

MEMORIES OF BLAKENEY IN THE 1930s

By Tony Wright

On the 27th March 1999 the author, born and brought up in the village, gave a talk to the Blakeney Sailing Club on the subject of Blakeney in the late 1920s and 1930s. This article is the text of his talk, making only those amendments essential to turn the piece from talk to written record. The content is drawn entirely from memory, although comments about particular events and dates have been checked where possible.

INTRODUCTION

I was born in the old Anchor Pub in Blakeney High Street on the 20th January 1915. When I arrived my mother, having already had two sons, said *What, another boy?* But Dr Kay said *Well, I can't put him back,* so here I am.

My father died when I was very young and at the age of eight I was sent to join my brother Eric at the Royal Merchant Seamen's Orphanage near Wokingham in Buckinghamshire. In those days boarding schools were tough places, especially for eight-year-olds, but just as I was getting used to it (after a year or so) my brother died from appendicitis. I was then brought back home to grow up in Blakeney's much happier environment. When I left Blakeney School I worked in the village until 1936 when at the ripe old age of 21 I took over the Post Office and Stores at Stiffkey. So what I should like to do now is to share with you a few memories of Blakeney in the 20s and 30s when I was a teenager.

I shall start off with Blakeney as a village and I shall then say a little more about my own particular experiences: firstly as a schoolboy and then as a shop assistant.

THE VILLAGE

I can remember when, with very few exceptions, there were no houses in the New Road, none up Langham Road, or in Back Lane, or on the southern side of Morston Road. Blakeney consisted then of what is now just the 'old' village: High Street, Westgate, the houses on Morston Road down to Temple Place, a couple of houses on Wiveton Road and William Starling's boat building and undertaker's business at the top end of New Road. Where the rest of the village is now there used to be allotments, all hired by village people at a relatively low rent for growing vegetables and keeping chickens and pigs. Local butchers usually killed the pigs, often doing the killing and scalding etc over an open drain – not so many hygiene regulations in those days! I can't remember anyone having a fridge then – meat and other perishables were kept outside, hanging on the wall in a box made of wood and perforated zinc. And if you wanted to keep eggs for the winter you had to put them in big earthenware tubs and cover them with isinglass.

So let's have a look round the village – first I'm going to take you down the High Street.

Right at the top, in the angle between the High Street and Back Lane, was a garage with two petrol pumps – the garage was an awkward place to get in and out of and the pumps were

almost on the road, which certainly wouldn't be allowed today. The old lock-ups behind the garage are now the Catholic Church.

Just down on the left, in May Breese's old cottage, there was for some time a dentist, and next door, of course, was the Calthorpe Arms, with a small bowling green. This pub was usually known as 'The Top House'. Further down on the right Mr Cubitt had a fish and chip shop. Then came the British Legion Hall (then called the Legion Hut) which was brought in second-hand in 1925, the donor being Mrs Jessie Burrows who lived in Whitefriars. It had previously been used as an army hut in Aylsham.

Almost opposite was a bakery owned by Charlie Russell. He was most clean and particular in his ways and you wouldn't even find a piece of straw outside his shop. The rest of the village was kept clean and tidy by Charlie Abram, the lengthman. Any small holes in the road were soon repaired – we didn't have to wait for a gang of men to appear! On the right hand side, in No 123, was John Dale's grocery shop – this must have been one of the smallest in England. Further down on the same side was a shop which sold **only** sweets. It was owned by a Mr Bond and then by Mr Harris, who died on the carner in March, 1944 - his wife was found drowned at home a few days later.

Further down still was Charlie Potterton's cycle shop and barber shop. A new Hercules cycle would cost you £4.19s.11d and 6d extra for the bell. To have a puncture repaired also cost 6d. The only time Charlie's hands were clean was after he'd given someone a shampoo. Now this is absolutely true: when Charlie's wife and daughter went on holiday he never did any washing up. He waited until the end of the week when he had a bath, then put all the dirty crocks in the bathwater. *Do you know*, he said, in his cockney accent, *all the buggers smelt of carbolic!* So he must have been using Lifebuoy soap.

Godfrey Sayers' picture gallery has been used for several businesses: confectioners and teashop, a butcher's, a post office, and a photographer's. The photographer's name was Mr Cooper and when I went there to have my 'likeness' taken he said *Sit in that chair* which I did, but in doing so I moved it – and I didn't half get told off! I was 16 then and getting a passport photograph before going to stay with my uncle, who lived in France and worked for the War Graves Commission. That was quite a challenge at the time. The two things I can picture most clearly now are the cemeteries on the Somme and the crowded trains with their wooden seats. The next time I went abroad was in 1936 on a day trip from Yarmouth to Ostend. What I remember most about that was the very rough weather on the return journey, in the dark. That trip cost 10s 6d. My next one was free – but that was in 1944.

What is now the High Street car park was given to the village by the Page family; it was originally an orchard, let to Mr Lynn, and then a public garden and children's play area. Just opposite was Sam Breese's fish shop, and next door was another bakery and teashop, run by Tim Russell. He was 99 when he died and kept up his dancing well into old age. He would say: *When I twist, you twist, and we'll all twist together*, but the girls didn't always appreciate his attentions.

Then came a butcher's shop, opened about two days a week by Edgar Mallett who came in from Stiffkey. Edgar brought his meat over in a most dilapidated old van, the doors and spare wheel tied up with string, and it often had to be pushed to get it started. Edgar liked his pint, and he liked a flutter on the horses even more but it was pretty clear that he had no success at it. Opposite was the shoemaker that everybody's heard of: Jacob Holliday. He also lived to a

ripe old age. He was a staunch Methodist and would tolerate no bad language, even the word *damn* was strictly forbidden. He didn't mind other people smoking, though, and sometimes you could hardly see across the room. His shop smelt of leather as well as tobacco, and there were ships in bottles on an upper shelf. There's a photograph of him in Michael Allen's office, which is the room where he worked. He always sat on the right as you looked in the window. Every morning he used to set the barometer that stood by the pathway leading to Mariners' Hill. It was damaged two or three years ago – I hope we shall see it again soon.

Down the hill on the left there was, for a time, another dentist, Mr Sanglier. He was also quite a good artist – I have one of his pictures. His place was later a wool shop. No 46 was a fish and chip shop run by Mr & Mrs Brown of Cley. A frequent order was *Fish and 2 please*. Next but one came Alfred Stanford's grocery and drapery shop. His nickname was Boney. A lot of people had nicknames then, no doubt you've heard of quite a few. There was Tipney Baines and Bugle Baines, Snivvy Bishop, Stilts Bishop and Mutton Bishop, Wongy Long and Willwatch Long, Cuddy Thompson and Pintail Thompson, Screw Palmer, Sugar Adcock, Trip Bean, Dutchman Temple. I suppose you know that Pintail Close was named after Pintail Thompson? I don't remember how people came by their nicknames, though Willwatch owned a boat by that name, when he was quite young.

In the yard opposite, if you remember where I left you, was the Salvation Army. Their building had been a Chapel and after the war it became Platten's fish and chip shop. We were never without a fish and chip shop until that closed down. Back across the road, and further down, was Joshua Parker's post office and stores. He was a good photographer and produced many of the old postcards of Blakeney. His premises were taken over by Freddy Brown – I'll say more about that later – and then by Bill Hayward. Opposite there was Barclays bank, now Bank Cottage. It was only open one day a week and only one person went in at a time, even when it was raining. Going back to the left-hand side of the street, there was Billy Woodrow's butcher's shop which had part of Brown's shop over the top of it. It was Billy who took me to see Norwich City play at the Nest, and to get there we went over Pull's Ferry. Next to Billy's came the Ship Inn and then another butcher's shop run by Mr Dickinson.

Opposite was a place which had been a butcher's, a post office, and then a music shop. The post office went there when Parker's finished but after the owner made some book-keeping errors it was transferred to Freddy Brown.

Further down was the Anchor Inn which my mother kept, following on from her mother. Strictly speaking, it was a beer house, as it had no spirit licence. It belonged to C.B. Smith of Trunch. Inside it looked more like a house than a modern pub, and people often came into the kitchen to drink their beer – and even through it to get into the yard at the back. I can remember going down to the cellar to get beer from the casks; to a young lad the customers looked an unsavoury lot on the whole. My mother married again in 1923, the lucky man being George Long junior. I don't think he was cut out to be a businessman: IOUs from customers would sometimes be left on the mantelpiece and George would come in and use them as spills to light his cigarettes. Once he was asked whether he sold Bass – *No*, said George, *I hent bin fishen*. George could tell a yarn when he had a mind to, but he was more at home with one-liners, such as his comment about a boat in a hard blow: *She carried about as much sail as a harlot's apron*. Morris printed some in the Sailing Club yearbook a few years ago. Anyway, after my brother Victor worked out that the pub was making a loss my mother gave up the tenancy – that was in 1937, give or take a year.

The chemist's shop next door to the Anchor was run by Mr & Mrs Johnny Goodacre. They seemed to live behind the counter as there was a fireplace and they did much of their cooking there.

Opposite the Anchor was – and still is, of course – the White Horse, but the bar wasn't as big then because what is now the lower section was the house which my grandfather owned and lived in. One of the rooms was a butcher's, used by Mr Reynolds coming in once a week by horse and cart from Stiffkey. Yes, another butcher! But I should explain that there were usually only about three butchers at any one time in Blakeney – the same as the number of bakers.

Having the Ship, The Anchor and the White Horse so close together was handy for the Salvation Army. On Saturday nights they had a service outside and then went inside all three pubs to sell the War Cry:

*Won't you come and join us, come with me,
Come, let's converted be,
Sell a penny War Cry, the same as me,
Oh come and be an Alleluia soldier.*

At the Moorings was another grocery shop run by Mr Clemence; I remember it being clean and well stocked but it didn't last long.

On the **Quay**, the Blakeney Hotel was being built in 1922 and I can remember getting lost in the cellars; I was 7 at the time. My brother worked there as a timekeeper.

Just opposite the **Low Quay**, you'd come to Curry Smith's blacksmith shop. George Thompson worked there, he became a very good metal worker and was later employed at Pye's garage. Further along into **Westgate Street** was another blacksmith's owned by Ernie Allen, it's now Perry Long's shop. And at Shipley House were Mrs Betts and her daughter Elsie who had a small grocery and drapery shop. Above the door was a large bell which made quite a clang.

Behind what is now Stratton Long's shop Mr Cobon kept some cows, and flocks of sheep often went past on their way to the marshes. The Post Office end of Hill's was another bakery run by Wilfred Russell, a relation of the other two bakers. Opposite Hill's was Walter Allen's carpenter's shop – he was brother to Ernie. Kenny Newton from Cley worked there for a time. He built the first Blakeney One Designs and also turned out more than a dozen violins – one of them is used in the Yehudi Menuhin School of Music.

Blakeney Garage was known as Pye's Garage because Herbert Pye built it, with the big garage going up in 1923. At one time he had 32 people working for him – as well as car maintenance, there was car hire, haulage jobs and fetching new cars from the manufacturers. I nearly made 33 people, but Freddy Brown gave me 10 shillings a week more to stay on at the Post Office. Up **Morston Road**, in Temple Place, there was another cobbler by the name of Johnny Wordingham, his nickname was Windigo.

There wasn't much else up Morston Road so now I'm going down the **Cart Road**, which goes due north from the Manor Hotel. In the 30s it was a very busy place because down there was a nine hole golf course, a tennis court and pavilion (which was destroyed by fire), a football field, covered with thistles and cowpats, and Will Turner's duck farm. The rural

sports were also held there, before they moved up to the Hotel Pastures. As children we used to open the gates for the golfers and were thrown a few pennies for our trouble. Caddying for the golfers brought nine pence a round, very good money in those days, of course. Later on I joined the Blakeney and Cley Golf Club; the subscription was five shillings a year but I don't remember employing a caddy!

I also used to drive my Austin 7 (registration number NG 440) along the Cart Road, over the bank and on to the Cast End, so that was a quick way to the beach. It wasn't so easy with a Ford Popular after the war and in any case the bank was raised after the 1953 floods and a stile erected.

There was a small putting green owned by Mrs Tawse just by the duck pond, which then was known as the Horse Pit – horses were given a drink there before being taken along the Cart Road to the marshes. On at least one occasion a fair was held at this end of the Cart Road. I think that was when there were two fairs that needed to be kept apart.

Before I finish my tour of the village I'd better say a word about **holiday cottages** – yes, we had them in the 30s as well, and even then some were quite big houses. Some of the families were very well-known in the village and are still connected with it today. There were several shoe people, the Clarkes, for instance, who had the Old Garden Cottage near the Low Quay. Then there were the Evans family from Leicester, the Orams, the Bramwells, the Maws, who were chemists, the Chases, and the Murdocks, including young Stinker. All these families had houses up the Morston Road. The Agnews had a picture gallery in London; their house was on the corner of Westgate Street, and I used to pump water up for them and clean their boots and shoes. I think I got 6d a week for that job. And don't forget the Brackleys, the Pembertons and the Cookes, and also the Burrows family who built White Friars for their summer residence and lived at 19 Orchard Court, Portman Square, London W1 during the winter. Most, and perhaps all, of these families were boat owners.

SCHOOLDAYS

'Schooldays' isn't really a very good title because I remember more about time outside school than in it. There were seasons for everything. We played several different games of marbles, collected cigarette cards, ran with iron hoops, skipped with ropes and whipped wooden tops. We also made our own fireworks by putting carbide in a tin with water and applying a match to blow the lid off with a bang. We made catapults, of course, and whistles and popguns, with acorn ammunition, all straight from the trees.

At harvest time we followed the binder picking up the sheaves of corn to make shocks in the field to dry and ripen. These were later made into stacks to await threshing by which time rats had occupied the stacks and at night we went round with lamps and sticks doing our best to kill them. We should have received a penny for every tail but I never saw any money. The fields look quite different today without the straw stacks. Some nights we went after rabbits with a long net on stakes; I suppose we were poaching but no-one seemed to mind. And no doubt we were trespassing when we went down on to the marshes to gather mushrooms. There were plenty to be had and they showed up white in the early dawn. Sometimes when I went with my 'peck and a half' basket there would be a dozen other people collecting – but we didn't make a business out of it, we only took what we could eat. Oh, and I mustn't forget

to mention collecting horse droppings: very good for the rhubarb (but I always put custard on mine).

Jumping creeks was another favourite past-time (we seldom fell in), and we slid down the bank and Mariners' Hill on pieces of cardboard – no wonder our flannel trousers soon showed signs of wear. Short trousers, of course, no jeans then. In the summer we could always swim even at low water, spending many hours round Agar Creek at a place called 'The Hole'.

At Regatta time, as well as swimming races, we had a high diving competition – it must be some years since we last saw that. Why did that come to an end? We also had the greasy pole, of course, and at the very end was a cage with a pig in it, which would drop into the water if you could pull the peg out. This practice was held to be cruel so for a time the pig was replaced by a duck.

Some cats went in the water as well. When a cat was missing the first place to look was down the nearest well. It was surprising how many survived – and it didn't seem to affect the quality of the water! The nursery rhyme that starts 'Ding dong bell' might have been written in Blakeney.

We spent a lot of time fishing. There were plenty of flat fish to be had in the Channel between Quay Corner and the end of the New Cut with a buttprick and you could catch them with your feet as well. Even Billy Long's dog could catch them. There were edible shrimps in Agar Creek and in summer, when the creeks on the fresh marshes had little water in them, we could easily catch eels, which were very tasty. There was water enough in Cley channel to catch fish at low tide using a net, with time enough for three beats. That form of fishing was known as 'beating the channel': a net was put across the channel and we splashed with an oar upstream of the net to drive the fish in – but not too close or you could drive them out again.

During the mackerel season a crab boat would be rowed round the Point to the seaward side of Blakeney beach to be kept ready for the shoals of mackerel – when they arrived hundreds of terns would tell you so and the water would be boiling. Sometimes there would be so many fish that it was difficult to get the net in. On one occasion I remember seeing a shoal at the water's edge with so many that we scooped them up with our bare hands. Another method of fishing was drawing the shore at night for salmon, but it was a very cold and wet job and I didn't do much of that.

In summer on Point Sundays, when it was possible to go out on a morning tide and come back in the evening, a little armada of boats and people went down to the Point to stay for the day. We would go tretting for flatfish on the ebb and again on the flood, and in between go cockling. And if we wanted tea we had to find wood to light a fire to boil a kettle, having filled it from the well near the Lifeboat House.

There was always wood to be had off the beach for lighting fires at home. And on the Eye we could get 'furra stalks'. These were the tough stalks that were left after the gorse bushes had been burnt. As often as not, it was Billy Bishop and me who did the burning, as his father had the Eye at the time. They were particularly useful on Mondays – that was when fires were lit under the coppers to do the week's washing. There was no need to saw the furra stalks – we just kept pushing them in as they burnt. Wet or fine, there was always washing on Mariners' Hill on Mondays.

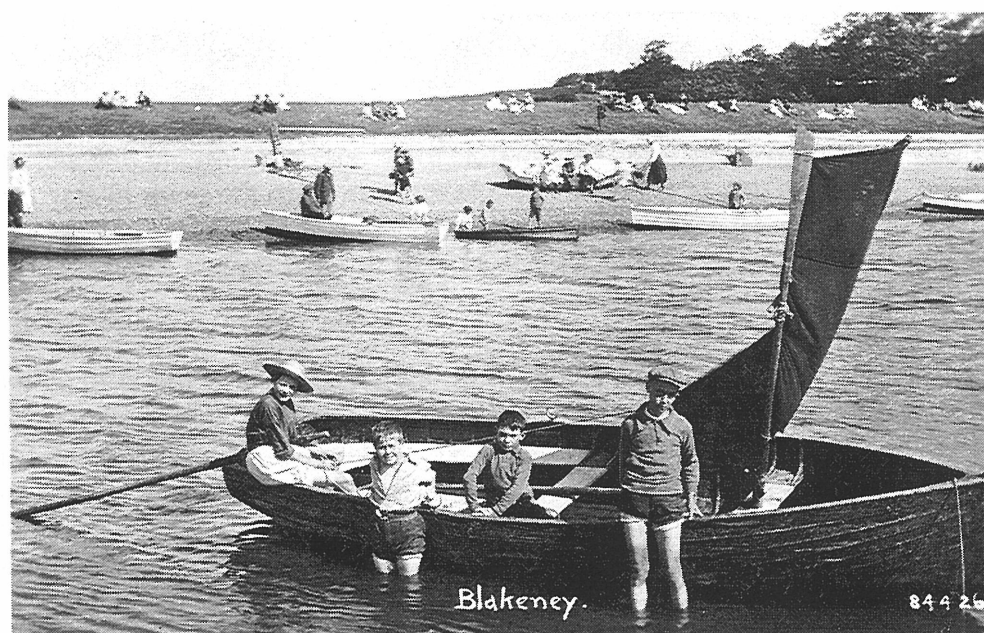
Though I took part in Point Sundays, I was also a member of the church choir. Mr John Bolton Aston was our choirmaster and also the Head Teacher. We had an annual outing to Great Yarmouth, going by train and changing at Melton Constable. We had tea in the Goodes Hotel and Mrs Jessie Burrows gave us two shillings and sixpence each to spend.

Mentioning the church reminds me that when someone died in Blakeney the church bell was rung once for each year of that person's age. I don't remember when that practice was stopped – probably during the war.

That wasn't the only bell in Blakeney. We used to see Hannah Pigott from Sheringham going round the village. She was a rather masculine looking woman, over 6 foot tall in her waterboot stockings. She'd ring her bell and shout: *Lovely white herring, lovely white herring, fourteen for a shilling*. We also had Mr Palmer from Temple Place, known as Kitty Palmer, who came round the village pushing a hand-cart and selling fruit and vegetables. He would call out: *A lovely plum, a lovely walled-in plum, peanuts a penny a bag, 2 bags for tuppence ha'penny, a ten shilling note in every bag if you be lucky. Only a few more left!* He also collected rabbit and hare skins, shouting: *Rabbit skins, hare skins, hunt'em up!* He gave a penny ha'penny for a hare skin and a penny for rabbit.

Then we had Mr Ted Bambridge who came round selling flat fish called butts. We knew they were fresh because he kept them alive on the carnsers in wooden boxes called coys. Could this be done now, I wonder?

Another service you don't get today is the carrier. We had Mr Heseltine from Cley. We could meet him at the top of the High Street on Monday and Friday mornings and give him a note of the things we wanted from Norwich. He would then call at the different shops or firms and deliver to the house the same evening – and his charges were very reasonable.



We had a scout troop in Blakeney, run by Billy Bean, and I was a cub sixer. I have a photograph of 17 of us and I think I am the only one left. We met in the Rectory Barn, which was then the social centre for the village. There were concerts, dances, and whist drives, as well as carpentry lessons by Mr Drew from Morston. But we met outdoors as well. On Sunday afternoons a gang of boys would go round the Downs, and family parties would go for walks or sit in groups along the bank, as you'll see from the **photograph** taken in 1923. There are the mussel canoes all along the channel and parties of people sitting on the bank, but no cars in sight at all – or dogs. The boat in the foreground, with the oar for a mast, belonged to my cousin Geoffrey, and the cute little boy without a cap standing by the boat is ME.

While I was still at school I had a paper round. The EDP arrived with the mail at 7.0 am but I didn't have the London papers as they were delivered by Billy Reynolds on his bike from Rounce and Wortley in Holt. The weekly papers and magazines sold in the paper shop were obtained from Ernest Joyce and Co. of White Lion Street, Norwich.

BROWN'S SHOP

I'm going to tell you something about the six years or so that I worked in Blakeney before going to Stiffkey. Having the paper round meant a very early start to my days but it did get me a full-time job at the paper shop, otherwise known as Brown's Post Office and Stores in the High Street, where Haywards used to be. Blakeney Post Office was the sorting office, which meant that mail was delivered from there to Morston and Langham in the mornings. In the evenings mail was despatched to Norwich in sealed bags by the same van.

In the shop I spent most of my time at the grocery counter and taking orders round the village, but when the shop was busy I had to do any job that needed doing. Freddy Brown was not one to turn business away; if someone wanted to know where he could get a puncture repaired, Brown would say *Leave it here* – and you can guess who had to do it – **and** I had to wash my hands afterwards! He would also sharpen knives and scissors, and did some soldering jobs. On one occasion he decarbonized his car engine to save 30 bob – but it cost him more in the end because he had to be towed back from Holt with a blown gasket.

I also helped at the post office counter, which gave me the experience I needed when I took over the Post Office at Stiffkey on 30th November 1936. My salary there was £65 and 11 shillings per year, out of which I had to fund the premises and contents – right down to the blotting paper used by the customers. The grocery side was extra, of course, although the margins on groceries were very small, and it wasn't easy to make a profit on perishables, especially as some were rotten on arrival.

But to go back to Brown's, there were many things we sold which you don't see now or else they were sold in a different way in those days - very little was pre-packed. Sweets had to be weighed out from big jars, biscuits from tins and 'loose' vinegar from casks. Sugar, prunes, sultanas and currents all had to be wrapped in flat sheets of coarse blue paper – not so easy as you might think. Soda was also loose – this was widely used for washing clothes, together with a small bag of blue. Candles were sold 6 at a time and were wrapped up in newspaper. Then there were several kinds of tapioca: rough, bullet, seed pearl and flaked.

Patent medicines were sold by the fluid ounce, some from containers called 'Winchesters'. Goodness knows what they were all used for. There was sweet spirit of nitre, Friars Balsam

and ammonia; tartaric acid, citric acid, and boric acid; tincture of iodine, permanganate of potash, saltpetre, camphorated oil, and Beechams pills – about 5 wrapped in a twist of paper. And there was naphthalene or mothballs to keep the moths away, though now mostly used against moles, I gather.

I'm not sure if licences were needed to sell any of these, but they were certainly needed to sell cartridges and fireworks. The licence for those cost 1 shilling per year, and it was 5s 3d a year to sell cigarettes, tobacco and snuff. Other licences were required to shoot game: £1 for 14 days, £2 for about 2 months, and £3 for the year or season which included the 10 shillings gun licence. The dog licence was 7 shillings and sixpence, unchanged since the days of Queen Victoria.

We also sold new and part worn clothing, such as second-hand 'tram driver's jackets', as they were called, which cost 6s 6d. A second-hand sports jacket sold for 4s 11d. Brown used to sell these around the local villages by hiring a room for three or four hours during the evening in pubs and village halls.

Needless to say, before electricity we had to have lamps, and that meant selling lamp glasses. I can still remember a few of them: Kelly, Cosmos, 2 inch Tram, 2 ½ inch Tram, Duplex, 20 line Veritas, and 30 line Veritas – all made in Czechoslovakia. Funny how I can remember those but can't remember my car number.

We sold pretty well everything a family needed for everyday living. Rubber and leather soles for shoe repairing, with small metal sprigs; a tin kettle cost sixpence, and saucepans could be mended with penny or tuppenny pot menders. We sold pig powders and poultry spice, and for sixpence you could have 7 bundles of kindling. Coffee beans were ground in an old-fashioned machine; it took ages, but the operation created a nice smell.

Balls of whiting weighing about 2 lbs and costing 2 pence were used for whitewashing ceilings, long before ceilingite and emulsion. Penny packets of black lead were used for cleaning kitchen stoves. For some reason my mother always had to mix hers in a coconut shell. There were also penny packets of red ochre for brightening up brickwork. You could have a child's paintbrush for 1 penny and good quality wallpaper cost only 4 pence a roll.

Freddy Brown was a hard master and it was difficult to get any time off. My normal hours were 8 in the morning till 7 in the evening on Mondays to Thursdays and from 8 till 8 on Fridays. On Saturdays I worked from 8 till 9 in the evening. Officially I had an hour for lunch, but I didn't usually get as long as that - there were often errands to be done, such as delivering telegrams. The hours meant that if I was picked to play for the Blakeney football team it wasn't very often that I could actually play. I remember that when my brother got married one Saturday afternoon in August, Mrs Brown said: *We shall be very busy - can't you get him to put it off till after the summer?* I did get the afternoon off, but I can remember thinking I would get wrong for not returning to work straight afterwards. I remember seeing the Church receipt book for that day in 1931: the cost of reading the banns was 2s 6d, the marriage was 5s and the certificate 2s 7d – a total of 10s 1d. He married Jacob Holliday's niece, by the way.

As a result of living and going to school in the village and then working there, I'm pretty sure that in the 30s I knew everyone living in Blakeney and Morston. How many people can say that of today's villages? Another difference between then and now is that people don't seem

to whistle any more. Not that we whistled when out on the water, of course, do we should have had a gale of wind to contend with!

AEROPLANES

This topic might seem a rather odd choice to end with, but in the 30s the aeroplane hadn't long been invented and the papers were full of news about record-breaking flights to various parts of the globe.

The Duchess of Bedford used to land her Tiger Moth in the field opposite Pye's Farm when she came to visit the nuns at Cley Mill. She was lost over the North Sea, like Amy Johnson. I remember the airship Hindenburg flying along the coast, and also a seaplane in the New Cut - I don't remember why it came but it stayed for about two days. Air Commodore Brackley flew his Sunderland Flying Boat round Blakeney before leaving for South America. He was drowned afterwards in Rio de Janeiro and his body was brought back for burial in Blakeney churchyard. And Wing Commander Fielding used to come into the Anchor - he was then Captain of the King's Flight.

In 1932 Tim Birkin landed his plane in a field of barley off the Langham Road, but he did give the farmer a cheque for £10 in compensation. I wonder if he also paid for the sheep he injured when coming down Langham Road in his Bentley. He died in June 1933 from an infection after burning his arm on the exhaust pipe of his racing car in Tripoli. As you know, he is buried in Blakeney. In retrospect, perhaps he should not have been so amused when his mechanic burnt his arm on the exhaust of his boat when it was moored at the quay.

I remember Peter Simonds being killed when his plane crashed at Morston in August 1934. He was stationed at RAF Bircham Newton and was staying with my mother in the Anchor at the time. Dr Kay's son was also killed in a plane crash, at Mosul in Iraq in July 1928. My brother was also in the RAF at the time and was able to attend the funeral. He sent newspaper cuttings back to the family, and after that we never had another bill from Dr Kay. Then there was Peter Scott who was killed in a flying accident. He is commemorated by the clock on the Church Hall - but it was 15 years later, when the clock needed repair, that Mr Harvey found out it had been wired into his shop.

We mustn't forget why we have the Cooke's Posts on the Cut. They commemorate Nicholas Cooke, a member of the British International 14 Team in 1934, who was killed in the Battle of Britain while flying a Boulton and Paul Defiant.

I used to meet John Chase, Graham's brother, when he landed at Langham airfield from Hertfordshire. He was later to be a Spitfire pilot, and we met again at Coltishall. He was then flying a Walrus, and I was driving an Armadillo.

My first flight was in a Tiger Moth, or something similar, over Aylmerton with Alan Cobham's Flying Circus. On landing, people asked if I'd enjoyed the flight. My reply was *Terra firma for me, mate, the more firmer the less terror!* Later I joined the RAF, but that's another story, of course.

Tony Wright was the sub-postmaster at Stiffkey Stores until 1972 when he took up musselling and other jobs in Blakeney; he is still the Sailing Club's bosun.