a mattock at about eight thousand to the acre if I remember correctly, the swedes and mangolds would be drilled with a single drill behind a horse and the potato ground would be banked up and the seed potatoes dropped by hand and the tricky bit ,the   banks split back again with the banking plough with the horse walking on top of the banks .The young plants would then be thinned using a hand hoe and the horse and single row scarifier would weed the rows ,so a lot of time would be spent in the root fields in the summer ,and then in the autumn the roots would be pulled and topped and tailed ,the swedes would be done using a root hook and the mangolds pulled and topped using a carving knife and I remember one day my father and I were getting near the end of a row and it was dinner time and it had developed into a bit of a race to finish first and my fingers were cut instead of the mangolds ,the root crops were then loaded by hand and put into clamps and  covered with straw and thatched with rushes to protect them from the frost ,the flatpole cabbage would be used earliest as and when needed .Very little silage was made and it was made using forks to load it I only knew of two or three farms who did make it so it was hay on most farms and that was very hard sweaty work ,a few farms had a hay pole and the hay would be swept to the rick in the field and a grab pushed into the swept hay and a horse was hitched to a wire  and a system of pulleys used and the horse would pull the hay up to the rick makers and when finished the rick was thatched using rushes and in the winter the hay was cut out using a hay knife which was quite hard work ,a lot of the hay would then be pitched up into the tallet (loft) and then dropped into hay racks which fed the cattle below. Farmers  who didn't have a hay pole had to do it all using forks ,and if the weather was unsettled and the hay was hardly fit to harvest it was put into pokes ,which were small heaps of hay ,until the weather cleared and then spread again, all labour intensive , I remember helping with the hay harvest before I went away to boarding school and I was driving the Massey sweeping hay to the hay pole using a horse sweep behind the tractor and when arriving at the rick I had to reverse a little so that that the sweep could be pulled clear ,then I was supposed to move forward slowly so that the sweep could be tipped over but unfortunately I went into top gear and shot forward and stopped touching one of the stay ropes of the pole ,one of the learning curves for a 10  year old .Because  of weather uncertainties most farmers liked to have one hay rick carried over to the next year .For some years we dipped sheep for other farmers and the sheep would be driven from as far away as Steart Farm ,Huddisford and Sedborough ,some hope of that now with traffic and open plan in the village .Originally the local policeman would oversee it with the odd visit once or twice a year ,then one year I had a man from Scotland another from Yorkshire who stayed for 30minutes and then left early because he wanted to see Hartland Quay ,but what finished it for me was when a man came from Westward Ho! who ran an amusement arcade and hardly knew a sheep from a cow and all this was before the EU took over, so I stopped after that .

                     Before artificial insemination was around not many farmers kept a bull so cows had to be driven to a farm which did have one ,we took cows to Mr Grenville Short's at West Town and Mr Stevens of Ashmansworthy and Mr Boundy of Cranford kept Bulls so it was a different sort of traffic on the roads in those days .

                     A lot of farmers wives would take in visitors as another source of pin money and my parents did that until the outbreak of war and it could not have been easy money because there were no labour saving devices around ,for instance the washing would be done using a furnace with a large boiler and the fire had to be kept stoked up and the clothes and bedding continually poked with a stick and then rinsed in the Rekitts blue bag water and then put through the large mangle .A lady called Mrs Philps who lived at Leeworthy Cross used to help my mother sometimes on Monday wash days and one day an aeroplane passed overhead and she said 'hark to that thing sturrin up the clouds now twill rain ", perhaps she had an idea about climate change .The ironing was done with "flat irons " which were heated by the fire and were tested for temperature by spitting a little on them because it was so easy to singe any item .My earliest recollection of the cooking was with the large open fire with the saucepans on the "brandies" which was a type of grid hanging on the chimney crooks and   the huge kettle with the handymaid attached ,which helped to tip the kettle and stopped your hand from being burnt ,the open fire would have a back stick which was usually a chunky  piece of oak such as an old gate post and would be smouldering most of the time and the baking was done in a cloam oven ,the oven would be filled with fast burning sticks and gorse , the flames would be roaring up the open chimney and when hot enough the ashes raked out and bread would be baked first and as the oven cooled down different items would be put in, it must have been a work of art and I cannot recall anything but good meals, one of my favourite meals was a 'tiddy pasty' much better than a Cornish one .Meals were more or less the same in most farmhouses with breakfast mostly being a fried one or   porridge ,l don't think Kelloggs had arrived then ,then lunch at about 11 am ,that was just a snack and a drink ,at 1 o'clock it was dinner time ,it was only the 'posh volks' that had dinner in the evening ,and then teatime would vary according to the time of year and the work that was on at the time ,at harvest time it was very often eaten in the hay or cornfield and supper was just a drink and snack. The milk from the cows would be used in various ways ,some would be allowed to settle until the cream came to the top and simmered until it set and then skimmed off ,sometimes a separator would be used ,the skim milk had a flavour of its own and was quite nice to drink but the separated wasn't so good ,rather like the red top that can be bought .Some of the cream would be made into butter and together with the cream would be put into the butter well to keep cool, no fridges in those days ,our butter well was at the bottom of the orchard it was not very deep and had a stone dome over the top with a small door and it is still there but obviously not in use ,some of the produce was sold at the Bideford pannier market .So that more visitors could be catered for I remember having to sleep in the granary in the summer ,and for the first night or two my father could be seen skipping about trying to kill the mice that were also in the building ,but anything to earn money in those difficult times .The visitors obviously enjoyed the food judging by the comments in the visitors book .A black lead stove was soon installed and later towards the end of the war an Esse was purchased and that made life a lot easier indoors and the kitchen was a lot warmer ,before we used to huddle around the open fire in the winter ,the bedrooms would be freezing in the winter so a hot water bottle was a must .Because electricity had not arrived the lighting was with paraffin oil lamps ,the Aladdin with a delicate mantle gave quite a good light ,outdoors an oil lantern was used and didn't give a very good light but later the pressurised Tilley lantern was available and was much better .In 1954 Barbara and I became parents of twin daughters Rosemary and Ruth but Ruth would not take feed naturally so that meant that I had to get out in the night when needed to light up a Primus heater to heat the water to warm up the bottle of milk ,what a performance it was .A lot of families kept a pig for home consumption and Jim Perkins would slaughter it and some of it would be put in the earthenware trendle and salted for future use ,nothing was wasted and I remember going with my mother and gran to the stream and watched them wash the intestines with the water running through them ,then it would be used as the skin for hogs puddings or for chitterlings ,but the river was a lot purer than today .Once while washing the intestines a salmon swam by on its way to spawn ,and in the autumn some locals would go out with a  lamp and a gaffe or fork and catch one ,highly illegal of course but would keep a look out for the water bailiffs ,but it all helped to feed the family. One night a group were out after salmon and the bailiffs had been tipped off and challenged the group and one had a gun and was looking for game so fired the gun in the air and the bailiff said that when he saw the flash he ducked and the shot whistled over his head but nothing more was done .

                     The hedges would be trimmed using a hook ,no mechanical hedge trimmers ,the road hedges needed trimming every year although very few would be topped ,the corn and root fields would be side trimmed every year ,but grass fields left to grow out and help to keep stock from horning the hedges .One year when I was trimming the hedges down "Donkey Turd Lane "I put the hook across a wasp nest and they could fly a lot faster than I could run so I was stung many times but my mother treated the stings with a "blue bag " which was used to whiten the sheets  etc when put into the rinsing water .when a grass field needed ploughing the hedges would be cut back tightly (browsed) and then hedged up mostly a clat and cope ,that involved digging out the foot of the hedge with a mattock or visgy if there were big roots and using a Devon shovel and putting it on the top of the hedge ,and I think that I helped hedge up all the hedges on the farm except for one which was done with a mechanical digger which had appeared on the scene, and the growth on the top of the hedge would be chopped off and used for firewood in the farmhouse and the browse would be used for the cover on the root clamps and the bottoms of the hay and corn ricks ,and any surplus would be burnt ,but it was considered. bad luck to burn Elder bushes ,perhaps that was because years ago many parts of the Elder was used for medicinal purposes. I have an idea but could be wrong that the use of the modern hedge trimmer where every hedge is sided and topped every year has coincided with the decline in numbers of certain species of birds because the seeds and berries are cut off and the bushes no longer provide cover and feed and shelter , Greenfinches were common but I believe that a disease has decimated them ,and Yellowhammers were common with their distinctive cry "a little bit of bread and no cheese" ringing out from the bushes, but the labour is no longer about  and who is around who can use a hook ,and it would be too expensive .I also wonder if other changes in farming practices have led to the decline ,for instance skylarks were commonly heard singing high in the sky but not now, it could be due to hay making being replaced by silage ,which is cut earlier and more often ,and we used to hear the skylarks during hay making in the middle of June and later .We used to see large coveys of Lapwings in the winter and a few would nest  in the summer also a few Curlews would be flying around making their distinctive call ,but not now and I believe it may be because a lot of the poorer ground is farmed differently and also there are a lot more badgers than there used to be because they are now protected and I had never seen one until the 1960's ,one bird which used to be quite uncommon was the Goldfinch but now I quite often see them ,I expect it is because there are a lot of bird feeders in gardens nowadays ,but I expect that things have always been changing over the years. One of the sounds I miss is the sound of the cuckoo every spring and how in June it altered its tune and in July away it would fly and in August go it must, l haven't heard it for years ,and I frequently. saw Kestrels hovering while flapping their wings but it's a rarity now .There used to be more Magpies around than now I expect it's because a lot of the thorn bushes have been cut down and always their nests were in those bushes ,but they aren't missed because the Magpies took a lot of small birds eggs and young .

                           Farms have altered so much since I was a boy, look at Alminstone where there used to be five active holdings only one now functions ,Messrs Allin ,Brown, Beckley ,Harding and Thorne ,Mr .Thorne used to also castrate bull calves and was good at helping with difficult calvings .The Jewells used to live in the small cottage ,it is now a large house, before moving to Leeworthy Cross ,and the Gorrells took the cottage ,Jack worked on farms and for contractors after he came home from the army when the war ended and Gladys helped with cleaning etc. for various people ,to see her on her bike was something to behold ,I doubt if she would last five minutes now with all the traffic ,but she did a lot of work for Alminstone Chapel. At Ashmansworthy (Ashincherry) there  were five holdings with  Messrs Cann, Burrow, Johns, Wade, and Stevens, now it has been completely altered but I suppose things have always altered over time because up until 1920 the Walland Carey Estate owned a lot of Woolsery and it was sold off presumably for death duties ,a lot of tenants bought their farms at the auction for instance on a copy of the sale a Mr Boundy purchased Cranford Farm (92 acres) for 2500 pounds and my Grandfather purchased Lane (169 acres )for 3500pounds ,I expect that seemed a lot of money In those days ,that was when my family came to Woolsery so compared to some we are still newcomers , one of the conditions of sale was that Walland Carey kept the game shooting rights and every Christmas Mr Wesley Dark the postman ,riding the motorbike and sidecar would deliver a brace of pheasants ,and my father would not shoot a pheasant . As a family we used to believe that when my Grandfather came to see Lane Barton he had my Uncle Len drop him at the top of Donkey Turd Lane (I wasn't allowed to call it that )and he walked through the lane and didn't enter a field or go into the house or anything and then went to the sale and bought the farm it always seemed strange , but a few years ago it was discovered on a census that a brother had lived there and helped run the farm for a few months after a relative had died , so Grandfather probably knew more about the farm than we thought .In 1930 my Grandfather retired to Bideford and my father and mother moved into Lane Barton and my Uncle and Aunt moved into Three Gables which was built for them, they later moved to Shebbear in the early 1940's and my family moved into Three Gables for a while but moved back to the farmhouse again ,my father didn't like it as" there isn't enough room to swing a cat". In 1952 Barbara and I were married and moved into Springfield which we had built ,Three Gables had been already sold .After a few years my parents and Barbara and I changed houses and not many years after my parents sold Springfield to the Burrow family and retired to Bude .ln 1998 we built Millview and son Derek and Angie were married and moved into the farmhouse Looking back to the 1930'sI I remember a lot of names that are still around ,the Andrew families  at Leeworthy Mill and Leeworthy Farm , Tom Andrew had a small farm and was a rabbit dealer and collected the rabbits from trappers and after a farm shoot ,his son Fred was a farmer and trapper ,Oswald Andrew farmed at Dipple and was a brother to Gilbert at the Garage ,C J Andrew ran the shop and Post Office and owned some properties in the village and retired farmer Mr Andrew lived at West Ville ,the Andrew family lives on in name and connections ,I don't know if they are related .The Cann family were also well represented at South Stroxworthy(Stroxry ) and Jack Cann at Strouds and brother Alb Cann at Hurley Meadow ,I remember  Alb Cann bringing his sheep to be dipped and as farmers did and still do chatted about new ideas and techniques and after each exchange he would take the pipe from his mouth and spit and say "scientific you see" ,I didn't know if he was supporting it or rubbishing it .There was another Cann I think he was another brother who later retired to Dipple Bungalow and we called him "laughey Cann" as he was always smiling or laughing ,a Cann family also lived at Cranford ,several Cann's are still in the area and family connections as well .Mr Sanders lived at Stroxworthy and was known as Captain Sanders with his family Ida ,Christine and Leslie and several of the family still live there .The  Stevens family are still around and Mr and Mrs Stevens of Ashmansworthy Farm had three sons and three daughters that I recall and some of their families are still in the Woolsery area or nearby ,there were also a Stevens family at Marshall Farm .At one time there were several members of the Perkins family in the parish but believe that Peter Wood is the only near connection left and lives at Venn where his Grandfather Mr Bill Perkins lived who had a 5 ton tipper lorry and used to wind it up by hand to tip it and  he carried a lot of stones for the council .There were other families around and are still here the Hardings ,Vanstones ,Wonnacotts,and Mr Wonnacott of Claw Cross used to sell tobacco ,and there were several Peards, Charlie ,Jack ,Giles at Cranford Water who was Mrs Sherbourn's father ,Tom ,Garfield and Raymond who was my generation, and later Bill ,I cannot think of any now but I believe descendants are still in the area .Mr Jack Lee farmed Satchfield , he was not a very big man but sometimes we could hear him shouting for Rose his dog if the wind was in the right direction , it was quite a distance and we then expected fine weather for a few days. The Cloke brothers famed with Frank at West Town and I think George was first at Ashcroft before moving to the other farm at West Town after Grenville Short died , some of the family. now live in the village. The Hill family farmed at Huddisford .The Cleave family lived and farmed the neighbouring farm Lane Mill ,and Mr and Mrs Frank Cleave ,William and Margaret lived in the farmhouse and Franks parents lived next door in GlenView . Granfer Cleave as we called him was a very friendly man and he used to like to know what was going on and would sometimes come and bring a book or two for us to read ,he was a great reader ,but he usually had  a question about something that was happening .I remember once he said "I see Bert has limed Stroxworthy Cross field", but I told  him  it was dashells (thistles)in flower and later that day I saw him walking up the road from Irene Bridge .Most summers a viper or two would be seen hung on the gates leading from Lane Mill which he had seen and killed while walking along the road with his stick ,I used to enjoy his company as he usually had a tale or two to tell . We all got on well with the Cleave family

                 Farm buildings were a lot different than nowadays, the walls were mainly stone with lime or cob pointing although a few were completely cob ,and the roofs had mainly slate tiles, one or two had been repaired using galvanised iron ,and there were one or two Dutch Barns with the curved roof used to store hay or straw .Cattle were only kept indoors in the worst of the winter and herds were a lot smaller ,my father had a fairly large herd for those days of just over 30cows and apparently one month in the 1940's  the milk cheque arrived and my mother was so excited that she could not wait until my father came in from the field so she took it out for him to see ,it was for just over £200 .More modern buildings started being erected around the 1960s with asbestos roofs and the size has gradually been increasing as farms have become bigger .Sheep were always running outside and lambed outdoor in all weathers ,not very nice when freezing or snowing ,but with indoor lambing things are much more under control especially with larger flocks and more lambs per ewe .Most farms and others who had space kept a small flock of poultry , originally in small huts or movable arks , but then a deep litter system developed using a surplus building , the main breeds being Rhode Island Red ,light Sussex or the more flighty Leghorn ,and a few White Wyandotts and Buff Orpingtons ,my mother had a small incubator and would supply a few others , the poultry was mainly the preserve of the ladies and it gave them a little independent money. Another reason for keeping hens was the fact that they could be eaten , one that did not have a red  comb meant it was not laying too many eggs so it would be caught and used as a boiler ,and were very good .

                    One thing that has altered a lot has been the working attire ,in the winter everyone wore corduroy 'britches' and leather leggings and hobnail boots ,no denims in those days ,and wellingtons were only used if you were working in water ,if it was wet a sack would be wrapped around your waist and another around the shoulders ,everything came in hessian sacks in those days, suits would be worn to chapels and churches and once I was told off because I went to a service wearing a sports jacket .The ladies always wore hats when out, and those around 60 would be dressed in black, not always widows ,and if one dressed in something brighter a comment like 'mutton dressed like lamb.' But after the war a lot of ex-army clothes became available so that was a big help for the men ,an army greatcoat was a great help in keeping warm when on the tractor ,the tractor cab had not appeared and it was mighty cold driving them .The wives would almost all be wearing "towser aprons "when doing housework or helping outdoors ,they were made out of hessian material.

                    During the war all sorts of fuels were rationed and most farmers were obliged to grow a certain amount of corn sometimes on unsuitable land, and some had no milling equipment, so Mr Frank Cleave of Lane Mill ,a neighbouring farmer ,decided to restore the old water mill wheel ,one day I saw the millstones being recut before they could be used again .One day Mr Cleave was repairing the timbers on the wheel and he was up on the wheel and it started turning and dumped him in the mud and water at the bottom .The headweir was and is still there on our farm and the mill leat runs through the farm to a dam at Lane Mill followed by the millpond and through the mill race to the wheel ,it is a very efficient way of using nature because the water then ran onto Leeworthy Mill and then onto other mills on its way to Bideford .There were trout in the river and if the bank had a protruding stone slab the trout tickling technique was used to catch them .One evening Eric and I were not getting much success in the river and we knew that there was a nice slab in the millpond so we crept through the bushes and lifted a sluice to lower the water level ,it sounded like the Niagara Falls so we hid in the bushes until the level had dropped and then caught a few trout ,what would have happened if we had been caught I would not like to say, I expect our ears or bottoms would have been sore and no doubt another lot when we got home ,but not a lot of milling took place in the summer. Around the millpond there used to be quite a lot of water hens but gradually they disappeared but why I don't know. The bridge at Lane Mill has a name on one of the keystones and the date which is 1846 and the name is J.Davey ,I assumed it was to do with the Davey family who were millers for a number of years but after thinking that for a long time I was informed that J.Davey was a stonemason who lived at Fouchole .

                    Mr Griffiths formed a youth club in the mid 1940’s and it was more for school leavers and older and it continued for 14 years ,it provided a lot of entertainment on the stage for the public and took part in other activities . The youth club put on various stage shows and one I remember was the pantomime Aladdin and one skit I remember was the phrenologist with John Raffe and Kenny Daniel it was very funny and all about reading the shape of their head .For myself I joined the Young Farmers Club at Bradworthy, that being the nearest club ,I used to go with Ken Allin ,Caleb Jennings, and John Burrow. We used to cycle in the beginning and when we could drive we would meet the one who was driving and the others would leave our bikes by a hedge and if we thought it was staying dry would leave our coats as well and it didn't enter our heads that it may get stolen and as for locking a car and taking away the key ,now I see drivers locking cars just to pick up the paper from the shop ,how things have changed and not always for the better ,but perhaps as one gets older one looks back through rose coloured spectacles and it may have been that every one knew who owned which bike and once I was asked why I was wearing my fathers raincoat .At the YFC we learnt all sorts such as dairy, beef and sheep stock judging ,competition sheep shearing ,not speed shearing ,hedging ,making thatching spears, and quizzes were popular ,but I did not enjoy the public speaking competitions ,I must have been brought up to be seen and not heard ,but some would probably say that you're not much to look at either .But we enjoyed it on the whole so that was the main thing and we met a lot from other clubs at the annual group competitions .

                          Life was so much different ,no telephones and electricity didn't arrive on a lot of the outlying properties until the 1960's so no television ,one of the first televisions I saw was at my Uncle Bert's in Woolsery in the early 1950's ,and radio's had a high tension battery which was quite expensive and an accumulator battery which was recharged at the garage so the radio was not on all the time .In the winter a lot of card games would be played ,in our case it was around the kitchen table because that was the warmest room because that had the big open fire and when it was cold we would huddle around it ,the problem was it was a large chimney and the draught would come under the kitchen door so a piece of sacking was placed  there ,we also had a dartboard hanging behind the door and helped to pass away the long winter evenings ,we also read a lot ,I read all the Just William books before moving on to Zane Grey ,Tarzan, Edgar Wallace and of course A.J .Coles. Whist drives were common in every village and it would be mainly locals because of the transport problem. Some people took it so seriously and would give black looks if you didn't play as they expected you to do ,I remember on one occasion  Mrs Braund of Maids Moor was partnering a man against me and another person and Mrs Braund made an obvious mistake and what a fuss he made so I had to point out that it was a turkey for the first prize and not a row of houses ,Mrs Braund was most grateful. Many dances were held in the Institute to raise money for various organisations and Woolsery was fortunate to have a local dance band with talented players ,Mr Ned Johns (Beryl Hancocks dad) on drums and Mr Bill Hill and Mr Fernlea Johns on accordions   and a lot of pleasure was given to a lot of locals in difficult war years .

                        Mention was made earlier about Woolsery Show ,in the 1890's two farmers were in the Farmers Arms and arguing as to who had the best young colt and the owner of the stallion said bring them here and we will judge them and is why for many years it was known as Woolsery Colt Show and over the years it has grown to be the Woolsery and District Agricultural Show .After a few years Hartland wanted to join and it was agreed to let them and the old minutes read that the next year the request was for two policemen to be on duty instead of one ,so what had been going on it did not say .Messrs Seldon and Cory were secretaries for a number of years and when Mr Cory retired he gave the committee a very interesting resume of Woolsery Show but unfortunately after his death the minutes disappeared so a lot of the history of the show has gone. Old photogragh's show that the earlier shows took place on the fields above Sunnyside and I have been told that was where the owner of the stallion lived .The first time that I have had any connection to the show it was held In the field on the edge of the village on the Venn road by kind permission of the Burrow family. It entailed a lot of manual work getting things ready ,the sheep pens used wooden hurdles which had to be  hammered into the ground ,instead of the quickly erected metal pens ,the show jumps were similarly erected and pits had to be dug to insert the posts which held the gate ,and I look back with fond memories of Caleb Jennings on Paddy ,Frank Brommell on Barney, Pam Searles on Seldon and Cory's Joey ,Rob Nancekivell on Laddie , Bill and Mike Priest family on Magic Mist and other various horses ,,Herbert Facey on Len Giffords horse ,John Burrow on Judy ,Alan Cann on Starlight ,the jumping was the finale. I have a photo of a Gilbert Short riding a horse over a jump with a note on it that states it is Woolsery Colt Show  1911 and on the 1911 census the only Gilbert Short lived at Winkleigh and with transport as it was in those days and the fact that classes were local I wondered how he was able to compete but it appears that he had connections with a Turner family who lived at Alminstone but I do not know who owned the horse. I cannot remember the show before the war but after the war it had resumed again and in the beef section it was only Devon beef cattle for a while ,but several different breeds of dairy cattle but now it is the other way around and there are several different breeds of beef cattle ,the sheep were Devon Longwool's and Closewool's and now all sorts of breeds ,also a few pigs and for quite a while there were no trade stands or handicraft tent.

The Handicraft tent was started in the 1950's because there was nothing much for the ladies and it did put new life into the show and mainly focused on cooked items and the WI competition and now is a popular part of the show ,and soon Martins of Bradworthy brought a van and sold things from it ,other firms like North Cornwall Tractors and North Devon Farmers followed and Ken Allin and I upset Tom Cann of Martins because we moved him from his usual site to be near the handicraft tent ,after the show he came to us really delighted because things had gone well for him ,now about 60trade stands attend.

                            About 35 years ago we were getting the show ready and the late John Raffe who was co-owner of the show field put forward the idea of giving profits to a given charity ,so as the then chairman I put it to the AGM and after some persuasion it was agreed to do it and the president for the year to choose the charity ,I cannot recall who that was but he chose Guide Dogs For The Blind and we raised five hundred pounds ,since then the presidents who are elected to serve a year have chosen various charities and the show has donated thousands of pounds to good causes so I am delighted that the idea of John's is still bearing good fruit .

                      Sometime in the early 1990's we had a very wet show day and badly rutted the field ,I had spent most of the day pulling cars and lorries in and out of field ,and Mr Peter Symons kindly offered his premises for the next year. We were able to use some buildings instead of marquees for some of the handicrafts and luncheon and because it was a much bigger field the show grew in size. This continued for about 12 to 13 years and the show then moved to the Milky Way at the invitation of the Stanbury family ,this worked very well and the show grew again because here again there was plenty of room for horse and cattle and sheep rings and large parking spaces .After about 5 or 6 years  we moved again to Clovelly Court at the invitation of Mr John Rous , the show has grown again with record attendances and entries and trade stands ,and it must rank as one of the most picturesque show sites .Having been on the committee since the late 1950's I am so pleased that the show gets so much support by committee members and sponsors and the public who continue to come year after year ,and I pay tribute to the various office holders past and present for their work and especially our present chairman Pat Martin , the amount she puts in is incredible. The show is completely different now ,it used to be that you knew most of the people attending and it was more of a social occasion but things move on and it has become well known over a larger area ,I hope that it continues to be a showpiece and be a vital link between town and country because a lot of visitors attend the show .

            Around the 60's and 70's Kennerland Farm was purchased with the idea of building a dam across the valley just up river from Cranford water and sea water would be pumped up from Bucks Mills using electricity during slack demand and then at peak demand let the water run back to Bucks through a tunnel fitted with generators this was to use the surplus nuclear generated electricity but it was found after various tests that the rock formation would let salt water seep away.

       Around the same time a mushroom farm was developed and ran at Cranford Water ,and at Venn a rabbit farm was built and rabbits were collected from other rabbit growers in the West and slaughtered and sold ,so various enterprises have started in the area .

                           One thing that has altered a lot in the community ,as well as the  change in agricultural practices and the housing development ,has been the place of the church and chapels in the area .When  I was a boy in the 1930's and 40's Sunday's revolved around the Sunday services and for the children Sunday School ,I can only say what happened at Alminstone chapel and I more or less knew how Woolsery Chapel was run, Sunday School started at 10.30 followed by full service at 11 until 12 then Sunday school again  at 2 until 3 and another service at 6 for an hour ,that was mainly for adults .Services were conducted mainly by local preachers in the Bude circuit ,Names which come to mind are the Saunders brothers and the Legge brothers , Ernie was quite deaf so he spoke loudly and from Woolsery we had Mr Prouse of Irene ,Mr Daniel of Kennerland and my father Walter Lott ,later on my brother Eric ,he later became a minister and moved to the Church of S . India for about 30 years and also Mr William Ceave of Lane Mill. Another preacher was a Mr Carthew and he was using the story of Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back at the City of Sodom which was burning and she was ordered not to do so , and he kept  repeating the phrase remember Lot's wife and my uncle Arthur Lott who was sitting behind my mother whispered in her ear ''he need not worry I shan't forget her '',I understand that my mother had a job to stop from laughing out loud . Another name that comes to mind is Cory Burrow from Hartland ,he was a printer and editor of the Hartland Times ,one Sunday he was taking a service at Alminstone and on the way his car had been playing up, so Gilbert Andrew looked at it and partway through the service he said "harken the Rovers coming if I don't go now I won't be able to start it again", so it was a short sermon that day

I do not know too much about the parish church in those days because the two denominations did not co-operate too much except for national or local special occasions. At Alminstone we had an excellent choir and a concert party known as the Alminstone Eight and they performed at several places around .The basses in the choir were led by Mr C J Andrew and included Messrs J Cardew ,P Dack ,W Lott (my father) and the tenors were Messrs F Cleave ,A Stevens A Lott ( my uncle ) and Uncle Bert Mitchell ,the altos were Mrs C Andrew and Mrs Cardew who when she was singing hymns such as Sing We The King she would go black red in the face much to the amusement of us youngsters , the trebles were led by my Aunt Alice Lott who was also the main organist ,she had a good voice and a powerful one if needed ,and there were some other trebles to back her up so they were a force to be reckoned with.

                         Most years the Sunday Schools would have an outing and this would be to the seaside usually somewhere like Bude so everyone hoped for good weather on the day and at the Sunday School Anniversary books would be given out as rewards ,I still have some left .

                            Two of highlights of the year would be the Harvest Festival and the Sunday School Anniversary ,the H F at Woolsery Church was the last Sunday in September and at Alminstone it was the first Sunday in October and Woolsery Chapel was the second Sunday in October .They were family get togethers and families would come from neighbouring parishes and on the Monday evening   a tea would be held before the service ,and it was some tea ,at Alminstone Mrs Stevens from Ashmansworthy would cut the bread and butter, no one could cut bread as good ,there were plenty of cakes and sponges and scones and butter and cut rounds cream and jam ,this solves the argument as to which goes on the scones first because back then it was always butter on scones ,I don't know which ' foreigner' altered things but I much prefer a homemade cut round and cream. I have recently seen a bill from Mr Theo Beer of Hartland dated 1935 and 6 lb of nobbies (buns) were 3 shillings (15p). and cut rounds were 13lb at a cost of 4s10 d .HF and SSA services would be full with some people standing in the stairs at Alminstone and Woolsery Chapel was the same ,I always used to wonder why some people in the village would pass the chapel and attend Alminstone ,but I suppose it was an historical thing with Woolsery being a Bible Christian chapel and Alminstone being Weslyan and the traditional attendance still continued after the Methodist Union was created .The Sunday School teachers at Alminstone were Mr C J Andrew ,Mrs Cardew  and Grace Cleave later Mrs Tom Bray, I believe that on the whole we were fairly well behaved , if we weren't and our parents heard of it look out .But once I remember that Ted who was about three years old at the time and he did something and Mr C J shut him down into the cutting up room as it was known, after a while Mr C J called to Ted to come up but Ted had locked the door and could not unlock it ,eventually he was persuaded to push the key under the door so it was resolved. At Woolsery Chapel I think that Mr Sid Wonnacott was the main Sunday School teacher and Mr Elliott and Mr Arthur Westaway were stewards ,at the Parish Church the Vicar was Rev. Lewis who served for a long time, L remember him visiting school and he was very interested in cricket so if the boys had a game he would umpire . Mr Eddie Brent was captain of the ringers and Mr Mullard was another who had a leading role , one of the Sunday School teachers was Miss Vera Cook , but as a Methodist I was not too familiar with the Church but thankfully that has altered now after the covenant and there is now a great deal of co-operation between us .A vicar who had an influence at Woolsery was Rev. Courtney Burroughand I have seen a few of the magazines that were circulated and it made interesting reading ,in Dec.1913 he wrote that in Nov. Frank Andrew age 9 died and a week later his sister Gloria age 16 died ,both contracted diphtheria and under Gloria's pillow  a lovely poem was found ,

                          Shall we meet beyond the river

                         Where the surges cease to roll

                         Where in all the bright "for ever"

                          Sorrow ne'er shall press the soul .

  In Feb 1919 the vicar was praying for the area because of the incessant rain and he apologised that he had put up the price of the New Year’s tea from 6d to 8d for adults and in Nov 1921 he wrote that 240 had attended the H F tea and made a profit of 3 pounds thirteen shillings 6 pence and a halfpenny ,and in the Aug .1920 edition it stated that on July 25th the unveiling of the war memorial had taken place and as no faculty had been granted it was fixed to the wall instead of being built in ,it all made interesting reading .

                           One of the things not seen around here now is the sight of Milestone Inspectors in other words tramps ,there were two regular men in the area in the 30's named Jack Mitchell and Sid Beckley ,it was mooted that Sid came from a well to do family, they would appear always alone but whether they met I do not know ,and I cannot imagine how they survived  as there was no social help ,but I think they did odd bits of farm work and probably lived off the land a little bit .Mr Aubrey Burrow of Ashmansworthy told me that one day he was out with his gun and Sid came along and said 'I wish you would shoot me ' and Aubrey said 'I can't shoot you while you are looking at me so turn around ' Sid turned around and Aubrey fired his gun into the air ,Aubrey did not believe that Sid could run so fast .

                       Before the advent of television and other digital inventions there was a need for other pastimes and one of the most popular with farmers and helpers was ferreting and the sound of 12 bore shotguns being fired was very common especially on a Saturday afternoon and Boxing Day .A lot of people owned a ferret or two and the shooters would stand on either side of a hedge and let the ferret loose into a rabbit hole and stand a gunshot back and wait for the rabbit to bolt and then shoot it ,the shooters would have to let the one the other side of the hedge know their position for safety reasons ,I can only recall one accident and an eye was lost ,so it was dangerous to shoot a rabbit running on the top of the hedge but mainly the rabbit would run into the field .Sometimes after a minute or two and no rabbit appeared the shooter would listen at the holes and a bumping noise would indicate that the ferret was 'laid up' ,then some digging was required to get the rabbit and ferret out ,one day a real Devonian said "put yer yer yer n'yer wot you cin yer ".The accuracy of the 'guns' varied , some were so quick and sure and others not so good and a double shot would be heard , sometimes this meant two rabbits had bolted together but mainly it was because of a miss. Sometimes nets were used and small nets were placed at the mouth of the holes and when the rabbit bolted it became entangled in the net and then despatched .Before my brother and I were old enough to be trusted with guns we very often used nets which was a safe way, other than being bitten by a ferret which wasn't unknown .Another country sport which had many followers was fox hunting and Woolsery was more or less on the borders of the Tetcott and Stevenstone  hunts so we have been in both countries over the years .Not every farmer were riders to hounds but a lot did on 'foot' and I cannot remember any that banned the hunt .Usually the meet would be in the village outside the shop and the Manor gate ,the field was not so big in my earlier days because riders had to hack to the meets but as systems of transport altered and horse boxes became more common the numbers increased , and the morning after the hunt dance in the Institute I  have seen scores of horses and riders move away after the huntsman blew his horn .The huntsman for many years was Charlie Woolridge and the whipper in was Les Grills, both would be in red and the farmers would be mostly dressed with a tweed jacket and flat cap and boots and leggings , not many had riding boots and the horses were quite a mixed bag with smaller riders on ponies and others on cobs and hunters . It cannot be nearly as good a day now with all the traffic and a lot of time is spent on the roads because farms now have miles of electric fencing so there isn't the gallops over the countryside and over the hedges and some farmers aren't so supportive of hunting .Also several villages held a gymkhana and I and Caleb ,and John would attend one or two ,once Arthur Souch drove us in a lorry to Bratton Clovelly and I entered the paper chase which is a bit like a small point to point ,I was leading the race approaching the last fence and I went the wrong side of a flag and got into a bog so that was me out ,I think the last time I saw Arthur he laughed and said 'I've been to Bratton Clovelly and they have had signposts fitted ',he still remembered my stupid mistake after many years .

                          I do not think that Woolsery had a men's football team in the 30's ,there was one earlier I have heard my father mention that he used to play ,In the 50's we had a cricket team formed mainly at the instigation of my brother Eric who was a keen cricketer and encouragement of Mr Griffiths .Getting a pitch was the hardest part and we had one pitch in the area of Abbots Close and another near Cross Park. We played teams locally , but I think the furthest away was Ashreigney,that turned out to be our needle matches mainly because their skipper was a bit 'in your face' and we were competitive but not like he was .A big problem was the fact that most of us were connected to farming and very often a lot of phoning went on during a Saturday morning to get a team together.

  We had some very enjoyable times as a team and we got on very well together ,Jim Vanstone and his brother George ,the Wonnacott brothers Brian ,Dennis and Gordon, Clifford, March, Ron Chapple ,Peter Andrew ,Ken Allin whose son Anthony played for Glamorgan and I recall that Anthony who was a spin bowler captured the wicket of Tony Greig first ball and Greig was the England captain, Ken's grandson Tom played for Warwickshire .also Jack Jenn ,Cyril Johns ,David Daniel, John Raffe , brother Eric when he around because after a few years on the farm he went back to college again , Jim was our most consistent batsman ,and one evening we were playing a match against a Barnstaple team and I opened our innings with Jim ,it was not a good start as I was out first ball and I can still hear Jim laughing and he went on to make a good score .Clifford was a fast bowler and Gordon was a consistent medium pace bowler ,Peter and Cyril were wicket keepers. We won some and lost some ,we got hammered by Werrington we were out of our class then ,but one day we were playing Clovelly and Eric was home and raring to go and he was fairly fast and got them out for 10 runs , Eric opened the batting and the first ball was a full toss which went for six and the second was exactly the same so we won after two balls ,I won't mention the bowlers name but usually he was a good bowler ,so that afternoon we had two innings apiece. As we were mainly involved with farming it meant that some of us had to milk the cows when we got home ,and farming became more specialised and herds became larger it was not possible to spare the time so the cricket took a back seat .One of the things that occurred which I have always regretted took place when we were playing Hartland ,we seem to have got into a stage of very negative play and I was bowling and in order to liven things up a little ,quite wrongly I appealed for LBW ,the batsman was obviously not out but the umpire who was I guess about 15 years gave him out ,what should I do ,if I said I was only joking it would have made the lad look silly ,he was a Hartland player so couldn't be accused of bias so I let things stand ,but I felt bad about it and certainly never appealed for a joke again as it wasn't cricket.

                    In the late 1950,s and early 60,s we ran a table tennis club and we played in the old Parish Room ,we used to play local villages such as Hartland ,Sutcombe and Alwington there was no league so it was only friendly's but it was competitive ,Peter Andrew ,Gordon Wonnacott ,William Cleave, David Daniel and others used to play but some left the area and others had commitment's so it gradually died out.

                       Before any development of any size took place in Woolsery I remember that one evening I was reading the Farmers Weekly and at the time it was running a competition by showing pictures of certain parts of the country and the reader who recognised it first would get a framed photograph of it,I studied the one shown and said to Barbara that this could be Woolsery ,here's the road to Bucks Cross and here's the road to Clovelly and all the roads seemed to fit ,but it can't be because the sea looks too near .The next week I was reading the F. W .and saw that a Mr Raffe had won the competition and it was Woolsery and it gave a resume of his farm, he was obviously wider awake than I was that evening , so whenever I visited Lower Town I saw the picture hanging up .

                        In the mid to late 1960's the council decided to build some more houses in Woolsery so some houses and bungalows were built  and known as East Park ,this was a welcome addition to the village and they were occupied by local families or someone who had connections to it .Later in the early 1970's  I think ,     an official from the council approached Messrs Burrow and Raffe and asked about buying some land in order to build some units for light industry ,when asked what sort of industry the reply was something in keeping with the area such as a bow and arrow factory .A year or two went by and then the council altered the planning and built some bungalows ,there must have been some difference in the value of land for houses and land for light industry ,I have no doubt that the vendors must have been very annoyed at the time. This was the beginning of South Park .

                       The mid 1970s was when the future of Woolsery took a turn ,it was designated as a key village ,some of us thought 'what a load of rubbish nothing will alter', how wrong can you be .Then a meeting was held in the Institute with a developer and we had opportunity to put forward our views about enlarging our village ,I remember I said that as a community we had shared together our joys and our sorrows and everyone knew each other and looked out for each other and that may be lost ,and others made various other points ,one or two may nowadays be classed as politically out of order, so it was put to the vote and the motion to build was carried. Looking back I realise that I was wrong and whilst I would not like to see the village grow any larger if it had remained as it was various businesses and organisations would have struggled or closed .The school may have closed ,the Post Office would have closed and probably the shop ,and the places of worship would have definitely been in trouble because of the change in attitudes to attending every Sunday .

                         A short time later the parish council met the developer ,I was on the council at that time ,and I put it to him that he was really only interested in making money so why could not something be done to benefit the village as had been done in other parts of the country ,and when plans were submitted things looked pretty good ,among things proposed were a village hall ,a doctors surgery ,a village green and other amenities .Why these proposals were dropped I have no idea ,I had become more involved with the Holstein Cattle Society, but I doubt if anyone could have done anything to make it happen .When it was proposed to develop the field that is now Old Market  Drive there was a lot of discussion regarding a large chestnut tree that was standing in a prominent position and it was inspected by a specialist who stated that it was perfectly healthy and should remain but obviously it would affect the size of the development ,but for some reason not too long afterwards it started to wilt and die so it had to be cut down ,I have no idea how the specialist got it wrong .

                         So Woolsery continued to grow under different developers to the size it is today and as things move on it is not any use hankering for the past ,but I do look back and I realise that I have been fortunate to have spent my time in Woolsery and known so many wonderful people and seen so many changes ,from the time when everyone was in some way involved in keeping things going in the immediate locality ,whether in agriculture. ,keeping the roads in order ,in the shop, or carpenters ,or similar occupations  ,it was all local and even the language was local ,'volks can't spaik vitty Debm'nowadays .I have Debm' tawlk with Andrew Millman at times and the incomers have no idea what it's about ,so learn the talk because "us might be tellin bout ee ".I think of the men recorded in the book Woolsery and Bucks Remembers , many of them I knew as a boy and their wives ,some of them were real 'characters ',and I feel privileged to have known them. But when I look at other parishes which have not had any development take place I see that things have moved on just as Woolsery has and that the families who were there have moved on or away and the farms have merged or broken up and people from different parts have moved in and brought new ideas and expertise and 'stick in the muds' like me have had to alter our thinking and catch up with the rest of society and welcome the new things that have taken place.

                      I hope that I have remembered Woolsery fairly and as accurately as my memory lets me and I know that things time wise are not in the right order but it was how things came back to me and thanks go out to people who I have asked to help me remember.-

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               Since writing down my memories things have altered a lot, the derelict  Farmers. Arms has been transformed and is magnificent and I have had some lovely meals there ,the outside of the Manor House is now as it used to be and I look forward  to see Woolsery when things are finished, I hope it won't be too long as l am not getting any younger, one thing that has delighted me is that at last the road leading to Lane Barton has been remade and is now suitable for a pram or trolley ride ,so where are you Alan and Eric.