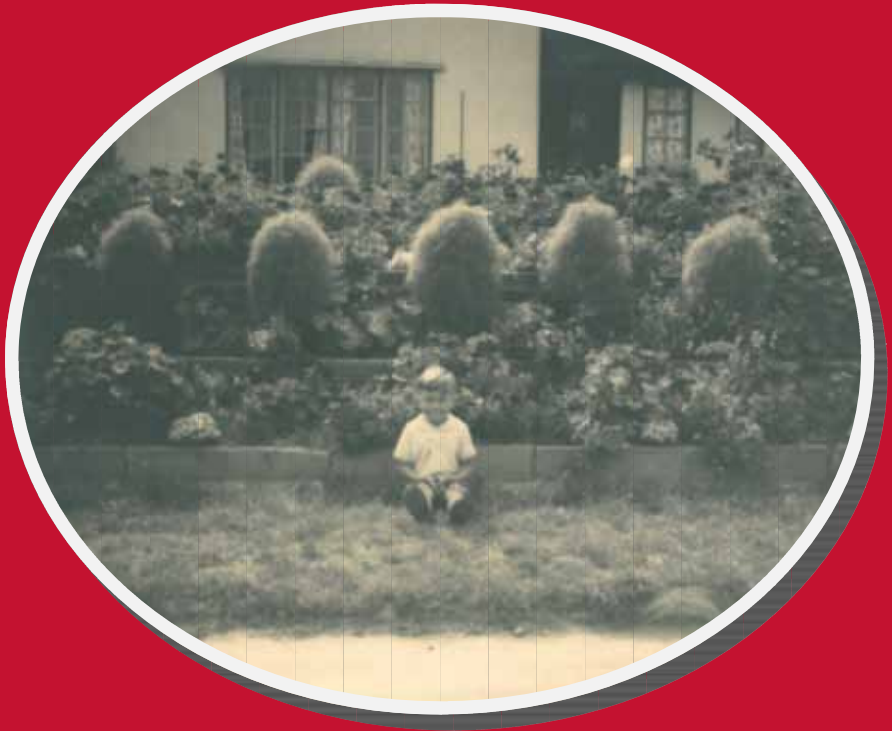


Memories of a Village Childhood



Growing up at 9 The Street
Rushmere St Andrew, Suffolk
1949 to 1974

By Charles R Clarke

Memories of a Village Childhood

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MEMORIES OF A VILLAGE CHILDHOOD

PREFACE

I began recording these early memories on my 64th birthday. I guess the Beatles must have considered this quite old when they sang “Will you still love me when I’m 64?”. My wife Wendy actually wrote the words of this song in my birthday card and confirmed that she did still love me – so all is well with the world!

Whether old or not, it did make me reflect on a year ahead that would see us celebrate our Ruby Wedding Anniversary and at the end of the year, my retirement.

My life has really centred around two Suffolk villages – the first 25 years in Rushmere St Andrew and the last 40 in Bramford. It is those years growing up in Rushmere that are the subject of this book and of events which I will try to recall with as much accuracy as possible.

As I write down these recollections from the summerhouse in our back garden, there are even things here that take me back to those early days. The massive leylandi trees were just saplings when my late father planted them when we first married. The bench in my shed was made by my late brother Roland. In fact the tool box I still use was also made for me by my brother when I was only a young boy. Some of the plants in the garden were transplanted from our home in Rushmere and even the bench seat was a former pew in Rushmere Baptist Chapel.

So with these memories in mind I turn back the clock to 1949 and see just what can be recalled.



Me and my Peter

CHAPTER ONE

A SURPRISE ARRIVAL AT 9 THE STREET

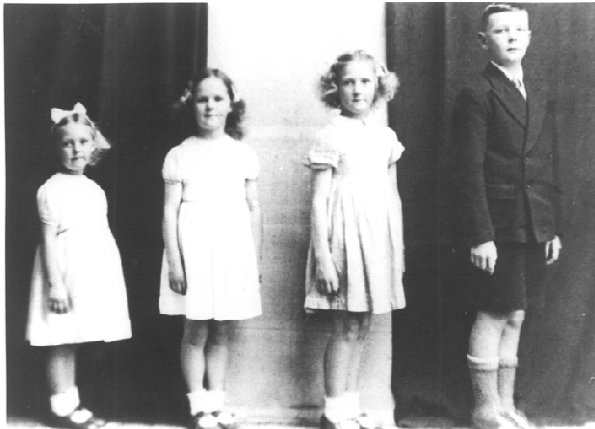
To describe my arrival into this world as “a surprise” would be somewhat of an understatement. With three daughters and a son all in their teens, Mum and Dad would rightly have assumed that their family unit was complete. However the world of nappies and sleepless nights returned to 9 The Street Rushmere on Sunday 24th July 1949 when Charles Robert Clarke made his appearance.

My sister Kathy recalls my three sisters and brother sitting at the bottom of the stairs awaiting news from the bedroom above. Even now in my retirement year she still refers to me as her “little brother”!

I understand that I was really spoiled by my sisters who actually fought to take me out!

And so my story of life at 9 The Street begins.

Mum and Dad probably thought that their family was complete when this picture was taken in September 1942



However Charlie invaded the family in July 1949

CHAPTER TWO

THE REST OF THE FAMILY

It is remarkable to think that when I arrived on the scene my 19 year old brother Roland, whom we all called Bob, had already been at work for over five years. He left school at 14 to join local timber merchants William Brown, where he was to stay for many years. My oldest two sisters were also out at work. Molly, who was 17, was working in the cheque department at the Coop and 15 year old Kathy initially worked in a bakery in Orchard Street, Ipswich. She later moved to engineering firm Cocksedges as an invoice clerk. Only two years later my 13 year old sister Joan joined local jewellers Croydons.

Courting Days



Bob and Audrey



Molly and Russell



Kathy and Cyril



Joan and David

On 16th May 1953, when I was just three years of age, my brother Roland married Audrey Naunton at Rushmere Baptist Chapel and left our Rushmere home for Wellesley Road in Ipswich. I have no real memories of my brother living at home, or indeed his wedding, except for just one. My brother had to serve in the Korean War as part of his National Service and was away from home for nearly two years. Of his return I have a distinct memory. I remember looking through our living room window and seeing a man in army uniform coming to the back door. I said to my Mum, "There's a man coming to the door," to which she replied, "That is your brother!" What I also remember is him bringing me home a red bus.

On 30th May 1954 my brother began his own family when Andrew was born. That made me an uncle at just four years of age.

THE REST OF THE FAMILY

On my fifth birthday the family unit of 6 was further reduced by two when my two oldest sisters were married at Rushmere Baptist Chapel. Molly was married to Russell Mowle to become Molly May Mowle! This time I do have some memories as I was page boy to my oldest sister. Russell's sister Rita was bridesmaid. One of my memories was rather embarrassing as I recall "wetting my trousers." My sister Kathy married Cyril Mann with my youngest sister Joan being her bridesmaid. Molly and Russell set

Wedding Days



Bob and Audrey



Molly and Russell



Kathy and Cyril



Joan and David



*Left; Page Boy at Molly's wedding
Right; Page Boy at Joan's wedding
Centre; Bob and Audrey's reception*



up a new home in Salisbury Road, Ipswich and Kathy and Cyril in Sirdar Road, Ipswich.

THE REST OF THE FAMILY

My Nieces and Nephews



Andrew



Carol



Alan



Paul



John



Susan



Timothy

THE REST OF THE FAMILY



Trevor



Ruth

I was still only 6 years of age when my youngest sister Joan also left our Rushmere home for Norwich Road, Ipswich when she married David Walker. I again was a page boy. Vivid in my memory about that Norwich Road house is the day when the ceiling fell down in one of the rooms!

And so, at the age of just six, I was in effect an only child for the rest of my growing up years in Rushmere. Memories of those first six years are rather sketchy although I do remember one or two incidents. I remember time spent around our old wind up gramophone with records such as “Hobo Bill’s Last Ride” and “The Laughing Loonies” having special memories. I do also recall being taken out in my tripper.

Bizarrely I was closer in age to my nieces and nephews than to my sisters and brother. I have mentioned the birth of Andrew but this was closely followed by a daughter, Carol, for Kathy and Cyril on the 19th July 1955 and a son, Alan, for Molly and Russell just two days later. Alan was soon joined by his brother John who was born on the 9th November 1956. Joan and David welcomed their first daughter, Susan, into this world on the 22nd January 1957 and Carol had the joy of a baby brother, Paul, on the 2nd July 1957. Likewise, Susan also had a new brother when Timothy was born on the 3rd May 1959. Molly and Russell made their family complete when Trevor was born on the 26th April 1961. Joan and David completed their young family with baby Ruth on the 28th April 1963.

And so, at the age of just 14, I had acquired six nephews and three nieces. Each one has a special place in my heart.

The whole family was saddened when Kathy and Cyril’s young son Paul was taken from us at just three and a half years of age.

CHAPTER THREE

EARLY HOME LIFE

In spite of having three sisters and a brother, my memories of life at 9 The Street were more or less entirely centred round Mum and Dad and me. As recorded in the chapter “The Rest of the Family”, by the time I was six all my siblings had left home and I was in effect an only child. I have to say that it was a very happy childhood with only positive recollections. It was a very conventional relationship between Mum and Dad. Mum was the homemaker and Dad was the breadwinner, with his domain being the garden and allotment.



Kathy and Charlie



Molly and Charlie



Joan and Charlie

These were the days when labour saving devices were years away. We had a gas cooker but no running hot water. Washing was done in the “copper” and then passed through a giant mangle in the shed. I remember this well as it was often my job to turn the giant handle that operated the wooden rollers. There was no fridge so things were stored in a walk-through larder. As my brother was a carpenter, he used his skills to build a whole wall of cupboards in the Kitchen. The sink was the old fashioned “Belfast” type with a wooden draining board. The toilet and bath were both in an out-house that was freezing in winter. Before that, of course, it was the tin bath in front of the fire! We had a coal fire in the living room but that was the extent of the heating. The front room was only used for “high days and holidays” and the bedrooms were very cold in winter. With no inside toilet, the bedrooms were provided with chamber pots under the beds.

Mum kept herself busy in the house and waited on Dad hand and foot. This was very much the “norm” in those days. Together with her three

EARLY HOME LIFE



Joan and Charlie at Felixstowe

special friends, Mrs Jay, Mrs Pryke and Mrs Naunton, Mum was always on hand to help with the special teas at the chapel. Always on the menu at these special occasions were potted meat sandwiches. A lady on the main road

prepared these on special trays which I had to collect. It has a sort of fatty covering. Having said that, I thought the sandwiches were really tasty. At Christmas Mum had another less glamorous job, when a number of people used to ask her to draw their chickens and turkeys.

Mum rode a really old-fashioned upright bicycle with a basket on the front. She was quite nervous on the bike and always looked intently ahead and was unwilling to be distracted by a conversation whilst riding. The brakes were poor and I used to joke that they needed to be applied around 100 yards from home to make sure the bike stopped in time!

Meals tended to be wholesome but plain with a similar pattern each week. On a Saturday morning I was sent to the Co-op butchers in Woodbridge Road to collect the meat for Sunday. It was always the same order each week – half a shoulder of New Zealand lamb about 8/6, some sausages and some bones for the dog, and also the same instruction each week – “make sure the meat is lean”.

As I mentioned earlier, Dad’s domain was the garden and allotment. As Grandma and Granddad and later Aunty May lived in the bungalow next door, Dad was responsible for cultivating their garden too. Our own garden had pigsties at the bottom, a small orchard in the middle and a paved area towards the house. The dividing fence across the garden was made of old bedsteads which I suspect Dad acquired whilst working at the hospital. Dad had an old shed full of old junk he had accumulated over the years. I say “junk” but, when we had an upstairs bathroom installed, all the pipe work used was found in that shed – it didn’t therefore cost Dad a penny!

EARLY HOME LIFE

Dad also rented a field in Bent Lane where I enjoyed many a day. The shed on the field was made entirely of orange boxes and we also had an old shepherds' hut on wheels. Dad kept a variety of animals on the field throughout the years, including pigs and cows and even experimented one year with growing corn. I was given my own two piglets one year which I named Jack and Jill. The idea was for me to look after them and receive the proceeds when they were sold. The result was my first post office savings account. I remember taking some geese to market in Colchester. Each bird was placed in a sack and tied at the neck with their heads popping out the top. They just sat on the floor of the car at the back.

It's really strange the things we remember but I distinctly recall walking over to the field one day with Dad singing the Perry Como song "Catch a falling star and put it in your pocket, save it for a rainy day!"

When Dad gave up the Bent Lane field, he took on a large allotment near the Chapel. One time we had over 200 hens on that site and sold the eggs on to a company called "Fram Eggs". That little enterprise came to an abrupt end when the chickens contracted fowl pest and all had to be destroyed. It was a sad day when the carcasses were buried in a large hole on the site. I had got very attached to those chickens and had the job of feeding them on a regular basis. Amongst the number was a speckled variety that Dad told me laid speckled eggs! I think that was true although I was never totally convinced.

Dad worked at part of the Heath Road Hospital called Heathfields where he was a stoker. In a really hot environment it was his responsibility to keep the giant hobs above the boilers full of coal. Using only a shovel, this was hard work. In his office was an array of dials which had to be constantly checked for pressures etc. As an aside I can remember seeing one of my calendars made at primary school hanging on the wall. He had to work shifts, 2-10, 10-6, and 6-2. When he was on the morning shift and I was not at school, I often used to cycle to his workplace and accompany him home. During the night shifts he would do up old bicycles or some other project. Being in a warm place Dad would often welcome "men of the road" out from the cold. He got to know these gentlemen very well with the name Bill Smith often being referred to. Dad would sometimes invite these men home for a meal although often without reference to Mum! Dad often had to work on Christmas Day and again if it was a morning shift, I would cycle to join him on his journey home. The family would then gather round to watch Dad open his presents. The presents

EARLY HOME LIFE

were very modest – items such as shopping bags, caps, razors and razor blades come to mind.

Christmas was indeed a happy time in spite of presents being of low value compared to today. Having shared some of Dad's presents, Mum would be really happy with things such as bath salts or Nivea Cream. There was one Christmas that remains in my memory. Dad built up my expectations by telling me I had three special surprises that Christmas. The first was that I had been selected to be a shepherd in the Nativity Play at chapel, something I had always aspired to. The second was when I was greeted Christmas morning with the sound of barking downstairs. My brother had bought me my very own dog, a terrier type named Peter. Although advertised as a pedigree it was definitely an out and out mongrel. I loved that dog and it was a family friend for many years. It came into the house but had to sleep outside in its kennel. When Dad cycled to the allotment, Peter would run beside him and be content to wait there until he came home. And the third of the surprises – well I can't actually remember! Many of the Christmas gifts I received were made by my brother. One year he made me a woodworker's bench and another year a wooden toolbox complete with tools with my name inscribed on the top. The tools have long gone but I still use the box. One year I had a great model garage with illuminated petrol pumps and the name "Charles Clarke Motor Engineers" on the front.

When I was really young Dad used to let me ride on the crossbar of his bike. Unfortunately, on one occasion, he was also carrying a sack or bag that caught in the front wheel. The result was that Dad ended up tumbling over the handlebars, taking me with him. He sustained a broken arm that was never straight again. A kind gentleman stopped to take care of us and as far as I recall I was generally unhurt.

To help supplement the family income Dad would carry out gardening jobs for people in the village. I remember the going rate being 4 shillings per hour. As I got older I would accompany him on some of his jobs and gain some pocket money for myself, my rate being 2 shillings per hour. When we were digging together, he would start a row and I would follow behind with the next row. Dad would then be able to put right any of my imperfections on the next row. My 2 shillings per hour was increased by 25% on a Saturday morning when I worked for Mrs Cross on the Main Road. She was very particular with the grass cutting - the lines had to be straight and I was never entrusted to do the edges. I used to look after the

EARLY HOME LIFE

whole garden and received four half crowns (10 shillings) for my four hour stint.

Dad was famous in the village for his colourful display in the front garden. He had made a brick constructed three-tiered bed system that when fully bedded out, was admired by passers by. He took great pride in his front garden.

These were also the days when most things were delivered to the door. Deliveries included bread, milk, greengroceries (I can even remember this being by horse and cart) and, of course, coal. The one I enjoyed most was the Corona man, my favourite being the ginger beer. And then there was the scissor grinder who came on his bike that doubled up as the grinding wheel for knives, shears etc. One unusual caller was George Hancock who travelled around selling his hand-made rock door-to- door. George was also a familiar face at the chapel as a local preacher.

A few other memories come to mind. On one bonfire night everything was



prepared for the big night. I had a big box of fireworks and the fire was ready to be lit. We were joined that night by my nephew Alan. Unfortunately, I had left the box of fireworks too close to the fire and a spark entered the box with a disastrous but one-off display of fireworks. I must admit to breaking down

Home of Mr and Mrs Page where I first watched TV

in tears but Dad immediately

got on his bike and cycled down to the nearest shop to buy some more. You were a hero Dad!

I must also recall the greengage tree that I grew from a pip. It became a great fruit bearing tree with the best tasting greengages you could wish for. It was still being enjoyed by the owners of Nr 9 The Street many years later.

In my early years there were cultivated fields behind our house but they were later purchased by engineering firm Cranes as their sports field. It became our window to many sporting activities. Now a confession! Every

EARLY HOME LIFE

year the firm held their annual Sports Day with children's races etc. My friend David and I used to casually join in the activities although not actually having any entitlement to do so. At the end of the day all the children received a gift and we gratefully accepted one too. I remember on one occasion securing a rather fine toy gun.

We never had a television in the early days but I had a way round that. Mr and Mrs Page lived in the street and were members at the chapel and had a telly. I would walk up to their home and cheekily asked if I could watch their television. They were very welcoming and I enjoyed many evenings watching programmes like "Double Your Money" or "Take Your Pick". We did eventually have our own television and I was able to enjoy those classic westerns "Rawhide" and "Wagon Train".

In the early sixties Dad purchased his first car, a 1937 Rover 14 with the registration EPG 803. It was the first of five Rovers that he owned. Although old, it was a great car in which we enjoyed many happy days. We also had a good bus service into town. The bus stopped right outside our house. I can still picture Mum looking out of the window at the bottom of the stairs waiting for the bus to pass the Falcon Public House in Playford Road. She would rally everyone to make sure they were outside the front gate in time.

At the age of 59 Dad had a severe heart attack and the evening remains vivid in my memory. Dad was sitting in his armchair just before it was time to leave for his night shift at the boiler house. He didn't feel well but put it down to indigestion. Although struggling, he set off on his bike ride to the hospital but never got there. Well, that's not quite true. He ended up in hospital but arrived by ambulance, having collapsed on his journey in. The first we knew about it was a knock on the door advising us of what had happened. It was touch and go and, although Dad did recover, he was never allowed to resume his very physical job. It was a sad day when I accompanied him to the boiler house to empty his locker. Later Dad was offered lighter jobs including a position at Ipswich Museum. However he just could not see himself with a feather duster and eventually accepted a position of lodge keeper at the hospital, where visitors had to report on arriving at the hospital. This also involved night shifts and, rightly or wrongly, he did often have a nap on a camp bed.

Dad never earned much money and I remember fairly late on in his working life him taking home only around £11, £6 of which would be placed on the top of the television for Mum's housekeeping.

EARLY HOME LIFE



*Our back garden at
9 The Street
(notice the bedstead fence
at the back)*



*With my army brother at the back
of 9 The Street*



*Mum and Charlie at the front of
9 The Street*



*Our children's playground
along the path from Bent
Lane to the Main Road*

EARLY HOME LIFE



The former site in Bent Lane where my pigs Jack and Jill once lived and where our old Shepherd Hut once stood.



The former site in Bent Lane of Dad's "Orange Box" shed

EARLY HOME LIFE



The allotments in Rushmere where we once had 200 chickens



Still in use! The tool box made by my brother



Carol, Susan, Timothy and Charlie outside Nr 9



The Lodge where Dad worked in the years before retirement



My Peter outside Nr 7

EARLY HOME LIFE

Dad's Boiler House 55 years on!



Inside the old Boiler House and the door leading to the shower



The old locker room and (right) where the old boilers once stood



The coal storage area and (right) the old pump room where Dad refurbished old bicycles

CHAPTER FOUR

CLARKE'S CORNER



Former "Clarke's Corner" in 2014

Many residents of Rushmere in the 50s and 60s referred to the end of Rushmere Street where it meets Playford Road as "Clarke's Corner".

In my earliest years the first property in Rushmere Street (Nr 7) was the home of my granddad and grandma, Alice and Charles Clarke, together with Dad's sister May. The family had previously lived in Holbrook but when the

bungalow became available Dad took the opportunity to move his parents next door. I have some memories of granddad Clarke who, in later years, had a leg removed through contracting gangrene. I was just 4 when he died in 1953. I distinctly remember Dad asking me if I understood that granddad had died – he seemed concerned about how I was feeling. Grandma Clarke died in 1957, which means I have many more memories. When Mum and Dad had finished reading our "Evening Star" newspaper, I would take it next door and exchange it for their copy of the "Daily Sketch". I remember doing this every evening. You had, however, to be careful not to disturb them when they were listening to "The Archers". Aunt May continued to live at Nr 7 after her parents had died.

On the other side to us at Nr 11 lived Mr and Mrs Potter. I don't remember too much about the couple except that Mr Potter gave me a fossilised Coprolite whale's snout that he had found, together with a press cutting reporting the find. This prize possession would be a centre piece of my "Rushmere Museum" described elsewhere. With the help of the Kelly's directories I established that, when Mrs Potter died around 1953, our new neighbour was Mrs Bowman followed by Mrs Gardiner, both of whom I struggle to remember. In the late fifties I do vaguely remember the arrival of Mr and Mrs Newman closely followed by Mr and Mrs Driver. They were followed in 1966 by Brian and Pam Wash who became active members of the chapel and were great neighbours. Their two boys Tim and Andrew both became members of the 1st Rushmere Boys' Brigade. When Brian and Pam eventually moved to another part of the village in the early 1970s, my sister Joan and brother-in-law David, together with their three

CLARKE'S CORNER

children Susan, Timothy and Ruth, moved into Nr 11. Dad was so worried about their financial commitment in purchasing the house for £4500! Soon after this, Aunt May moved into Tooley's Court in Ipswich and my brother Bob and sister-in-Law Audrey, with their son Andrew, moved into Nr 7. And so Nos 7,9 and 11 were in Clarke ownership.

There was one other property in our unique block of two houses and two bungalows. This was Nr 11A and was owned by Mr and Mrs Pryke. Again the couple were active members of the chapel with Mrs Pryke in particular being a great friend of Mum's.



*Above; Residents of
Nr 7 Grandma and
Grandad and
Auntie May*

*Above; Residents of Nr 11A
Mr and Mrs Pryke, Iris and Bill*



*Left; Residents of Nr 11
Brian and Pam Wash*

CHAPTER FIVE

VILLAGE LIFE

I suppose Rushmere St Andrew was like any other village in the 50s and 60s in as much that it appeared that everyone knew everybody else. Often the heart of many villages in those days was the public house but I will need to pass on this one for a very good reason. Although we lived within a few hundred yards of the Rushmere “Falcon” I cannot ever remember my Dad entering its doors. The same could be said of the “Garland” in Humber Doucy Lane. My observation is a slight exaggeration as there was one occasion when my mum’s brother Bill was staying with us and had to be collected from the “Falcon” by Dad after consuming far too much alcohol. Uncle Bill liked his drink!

The centre of our world was the chapel which is covered in a separate chapter. Dad was also very much involved in the life of the village. He was a member of the Parish Council for many years as well as being part of the Rushmere Heath Committee (called “The Commoners”). I remember one occasion when there was an election of Parish Councillors and Dad had to do a bit of campaigning in the village. He was up against a man named Mr Baker and we very naughtily used to sing, “Vote, vote, vote for dear old Albert, chuck old Baker in the mud...”

Dad fronted a number of campaigns in the village including one to provide a footpath along the dangerous Playford Road from the Tram Terminus to Bent Lane corner. It took many years of lobbying but it was eventually provided. Another was to provide additional space at the cemetery behind the Parish Church. When the burial ground was full, a decision was made to move all future internments to Ipswich, a decision that did not impress my Dad. Through his hard work an additional piece of land was purchased that enabled the existing cemetery to be extended.

There were four shops in the village. The one near the Baptist Chapel was kept by Mrs Rush followed by Mr and Mrs Shiplee and was where we bought all our sweets. These were the days of farthings and I remember you could buy four “Black Jacks” for an old penny. It was also the days when there was a deposit on drinks bottles. It was always a good source of income for us boys to rummage around for bottles to gain a few pence for more sweets. The Post Office on the corner of Humber Doucy Lane and Rushmere Road was kept by Mrs Wolf. It had a rather imposing door with a latch that rattled and the lady herself was rather stern! The third shop was at the end of Bent Lane and was kept by a Mr Harry Keeble. It was where my brother-in-law Cyril once worked. On the other side of the main road at the entrance to Beech Road was Beechwood Stores kept by Mrs Basford whose son Alwyn was one of my pals. Beechwood Stores was where we purchased our copy of the “Greenun” on Saturday nights.

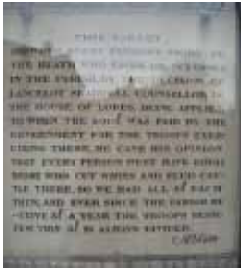
VILLAGE LIFE

There was a cobbler's shop next to the chapel which I can never remember going in. Apparently it was previously a general store managed by Harry Keeble who went on to open the aforementioned shop at the end of Bent Lane. The shop was at the end of a row of houses called "Tablet Cottages" They were so named due to an inscribed tablet on the outside of one of the cottages setting out parishioners' rights to the use of Rushmere Common. The full wording is shown below.

It has been suggested that residents of Rushmere could legally cut turf from the centre of the greens on Heath Golf Course. I am not actually sure whether anyone has dared to try it!

When the cottages were demolished, the tablet was repositioned on the front wall of the Baptist Chapel.

There was also a blacksmith's shop kept by Mr Rufus Crapnell who took over from his father Joseph. The business was continued for a while by Rufus's son Desmond.



The former Tablet Cottages and the tablet that is now located on the front wall of Rushmere Baptist Chapel



This early picture of Keeble's Shop includes, on the right, The Tolegate which was demolished in 1938.

VILLAGE LIFE

A picture of the Village Shop with the old Supply Stores (by now a Cobblers Shop) in the foreground



Right; The former Beechwood Stores on the corner of Beech Road



The former blacksmiths shop



An early picture of Rushmere Supply Stores next door to the chapel

The former Post Office

CHAPTER SIX

RUSHMERE PRIMARY SCHOOL

At the age of five I followed in the footsteps of my older brother and sisters by attending Rushmere Primary School in Humber Doucy Lane. Remarkably I can actually recall entering the front doors of the school for the first time in 1954 and seeing headmistress Miss England sitting at her



Rushmere Primary School

desk. I am fairly certain that my sister Kathy took me on that first occasion. Apart from Miss England, who had also taught my sisters and brother, there was just one other teacher. Her name was Miss Munyard whom we nicknamed Miss Mudguard. There were just two classes, one for ages 5-8 and the other for ages 9-11. Headmistress Miss England took the older group.

The accommodation was fairly basic with outside toilets and a “slow but sure” coke stove for heating. School dinners were held in the adjoining Village Hall where Sunday School teacher Florrie Bye was one of the cooks.

RUSHMERE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Teaching was basic too, born out by the fact that I can only recall one pupil progressing to a grammar school. In fact, my father never allowed me to take the 11+ exam at all. Either he felt I had no chance of passing or that a Secondary Modern School was quite good enough for me.

The cane was also used on a number of occasions although I did manage to avoid it myself.

Other memories that come to mind are the school radio programmes “Singing Together” and “Time and Tune” which both had accompanying booklets containing the words of the songs used in the programme and which allowed us to join in with the singing.

I also remember making spill containers from balsa wood and calendars with woollen pictures.

And then there was what was called “French Knitting”. This involved a wooden cotton reel with four nails hammered in the top. The wool was then twisted round each nail and using a crochet hook loops were lifted over the nails and eventually a cord started to appear through the bottom of the hole. These cords were then made into small circular mats.

It was also in the days of a third of a pint school milk which I remember being often iced up in winter.

After that first day I think I probably soon made my own way to school, walking in the earlier years and then biking.

In my last few years at primary school I used to visit my sister Kathy after school on Mondays in her home in Schreiber Road.

One amusing incident was when one of the boys got his finger stuck in the small hole in the underside of his desk and the Fire Brigade was called to release him.



The traditional school photo

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOBBIES

My interest in coin collecting was sparked by a display in the window of a bank (I think TSB) in Lloyds Avenue in Ipswich. It was a display of a century of old pennies (not, of course, old in those days!) 1860 to 1960. This must have been in the early sixties, years before decimal coinage, when it was not uncommon to discover Victorian pennies in your everyday change. So inspired by this display my friend David and I decided to start our own collection. David's father owned a chain of shops and he therefore had access to loads of small change to sort through. Whilst our collections grew fast, we soon learnt that certain dates had low mintages and were hard to find. I even posted notices outside our house in Rushmere advertising for the dates needed to complete my century. I even got my sisters in on the act when the item on my Christmas list was a 1951 penny. They clubbed together to buy the penny at the princely sum of £3 (a lot of money then) and even wrapped it in a large box to conceal its identity. There was one date that did elude us and that was 1933 when only six were minted. Such was our fascination with that coin we both travelled to the British Museum to view the one held in their collection. Eventually we both completed our collections (apart, of course, from that 1933) and this further stimulated my interest enough to expand my collection to include all English coins.



My Century of Pennies

The other interest that I shared with David was our passion for Ipswich Town Football Club. We really did pick the best possible year to start supporting the Blues – that famous season of 1961/62. That, as every town fan knows, was the most successful year in the club's history when the team won the first Division Championship for the one and only time. It made such an impression on us that even today we

can reel off the names of the eleven players: Bailey, Carberry, Compton, Baxter, Nelson, Elsworthy, Stevenson, Moran, Crawford, Philips, Leadbetter. It was in the days when you could have a full afternoon's entertainment for 3 shillings. That was 4d on the trolley bus from Rushmere Heath, 2 shillings admission to the ground, 4d for a programme and 4d for the

HOBBIES



Our heroes of 1962

return bus ride. We normally got to the ground by 1.30 in order to get a good view near the front wall and afterwards stayed behind to get autographs from our heroes. Then it was quickly home to watch another of our passions – “Dr Who”!

I have always had the collecting bug. I remember the days when packs of chewing gum included series of cards to collect. The series I remember in particular was “Flags of the World” which I eventually completed after sending off to the manufacturers requesting the cards missing from my set. I also loved the cards which came free with Weetabix. You could send for the viewer to enjoy the pictures in 3D. In the animal collection I distinctly remember Nr 1 being the Gnu!



*A First Division
Championship medal*

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOLIDAYS



Mum and Dad relaxing on holiday

Although Dad only earned very modest wages, he always made sure we enjoyed annual holidays. Our most popular destinations were Lowestoft or Clacton, where we would stay in a guest house for bed, breakfast and evening meals. Dad must have set money aside to enable us to enjoy these weeks away as he was always generous when we were there. Dad and I liked to get up before breakfast for an early morning walk, which al-

ways included a cup of tea and a Kit-Kat at a local cafe. The one thing I remember about the meals in the guest house was the posh napkins in silver rings, something that was never seen at home. For many of our holidays we were joined by Kathy, Cyril and Carol. For the Clacton holidays



More holiday snaps

we also hired a chalet on the front. Armed with newspaper and a book, Dad would often spend the morning relaxing in a seat alongside the pier edge. Mum was just content to watch the world go by in the chalet. We would often take in a show on the pier, which once included a very young Roy Hudd performing in a variety show. The day we set off for the Clacton holiday in 1966 was the day of the World Cup Final against West Germany. We watched the start of the match in Rushmere and arrived at our

HOLIDAYS



Family holiday at Highcliffe on Sea

guest house just in time to see extra time and witness England lift the World Cup in that famous 4-2 victory.



The rock that young Tim carried all the way down from the top of Snowdon

Car journeys in those days were more of an adventure and even the 48 mile journeys to Lowestoft included a picnic stop half way. On one occasion we did venture further afield when we went to stay with Dad's sister Glady in Manchester. Our stay included a visit to Blackpool where we climbed the famous tower. The climbing got more serious later in the week when Cousin David took us up Kinder Scout peak.

In addition to holidays with Mum and Dad, I did have other holidays with the extended family. On one of these holidays in 1966 we went to Highcliffe-on-Sea near Bournemouth. Although our parents stayed at home,

HOLIDAYS



On top of Snowdon in 1972

this was to be one of the very few occasions when the families of all three of my sisters and my brother were together on holiday. We had four chalets next to each other with a family in each. I joined my sister Joan and her family. It was a wonderful holiday that everyone looked back on with much joy. The last of these family holidays was in 1972 when my new girlfriend of a few months joined us for a week in Wales. One incident that is often recalled is when we climbed Snowdon. At the top of the mountain there was a large marble rock that caught my eye. I jokingly said to my thirteen year old nephew, Timothy, that I would give him £1 if he carried it down. Amazingly he did just that and I still have it in my garden.

Whilst at Kesgrave School I was allowed to go on two school trips to the continent. One trip was to Belgium and Luxemburg and the other also included Holland, Germany and France. I initially couldn't remember the exact years these took place but then I recalled on one of the trips seeing a newspaper bill board on our arrival back in England announcing the "Great Train Robbery". It therefore must have been August 1963.

CHAPTER NINE

RUSHMERE MUSEUM

I wonder how many people realise that Rushmere St Andrew once had its very own museum. Well, I suppose it wasn't an official one but it did exist at 9 The Street. In fact, its location was once a pigsty at the bottom of the garden. After cleaning it out, I set up shelves around the walls for my displays. I again shared this interest with mate David Peachey and for our inspiration we were frequent visitors to Ipswich Museum in High Street.



The centre piece of Rushmere Museum, the piece of coprolite that was once the snout of a toothless whale

Knowing our interest, people would give us various objects of interest for our displays. My prize exhibit was a piece of coprolite that was a fossilized snout of a toothless whale. This was given to me by our neighbour Mr Potter and was the subject of a newspaper article when originally found. I had various other rocks and fossils and a display of old coins and medals.

When Dad needed the pigsties again, I had to move my museum into my bedroom cupboard and then later into part of a cupboard in our living room. Part of it still resides in my loft at Bramford!

CHAPTER TEN

FRIENDSHIPS

My earliest friendships were with boys who lived near our home in Rushmere. Peter Kipling lived in the detached bungalow at the end of our row, Nr 15 The Street. We were good mates at one time but I think links were severed when the family moved from that home. David Forton lived in the house on the corner of Playford Road and Bent Lane. It was a posh house and the family were quite high up in the social rankings. I cannot even



George Waring

remember ever going into their home. However David was a mate, along with Richard Haste who lived on the first bend in Bent Lane. Richard's father was Jack Haste, an artist who ran the Haste Gallery in Ipswich. They were a very friendly family and I maintained links with Jack right up to his recent passing. However the family had to cope with severe tragedy when young Richard died before reaching his fifth birthday. It was a devastating loss and one that I felt very acutely at the time. David, Richard and I often played together and on one occasion we were clambering on the roof of one of Mr Forton's outbuildings. Our weight was obviously too much for the asbestos sheeting and I fell straight through. Very naughtily, we said nothing about it to David's dad and on its

discovery Mr Forton paid a visit to my parents that evening. I can't remember if Dad had to pay for the damage.

Another friend who lived further up the street was George Waring who lived with his Mum and grandfather, Mr Knappett, who was a deacon at the chapel. We attended Christian Endeavour together, as recorded more fully in the chapter on Rushmere Baptist Chapel. George also attended Rushmere Primary School until the family moved to America in 1959. I have never heard from George since and would love to know how things worked out for him.

David Freeman was another mate who initially lived in Playford Road but later moved to the Main Road where I often used to spend Saturday mornings. David, I remember, used to collect matchboxes.

FRIENDSHIPS

Alwyn Basford contracted polio at a very young age and had irons on his legs. His Mum kept Beechwood Stores, a small shop and newsagents on the corner of Beech Road. In later life Alwyn ran the shop until its recent closure. Alwyn, like me, loved his model cars and trucks and we often played together.

Many other friendships were formed at Primary School and it was there that I first met David Peachey. David's dad John Peachey, owned a number of newsagents in Ipswich including Whitton Stores, Garrick Way and Meredith Road. David only stayed at Rushmere Primary for about a year before being transferred to a private school in Felixstowe. We continued, however, to be good friends and I was always welcomed into David's family in Playford Road. Mr Peachey always purchased new cars and I especially remember the Ford Zephyrs he owned. He regularly had to visit his chain of shops and would take David and me with him in his smart cars. I really enjoyed those times where we were also treated to drinks and sweets at the shops. As recorded in the earlier chapter entitled "Hobbies", we loved our football and would play at the bottom of David's garden. Go-karts were all the rage in those days. These were not ones you bought but



Left to right; David Freeman, David Forton's House, George Waring's House

were hand made using old pram wheels and odd bits of wood. They got quite sophisticated and I remember one of mine was totally enclosed with



David Peachey

a roof over it. They were propelled by a metal pole that was used in similar fashion to an oar. David was also into puppets and we would attempt to put on puppet shows for their family to enjoy (or was it endured?). We also enjoyed snooker and the football game "Subbuteo". Later Mr Peachey had a snooker room built in his garden to add to his already constructed swimming pool and tennis courts. They were also the first people I knew to have a colour telly and I was able to watch my first Cup Final in colour.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SCOUTS AND BOYS' BRIGADE

When I reached the age of around 11, my father thought that I would benefit from joining a uniformed organisation. We had nothing in Rushmere so I joined the 17th Ipswich Scouts who met at Turret Green Baptist Church in Ipswich. I caught the bus to and from town but had to walk to and from the bus stop on the main A12. I have to say that I didn't really enjoy Scouts and looked for excuses for why I couldn't go each week. However I stuck it for a number of years and probably benefited from it. I went on camps, including two weeks at Phasels Wood in Hertfordshire. The thing I recall about this camp was making shelters in the woods with bracken and having to sleep one night in them. I also recall receiving, on two occasions, a large box of goodies from my sister Kathy via the post. The other lads were jealous but I just hope I did share things around. Being a two week camp, there was a day when parents could come along and again it was my sister Kathy who brought Mum and Dad. I have to admit that I was rather homesick during those two weeks and was glad to get home. I also took part in some Gang Shows during my time with the 17th Ipswich. It was somewhat ironic that, although I didn't really take to Scouts as a boy, another uniformed organisation for boys would play an important part in my future life. At a Church Meeting at Rushmere Baptist Chapel in 1970 it was suggested that a Boys' Brigade Company be started in the village. I knew very little about the organisation but volunteered to help in any way I could. It was an exciting time as we visited homes in Rushmere to seek out potential young lads to join our new company. I say "Company" but in fact we had to start off as a platoon of an established company, in our case the 11th Ipswich who met at Colchester Road Baptist Church. On the first evening we had fewer than 10 boys but it was the beginning of a very successful company. After three years our Captain John Watson, left and as part of the reshuffle, I became Officer In Charge of the Junior Section (boys 8-11). I really enjoyed the challenge and continued with the



Dad at Phasels Wood Scout Camp

SCOUTS AND BOYS' BRIGADE



Rushmere BB Display Evening



A young Tim in the BB Football Team

group even after leaving Rushmere in 1974. Another irony was the fact that, soon after we established our group known as the 1st Rushmere, the company under which we had been established closed. The result was that the boys from Colchester Road joined us at Rushmere. It tested our resources but made us into a much stronger unit. I look back on those years with much joy, in particular, for the opportunity we had to share the Christian message with those young lads. In fact one of the boys in my care, David Roberts, went on to become the Captain in later years. We had some really great camps, including a week in Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire. My cousin David, who lived in the area, made all the arrangements although we were not entirely prepared for how basic the facilities would be. It was a field with no running water and no toilet facilities!. We put the marquee up in a thunderstorm and the mod cons were non-existent. Having said all that, the boys look back on that week as one of the best camping experiences ever.



BB Camp at Sizewell



Presidents Award for Michael Roberts

CHAPTER TWELVE

RUSHMERE BAPTIST CHAPEL

I was taken to Rushmere Baptist Chapel at a very young age and it became an integral part of my life whilst living in the village for 25 years. During that time my father was Sunday School Superintendent followed by my brother Roland. Earliest memories were times spent in the Primary Department where Miss Flory Bye was the leader. Things changed little in that



Sunday School Picture in 1959

department under her leadership including the song “Hear the pennies dropping” being sung during the collection. I don’t remember too much about the times when father was Superintendent except for the special Sunday School Anniversary days. I think these remained in my memory mainly because Dad planned these services at home. I remember the cupboard under our stairs being full of props used on these special days. We had piles of wooden bricks and many other objects, including a set of working traffic lights. These objects were all used as aids to communicating the Bible message. These were indeed red letter days when new clothes were the order of the day and button holes abounded. Each scholar was expected to take some part in the day and recitations with up to 7 verses had to be learnt and songs sung. Many of these recitations were written by father and indeed later by my brother. We had a special preacher for the day and everyone’s favourite was Mr W. C. K. Bateman, a schoolteacher by profession. The way he told stories to illustrate the Bible message had everyone mesmerised. The day ended with the prize-giving where scholars were rewarded for good attendance with the presentation of a book. The final announcement of the day was the destination of the

RUSHMERE BAPTIST CHAPEL



The Chapel in Centenary Year 1959

annual treat which was never really a surprise as we always went to Walton-on-the-Naze. A coach would arrive at the chapel early on a Saturday morning and we would enjoy a great day together. Around tea time we would make our way to the pier where we would



Tablets to commemorate the decades of the Centenary. Tablet holders (left to right Mr Knappett, Mr Naunton, Marjorie Chilvers, Miss King, Mr Pryke, Bill Pryke, Doreen Broom, my sister Joan and Nora Scott

enjoy a tea of sandwiches and cakes. The day would often end with a game of cricket on the beach. Happy days indeed!

During the time of my brother's leadership of Sunday School, everyone wanted to be in the class run by Bill Boast. This was not because he was a good teacher but, when you answered a question correctly he would give you money! Another feature of Sunday School in the 50s and 60s was the fact that all my mates attended. They were not all from Christian homes but it was the "norm" in those days to attend Sunday School.

Sunday School was very important in shaping my life and I am indebted to those who spent time teaching me the truths of the Bible.

In the early days Sunday School was in the morning with Church Services in the afternoon and the evening. I didn't always attend the afternoon ser-

RUSHMERE BAPTIST CHAPEL

vice but would meet my brother at the end of the service and we would walk around Alder Carr wood before tea. The wood had always had a special place in our family – a place where we would pick bluebells (not allowed today), kingcups and cowslips. I remember one occasion finding a young bird that had fallen from its nest and bringing it home where it sadly died. And that railway tunnel at the entrance had a great echo!

In addition to Sunday School we also had Junior Christian Endeavour under the leadership of Miss Nora Scott. CE, as it was called, encouraged the scholars to take part in the evening by leading, praying or reading. This was a good training ground for the years ahead. Two people would take it in turns to lead the evening and afterwards to record the programme in a book and to illustrate the Bible story selected. I remember the occasion when my friend George Waring and I led the evening and I wrote up the programme in the special book. I was supposed to leave enough space at the bottom of the page for him to draw a picture of the Bible story but my writing was so large I only left a tiny space and remember him being very upset. Sorry George!

Rushmere used to have close links with Stoke Green Baptist Chapel and shared their minister for a number of years. The earliest minister I recall



*Opening of Vestry Extension in 1954
Left to Right; Rev Weigall, Mr Naunton, Mr Pryke, Dad, Miss King,
Eric Broom, Edward Gilson (Builder), Rev Bryan
(Area Superintendent), Rev Lewis (Minister)*

RUSHMERE BAPTIST CHAPEL

was Rev Lewis who sadly died at a very young age in 1954. I can remember having teas in the old Stoke Green Chapel. They were happy days! We also shared a minister with Turret Green Baptist Church when Rev Eldridge preached on a regular basis.

In 1954, a very young man, Derek Chilvers, was called to be the lay Pastor. By all accounts my father was very instrumental in recognising the potential of Derek and many people of my generation will always associate him with Rushmere, a Church he was still serving when I moved away from the village in 1974. For many of those years he was unpaid and even in later years was only employed on a part-time basis. Although only receiving a small remuneration, Derek worked tirelessly and many people have reason to be so thankful for his ministry.

Much of the building extension work was carried out by the members with my Dad and brother being at the heart of work projects. I remember clearly the baptistry being dug in 1958 and ten years later in November 1968 I was baptised by Derek Chilvers. My brother gave me a Baptist Hymn Tune Book to mark the occasion.



*Chapel organist and great family friend
Bill Boast and picture taken in his garden*

Organist Bill Boast was a great family friend and had such a generous nature. At the end of the evening services he would always have a bag of sweets to hand round and those who cleaned the chapel each week would find a bar of chocolate waiting for them on the organ. He also loved dahlias (as the picture to the left shows) and was always handing out bunches.

Another person worthy of mention is Miss Margaret King (seen in the Vestry Opening picture on the previous page). She was, I believe, a granddaughter of Robert Lacey Everett, a local preacher and Liberal MP, who built the chapel. She lived in her early days at Rushmere Hall where she hosted Sunday School Treats and church gatherings. I remember a treasure hunt on one occasion and finding the prize in the contents of a wheelbarrow!

All in all great memories of Rushmere Chapel!.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

KESGRAVE MODERN SCHOOL



Kesgrave Secondary Modern School Sister Kathy in Netball Team



Headmaster Mr Reeve

I again followed in the footsteps of my brother and sisters by attending Kesgrave Secondary Modern School in 1960. Indeed it was also the same headmaster, Mr Reeve – affectionately known as “Chub”. Mr Reeve was coming to the end of his teaching career and later in life wrote a book entitled “From Slate pencils to Word Processors.” The book included the above picture of my sister Kathy in the Netball Team. It was certainly a culture shock for us who came from the small primary school at Rushmere but generally the years at Kesgrave were happy ones. Two things stick in my memory from the early days at secondary

school. The first involved the uniform. The school had a choice of jacket colours – either navy blue or grey. Mum decided that as I had a grey suit (a hand-me-down!) that would be fine for school. Unfortunately for me, although there was a choice, I was the only one in the school to wear grey – everyone else had the navy blazer. The other thing was that Mum also insisted on me wearing short trousers right up to my second year at Kesgrave!. Again I was the only one in the class! I was probably scarred for life!. To help me recall details of those early days at Kesgrave School I enlisted my current friend at Church, Steve Bowman,



Me in 1962

KESGRAVE MODERN SCHOOL



Richard Carr, Christopher Mittell, Alan Bales, Martin Llewellyn

who was actually in my class. Our first form teacher in Class 1A1 was Mr Worth who also took us for English and RE. He was a very approachable and good teacher who always had our best interests at heart. Stephen recalls a Miss Brown



Steve Bowman

as our French teacher but I must admit my memory fails on this one. It was Mrs Barrie for Maths and Mr Pearson for Geography. The latter was one of the teachers who gained a nickname – his being “Dead Rat!” He was actually a very friendly teacher and somewhat helpful in exams by giving us advance notice of the questions and even providing model answers. However this failed to help me in the long term as, when it came to the actual external O Level exam I was



Mr Jude, Mr Pooley, Mr Elmore, Mr Noller, Mr Wright



Mr Pearson

Mr Worth

Mr Cutmore

awarded the worst possible grade of 9!

Mr Pooley (nicknamed Josh), our woodwork teacher, had a reputation for throwing objects at unruly pupils, something that would not be acceptable

KESGRAVE MODERN SCHOOL



Mrs Williams, Mrs Barrie, Mrs Young

today. Old School teacher Mr Jude was coming to the end of his career, having also taught my sisters many years earlier. In later years French was taught by Mrs Young- a fearsome lady who did not suffer fools gladly. Other

teachers recalled were Mr Nollar (Gardening), Miss Aldman (English Literature), Mr Baylis (Metalwork and Technical Drawing) and Mr Lait (Science). Three more are worthy of mention. Mr Cutmore was our form and English teacher in later years and was a real gentleman who was a great help to me when taking my O Levels. The first time Science teacher, Mr Wright, introduced himself to us he warned us that, "You will know when I am annoyed when you see smoke coming out of my ears". We never forgot that. One other teacher of note was art teacher, Mr John Constable, who was the great grandson of the famous painter of the same name. When he left the school he painted me a small picture that has unfortunately been lost –it probably would now be worth a fortune!

As I look back at my first report in 1A1 the final comment by the headmaster at the bottom of the page read "Charles appears rather out of depth in this class". I had finished 34th out of 37 in the form. Unfortunately, I was unable to hold my place in this top stream and was placed in the middle stream class 2A2 the following year. At the end of that year I finished top of the class and was reinstated in the top stream in the third year, class 3A1. At the end of the fourth year I decided to stay on an extra two years to sit my O Levels. Our form teacher for the fifth year was Mr Keene who enlisted me and friend, Mervyn, to carry out some gardening work at his house in the school holidays. The garden was like a jungle and was quite a challenge. The money came in handy though!

For our final year at Kesgrave Mr Cutmore was our form teacher. As I said earlier he was a great encouragement, especially in English which I failed at the first attempt. However, with his help, I was able to retake it after leaving school and he was pleased when I passed at the second attempt. During those final two years I worked as a Stage Electrician for school plays such as "Twelfth Night". Somehow I even aspired to Deputy Head Boy as well as Chief Librarian and House Captain of Nelson.

As I look back at the school photo taken in June 1962, I can begin to put names to my classmates – Tony Collard, David Freeman, Mervyn Dale, Martin Llewelyn, Christopher Mittel, Lee Douglas etc etc.

I left Kesgrave School in June 1966.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

FIRST CAR

After starting work in 1966 I thought it was time to look for some transport. I was cycling to and from work and indeed coming home for dinner as well. A motorbike seemed the obvious choice but my father had other ideas. He wasn't convinced about the safety of two wheels, and as a



Memories of my first four cars (only the Singer Gazelle is my actual car)

further discouragement, he offered me £50 to purchase a cheap car. It doesn't sound much today but in 1966 it was enough for a first car. I turned to my brother-in-law David for help in finding the right vehicle and so, on November 5th 1966, we spent Saturday afternoon looking at potential purchases. We did find one at the right price but I was rather put off when a wheel came off on the test drive! After looking at others we visited Cox's Car Sales in Ipswich. They were advertising a 1955 black Morris Minor Saloon. The car was just what I was looking for but the problem was that it was £85. I convinced Dad that it was the one for me and promised to pay the extra £35 myself. At this time I had yet to pass my test so it had to be driven to Rushmere by the salesman. I'm not sure how I afforded to run it when I was only earning £6 a week! It proved to be a great little car apart from the time it needed a new gear box. A work colleague pointed me in the direction of a gold seal gear box at a scrap yard in Yaxley. It was on an Austin A35 but I was assured that it would fit. After bringing it home we were horrified to discover that, although it fitted to the engine perfectly, it was some six inches shorter! Dad came to the rescue again by

FIRST CAR

visiting his old employer, Goslings, in St John's Road who machined an extension to the prop shaft. So all was well.

I had driving lessons in a Wolseley Hornet at Drivewell School of Motoring in Neale Street at the princely sum of 17/6 per lesson. I passed second time. I traded in the car for a 1960 Red Austin A40 in 1968 and then a 1964 green Ford Cortina Mk 1 in 1970. My last car in these Rushmere days was a 1964 Green Singer Gazelle.

Going back to that first car, the salesman from Cox's who drove the car back to Rushmere said that although I would have many cars in my lifetime your first car would always have a special place in your heart. He was right. I will always have a particular affection for 690 FMM.

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Drivewell School of Motoring Booklet with Revetts Ltd advert on the back promoting the new Hillman and Triumph cars!

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

STARTING WORK

I think that my earliest job ambition was to be a bricklayer. I'm not sure where that came from but it certainly seemed an attraction to me. During Secondary School I really enjoyed Technical Drawing and this seemed to



My place of work since 1966

turn my mind to a career as a draughtsman. I was also quite good at mathematics and, when a local firm of Quantity Surveyors sent a letter to the school seeking two trainees, I was one of the two whom my teacher thought it might suit. The problem was that I had no idea what a Quantity Surveyor did and had to do some quick research. Anyway I went for an interview at Caston, Porritt and Palmer in Grimwade Street and was offered the job at £6 per week. My first day at work was Monday 4th July 1966 and, as I approach retirement in 2014, I am still employed by the same firm. As they say, I am still deciding if I like it! My vivid memory of that first day was being presented with a huge pile of drawings which set the alarm bells ringing. Surely I was not expected to understand complex drawings on day one? I was somewhat relieved when I realised my task was just to neatly fold the drawings. I spent one day a week at Ipswich Civic College eventually gaining my ONC then HNC. Further years were spent at Chelmsford College to study for my professional qualification. I

STARTING WORK

actually became fully qualified just one week before my wedding and therefore one week before leaving Rushmere for the final time. When the results letter came in the post, Mum brought it up to my bedroom and I remember her being so proud when I flung the letter in the air and celebrated a pass. New trainees are amazed to learn that in those early days there were no calculators, no photocopiers and certainly no computers. If you needed to copy, it was carbon paper and, if you needed to add up a column of figures, you had to use your brain. It was also in the days of feet and inches, and to work out the volume of concrete, you had to use duo decimals. I think most people today would struggle to multiply eight feet six and threequarters by seven feet four and a half by three feet six and a quarter (answers on a postcard!) Typing was done on stencils where the keys of the typewriter cut the letter shape into the paper. These perforated sheets were then placed on a Gestetner where the ink would pass through the shapes and imprint on sheets of paper. If the typists made a mistake, they had to cover the perforations with a pink substance and retype the words.

Office life in 1966 was much different from today. You knew your place and the boss, Mr Caston., was always addressed as “Sir”.

The only electronic device was the comptometer which calculated duo decimals. All calculations were carried out long hand and then checked on this machine.

The telephone switchboard was what was commonly known as a “dolls eye” - extension numbers falling down and indicating they wanted attention. When our telephonist was away, I was sometimes asked to operate the switchboard which I absolutely hated and often got in a muddle with who was calling who.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

COURTING

Having led a fairly sheltered upbringing, meeting and forming meaningful friendships with girls was always going to be a challenge for me. Our young people's group at Church was a close knit unit but for me nothing more than good friendships developed. We had great times together, including weekends away at YMCA hostels and many other church based activities.



*Wendy working as a
telephonist at Took's Bakery*

On one occasion we had a young people's group visiting our church at Rushmere although I cannot remember who the group represented. We gave hospitality and one of the young girls came to ours for dinner. Her name was Alice and she came all the way from Penzance in Cornwall. Being shy, I said little at the meal but, on her return to Cornwall, she wrote to me and as I really liked her I was over the moon. Further communications were made, the last one being a letter card I sent to her from one of our holidays in Clacton. I said it was the last one because, on our return from Clacton, I had the letter card returned ripped up in small pieces in an envelope. I was upset but, with her living in Cornwall, it never would have worked.

On another holiday in Clacton, I quite liked a girl in the adjoining chalet we had hired on the front. When her family left she left a note on our chalet door with her address. I think some communication took place but that soon fizzled out.

The only other situation I can recall was when I took one of our local preachers at Rushmere to his appointment in Earl Soham. I again met a girl there I quite liked and returned during the following week when they had a young people's event on. I tried to have some meaningful time with her but it was a non-starter.

And so as you can see I had little success in my attempts to find a girlfriend. What I really needed was a helping hand and that came from my mate David. David had a girlfriend Valerie who lived in Stratford Road, Ipswich. And Valerie had an older sister, Wendy, who David wanted me to meet. But for me there was a problem! As I recorded in an earlier chap-

COURTING

ter, Dad had never entered a public house whilst living in Rushmere and alcohol was never in our house. Having been brought up in this environment I was concerned when David told me that Wendy worked in the office of Tolly Cobbold Breweries. It was probably not a fair judgement but the problem was resolved when Wendy left Tolly's and went to work for the Post Office as a telephonist.

And so on Friday 24th March 1972 David came to our front door with a message. Wendy would meet me at Portman Road the next day for an Ipswich Town Reserve game. I wrote Wendy a little note arranging a place and time to meet. Yes, it was a blind date although David had given me a photo – Wendy didn't even have that!. We indeed did meet and, for the record, Ipswich lost the game to Southampton 2-1. Apparently I made little conversation but, after I dropped Wendy off, she agreed to come to Church with me the next Sunday evening.

The following week there was a Christian event called the Supper Club. These events were where you had a meal which was followed by a Christian speaker. Wendy agreed to come with me to the event which was held at the Ascension Hall in Ipswich. The problem was that the speaker named Doreen Irvine went on and on.. Believe it or not, I finally got Wendy home after 1.30 in the morning – on our first proper date! Fortunately her Mum saw the funny side of it in the morning so I got away with it.

We had similar interests and continued to attend football and Church together. We also enjoyed a holiday together in Austria in 1973.

When I arrived home late after seeing Wendy, I had to drive past the side of my brother's bungalow to my garage. Although I tried to be quiet he mostly heard me coming home and dutifully told Mum and Dad the time I got in – thanks Brother! In fairness, my brother and sister-in-law always



welcomed us into their home and we spent many a Saturday evening playing "Monopoly". They even looked out for Wendy when I was away on a Boys' Brigade Camp. We sent long letters to each other that week – copies of which are still retained by Wendy.

Our relationship continued to grow and we were engaged on the 25th January 1974. I proposed to Wendy on a log at Shotley Shore. We often return there but, unfortunately, the log has long gone.

Holiday together in Austria

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FAMILY UPDATE 1974



Family Get Together in 1969

As I look back on the year 1974, the year that would see me leave the village, it is worth just pausing here to give an update on the rest of the family at that time.

As earlier recorded, my brother Bob had moved into Nr 7 The Street after spending a number of years in Parliament Road in Ipswich. Sadly son, Andrew, now coming up to his 20th birthday, was quite severely mentally handicapped. In addition to a physical handicap that made walking extremely difficult, Andrew was unable to speak and had to have everything done for him. In spite of his restrictions, he was a happy young man and was a source of joy to my brother and sister-in-law. He was able to spend time at Heathside Special School in Heath Road, which gave his parents much-needed rest. They were both devoted to Andrew and never complained about their situation once. Bob and Audrey gained strength from the other parents at the School which included at one time the Ipswich Town goalkeeper Roy Bailey. Mum was very supportive and would look after Andrew while Bob and Audrey went to Chapel. I can still vividly picture Andrew sitting at our living room table playing with his toys and

FAMILY UPDATE 1974



Bob, Audrey and Andrew



Kathy, Cyril and Carol



Above; Molly, Russell, Alan, John and Trevor

Right; Joan, David, Susan, Timothy and Ruth



his face beaming with delight. Andrew loved family holidays and was a much loved member of the family.

FAMILY UPDATE 1974

My oldest sister Molly and brother-in-law Russell had several moves with his job and in 1974 was working for Eastern Electricity. They had homes in Bedford, Ware and Chelmsford. I enjoyed stays in their home on a number of occasions. The most recent of these stays was whilst taking my professional exams in 1973 and 1974. It meant a less stressful short train ride to my exam location in London and was much appreciated. Alan, John and Trevor were all very musical and played instruments in local bands. By 1974 Alan was studying at Hatfield Polytechnic and John had begun his long career at Marconi. Trevor was still at school.

My sister Kathy and brother-in-law Cyril stayed in Ipswich until 1960. Cyril worked for Walker's Stores in Ipswich and was offered the post of Manager of the Sudbury store. I enjoyed many stays in their home in St Andrew's Road, Great Cornard. During school holidays I would help out in Cyril's shop which, by then, had become a supermarket named "Key Markets". My job was keeping the shelves stocked up and, in particular, the refrigerated section containing all the butters etc. I even got a little wage packet at the end of the week. By 1974 Cyril had left "Key Markets" and was working at Lavenham Press. Kathy was working as a cook at the Spastics Society and Carol was at Spurgeon's Children's Home.

My youngest sister Joan and brother-in-law David remained in the Ipswich area, moving from their first home in Norwich Road to Camden Road in the town. I spent many hours in their home too and David was a great help in anything mechanical. At the bottom of their garden David had a long-standing project to build himself a cabin cruiser boat. It was eventually completed and was the start of a long love affair with the sea. He also introduced me to fishing. At a Sunday School outing in Walton on the Naze I won a simple freshwater fishing rod. In the following weeks David took me to the River Gipping at Bramford to try it out. My interest in fishing never really took off but reignited another passion for David. Their son, Tim, was equally enthused with fishing and they both enjoyed great times together. As previously recorded, Joan and David and their growing family moved from Camden Road to Nr 11



Dad and Andrew

FAMILY UPDATE 1974



The Family in 1969



Charlie with nieces and nephews



The original Clarke Clan



Mum and Dad

The Street and become our neighbours. In 1974 David was working as a maintenance electrician at Ipswich Docks, having previously worked for Martin and Newby and Christy Brothers. Joan was now working for General Accident in the fire department. Tim and Ruth were still at school but Susan was working as a dental nurse in Belstead Road. The focal point for our family was, of course, 9 The Street and it was so special when we were all together. On one of the gatherings in 1969 Dad took the opportunity for a family photo shoot and used the chapel for the occasion.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MARRIAGE AND FAREWELL TO 9 THE STREET



Wedding Day June 22nd 1974

Following our engagement, it was time to consider where we would set up home. One of my work colleagues had picked up a brochure from David Brown Estate Agents advertising a new estate being built in the village of Bramford. We took a trip out to see the new houses one Saturday and liked what we saw. We were particularly drawn to the bungalows fronting on to the picturesque River Gipping. The problem was that they were selling at £9200, a lot of money in 1974. We paid a visit to Eastern Counties Building Society to check out if it was financially possible and realised that a significant deposit would be required. My father was again very generous and gave us £500 towards a deposit. We scrimped and saved and managed to accumulate £1800 as our deposit but these were the days of very high interest rates and our monthly mortgage would still be £62.90. I know that does not sound much today but, to put it into perspective, I was only earning £120 a month. It needed a conversation between my employer and the Building Society to assure them that my job was secure and it was within our means.



*Best Man Ivan has remembered
the ring*

Wendy was attending Greenfinch Gospel Hall at the time and that was where we were married on the 22nd June 1974. However, the Rushmere connection was maintained by having our reception in the old Village Hall where we had outside caterers. Wendy's sister, who was engaged to my mate David, was a bridesmaid, together with my two nieces Carol and Susan. My good friend at Church, Ivan Barley, was my best man.

We set the time of our wedding for 3pm to coincide with the time we first met for that football match in 1972.

MARRIAGE AND FAREWELL



Bridesmaids Susan, Carol and Valerie



Wendy and Dad



David and Mum



Wendy's Mum and Dad and my mate David

MARRIAGE AND FAREWELL



Joan, David, Tim, Mum and Dad in Greenfinch Church



Signing the Register and below, cutting the cake



MARRIAGE AND FAREWELL



Aunties and Uncles outside Rushmere Village Hall



The Clarke Clan outside Rushmere Village Hall

And so, at around 6pm on Saturday 22nd June 1974, we set off for our honeymoon in Cornwall. I had lived in my beloved Rushmere for nearly 25 years but was now leaving for the final time as a resident.

So what happened in the next 40 years? Well, as they say, that's another story!

CHAPTER NINETEEN

IN CONCLUSION

My journey down “memory lane” to record the events of my first 25 years living in the village of Rushmere St Andrew has been a rewarding experience. As I have retraced the steps that I made over 40 years ago I have discovered that, although most things have changed beyond recognition other things are basically the same. Take my recent visit to Alder Carr Wood where I spent so many happy days with my brother. The route down Holly Lane is definitely different where a motor cross track has changed the landscape completely. But go down a bit further to the railway tunnel and that echo is just as I remember it (yes at 64 I did try it out!). And then as I entered the wood the bluebells were just as I remembered them and the king cups were still in the place I remembered them.



ALL CHANGE NOW!

The pews have gone and the majority of the faces are no longer with us

And then there is the chapel I remember. The buildings have changed significantly and even the pews have gone (hence the one in my back garden). The hymns have changed and the style of worship is different but one thing has not changed - although the translation of the Bible is in more modern language, the message is exactly the same. There's a verse in the Bible which says “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever” I think that is fabulous news. I am so grateful for parents who took me to Sunday School and Church where I heard about the message of Jesus.

That message that I originally heard in Rushmere Baptist Chapel has

IN CONCLUSION



Just as I remember it!

Floral Memories of our walks in Alder Carr Wood; King Cups, Shirt Buttons, Bluebells, Cowslips, Campions and the tunnel with a great echo

become the cornerstone of my life. For those who accept the message of Jesus and allow Him to become their Saviour, life does not end when we leave this world. It is the start of an amazing new adventure far more exciting than this one. I trust that the readers of this book will discover that for themselves.



Cover Pictures

Front;

This is my house!
(outside 9 The Street)

Back;

Top: Mum and Dad outside
9 The Street

Bottom: Rushmere Village in 1961
By A R J Frost

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