

Delivered to Belle Vue 1.2.2011
by Ursula and Noel Thornton

URSULA'S MEMORIES OF RINGMORE.

I was born (in 1943), in the first house on the right hand side from St Anns Chapel to Bigbury village, at that time called 'Graydon'. My parents moved to 'Rose Cottage' in Ringmore when I was two years old.

My earliest memories of Ringmore were of keeping chickens, and the delight of one regularly coming through my bedroom window and laying her egg on my bed. Like a lot of country people in those days, we kept a pig that was fed on the scraps.

We had no electricity, and the toilet was very primitive, at the top of the garden. We had a radio that sizzled and crackled and I remember my parent's difficulty in tuning it in. Sometimes Mum would walk me over to Mr Stacey's at 'The Ark' for him to recharge the accumulator.

We had a black-lead stove to both cook on, and to keep the cottage warm. I remember bathing in a tin bath in front of it. Our water came from the pump outside 'Rock Cottage' and of course, we had a 'Tilley Lamp' and a paraffin heater and candles.

My Dad caught and sold rabbits, I remember them being hung up in the back kitchen and mole skins drying, stretched out on a board in the sunshine. He kept ferrets and never owned a gun. He also did farm work and gardening.

In 1947 when the snow was up to the top of the hedges, Mum walked to Modbury to fetch bread and other provisions for us, and others.

On Sundays, we would often dress in our best clothes and walk to Challaborough. On our return, Dad would usually give me a piggyback ride, part way up the long hill.

I always attended Sunday school and I liked to sit opposite the door so that I could see the sunshine outside, even though I could not feel it. Miss Scoble taught us, she and her sister were very industrious and practical ladies. Among other things, they bred rabbits and made lovely fluffy gloves. I had a grey pair. We had the most amazing Christmas parties in the church hall with a huge Christmas tree, lit with small candles (not electricity).

All of the children received a gift (I think provided by a generous parishoner). When I was older, I sang in the church choir for a while, though I suspect that I was out of tune.

I enjoyed visiting Mrs Collier and Miss Smith and Mr Reynolds at 'Crosspark'. At that time, they had a café and I loved the aroma of the freshly ground coffee whenever I went there, and lovely puddings. Mum did housework for them and I would play in the garden, riding my tricycle. (See photo)

I also had a pet drake that they had given to me.

I had nice long chats with Mr Budd who lived at Rock Cottage, he spent a lot of his time sat on a chair, outside.

2.

Apart from the church and the Journey's End pub, the village had much to offer, and people took pride in their work. For instance, Mr Albert Freeman was a craftsman in building and carpentry, Mr Buck was a builder, Mr Brewer painted the signposts and swept the roads as did my Grandad and Mr Burgoyne.

There was a Post Office run by Mrs Rogers and her daughter Jean, (They also sold knitting wool) and Mr Rogers ran the taxi service. There was a filling station run by Mr Johns, in what is now the pub car park. There was a library in the old school house.

Mr Roy Hext delivered milk. Mr Farley was the carpenter, coffin maker, and funeral director. When I played with his grand daughter Nora, in their garden, I had no idea that he was making coffins. Mr Parent cut men's hair. Mrs Triggs and Mrs Lock ran a guest house at 'Sea View'. We were also catered for with various regular deliveries:- Mr Ward the baker and Fox's from Modbury and Mr Dodridge with fresh fish and fruit and vegetables. Mr Perkins delivered paraffin and ironmongery. Mr Coyte the butcher delivered meat. Occasionally, hawkers would call, for old rags, etc, and Indian men wearing turbans, would knock on the door, carrying suitcases full of silk goods for sale.

My Grandparents 'Joe' and Helen Bartlett, lived near Bigbury village.

Grandad told us that in his younger days as a farm labourer, he even worked at Combe,(Later purchased by Noel's father). He walked from Ringmore to Stoverlake (Near Ashford) to catch the horses and then get back to the farmyard by 7am for the days work. After 5pm he had to reverse the process and walk home to Ringmore. Sometimes, he would stop to soak his feet in the stream in Combe Woods near the old cottage. Gran was a seamstress and made the first set of curtains for the new Bigbury Memorial Hall. Most of my clothes were made by either Gran or Mum.

Mum would sometimes take my cousin Hannah Horne and me, to Bigbury on Sea for a picnic. We would change into those awful knitted bathing costumes, made by Mum, as was the custom in those days of economy. We would have the beach, virtually to ourselves. But later, when the double-decker buses started running, people from Plymouth came in their hundreds and the sands became crowded. I did not enjoy the beach so much from then on.

It was with great excitement in 1949, that we moved to No 1 Crossways, the first of the council houses to be completed. It was wonderful, we had electricity, a 'Rayburn' that provided constant hot water, an inside toilet that flushed, and a big garden for Dad to grow all our vegetables.

In those days we walked everywhere, making regular visits to my grand-parents at Bigbury and Aunty Mary and Uncle Jack Freeman at Kingston. On the way we would sometimes chat with Mrs Bessie Freeman at the 'Old Castle'(often plucking chickens) and the blacksmith in his forge on the hill into Kingston.

3.

We sometimes combined the walk with a visit to Ward's bakery and grocery shop at St Ann's Chapel. Mrs Ward would weigh out everything. Sugar and other dry goods were put in strong blue paper bags, she then neatly folded the top to prevent spillage. She would then add up the bill on a piece of paper, no calculators in those days. At that time, we still had Ration Books.

As children, we made our own amusements, playing hares & hounds or, hide & seek around the village and fields. One afternoon I remember a group of us arranging our own little concert, dressing up in 'costumes' and inviting some of the villagers to come and see us,. We put chairs across Cockle Lane, for them to sit on. I believe that it was Gloria Nicolls who organised us younger ones.

I sometimes played at 'Challaborough Cottage' with Avril, Glynis and Felicity Jeffery and Mary Brewer (now Fraser). They had a super swing in their linhay, and the wall of the house was good for hitting a tennis ball against! Mrs Jeffery used to arrange lovely birthday and Christmas parties in her house.

On one occasion that I recall, we collected for a charity, with the aid of their donkey.

Sometimes, I would go to Mr May's barn and watch him milking the cows, he would let me feed them 'mangolds'. I remember him as a quiet man, I probably got in his way, but, but he never complained.

I also loved to watch the corn harvest, then later on, the threshing. It was very dusty, as the threshing machine separated the corn into sacks. I remember sitting on my own in the corner of the field at the top of Cockle Lane, enjoying my picnic, Little did I know then, that I would marry a farmer.

Mr & Mrs Leigh lived at 'Bohemia' and I was friends with Carol, their daughter. One day they took me to Plymouth with them, in their car. As we did not have a car, this was a real treat.

I was fascinated when Mr & Mrs Elson of No 5 Crossways acquired a television set. I thought 'Dixon of Dock Green' was fantastic. Eventually, we had a TV of our own.

Coronation Day was warm and sunny, and celebrations took place in the field behind the council houses. My friend from Lower Manor Farm gave me a ride on her horse which she had decorated for the occasion. I did not enjoy being up so high, and decided that I much preferred roller-skating.

I went to Kingston School and travelled there by 'Stevens' coach.

The teachers were Miss Johns for infants, and sewing and knitting. She also took us on nature walks. Sometimes on sunny days, we had our lessons outside, which I loved. Mrs Crocker was the headmistress and taught the older children.

In the house opposite the school, the doctor ran a weekly surgery.

4.

I had dancing lessons at Modbury with Miss Groves, so once a week I would remain on the school bus for a lift back to Modbury where my Mum would meet me. We would go to 'Fox's café' and have beans on toast, before crossing the road for my lesson.

When I took exams in Plymouth, and on one occasion, in Paignton, Mrs Alice Mason would accompany us to play the piano for me. Although I did ballet, I really enjoyed tap dancing the most. I had an offer to go to school in London to further my dancing, but being very shy (except on stage) and a 'country girl', I did not take it up. My teacher moved away and I did not have any more lessons. However I did partake in a talent contest in Kingsbridge Town Hall. I choreographed my own tap dance, my mum made me a colourful costume, and Mrs Mason kindly played the piano for me. We hired a taxi from Mr Rogers of the Post Office to take us. Although I was naturally very shy, I enjoyed 'tap' so much that, I lost all my reservations when dancing. To my utter surprise, I won the contest.

Mrs Mason and my mum sometimes organised pantomimes which were held in the W.I. Hall. Most of us local children would partake and it was great fun. In fact the hall was used quite a lot for whist drives, parties, dancing, and concerts, some of which were performed in 'Devonshire Dialect'. I remember one, with Mrs Mason, Miss Bardens, Mrs Lock & my mum, which was hilarious.

I was familiar with quite a few houses in Ringmore, because my mum used to clean them, and my dad did gardening. The owners were more like friends than employers. 'The Vean' was a favourite of mine with the lovely flower beds in front of the house. Mr and Mrs Reid moved from 'The Vean' to 'Three Corners' which was next door to their relative Mrs Searleswood at 'Well Cottage' that had lovely parquet floors. Colonel Cowley lived at Walnut Tree Cottage. In later years I renewed acquaintance with him, when Noel and I joined the Civil Defence Corps.

When I was 11, I took an exam to be accepted for Kingsbridge Secondary School as it was out of our area.

My Dad took me to Plymouth to buy a bicycle for cycling up to St Ann's Chapel for the Western National bus. I also persuaded him to buy me a pair of 'slip on' shoes that were the height of fashion, at that time. In those days most schoolgirls, including myself, wore white ankle socks until leaving.

I also joined the Girl Guides and stayed at a friend's house for tea.

I shall always be grateful to my parents. They worked hard and sacrificed a lot, so that I could have the best sports equipment and uniform and other expenses.

My school days at Kingsbridge were such happy times. I had a great respect for the teachers.

5.

Holywell Stores was run by Mr Stan Peard and his wife. The shop was much smaller then, taking over the ground floor of the old house.

After they left, Mr & Mrs Delmar owned it and extended it, and some year's later, after I was married, I worked for them when Mrs Delmar was taken ill.

Meanwhile, my mum worked in the Peard's shop at Challaborough and Noel supplied potatoes.

During my teens, the highlight of the week, was square dancing, in the Memorial Hall at St Ann's Chapel. Mr Peard would play the piano- accordion for us, as accompaniment. My mother would walk up with me, and visit Gran and Grandad while I went to the dances.

This was a lovely social event for all us teenagers and it was at this time that I got to know Noel. Although I saw him on the school bus, we had never had a conversation.

On leaving school, I attended Plymouth Technical College to study Cookery and Home Economics.

It was during this time that Noel and I had our first date. (Walking around the village.) He was my first and only boyfriend. (And Noel, likewise.) During our courtship, on the long summer evenings we loved to walk to Aymer Cove,(where Noel would swim), and along the cliffs towards Wiscombe.

On Sunday evenings we attended Bigbury church as numbers were very low, sometimes it was only Reverend Davies, his wife playing the organ, and us.

We were married in Bigbury Church on 23rd June 1962. Mrs Alice Mason played the organ for us, Mrs Barbara Taylor of Marwell made my bouquet and the bridesmaids posies and the buttonholes. She was a wonderful florist, somehow incorporating flowers that were out of season.

My father was a very quiet and contented man and did not 'move with the times'.

It was quite late in his life before we could persuade him to have a telephone, which was lovely as we could talk to him every day, and not just when we took up meals. It gave us all peace of mind.

Ringmore is a village with much character and charm and thankfully mostly unspoilt. I feel thrilled that my son Timothy and daughter in law Alice are able to enjoy living in such a lovely place. Even in the same house that I grew up and lived in, until my marriage to Noel.

Village life is about the community, and my memories are of lovely people who made it a good, happy and safe place to grow up in.

These are just a few of my own personal memories of 'My Ringmore' and some of the people that I knew and respected.