

Studwell – Droxford in the 1960's (Charles Skipwith)

1960's

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My family first came to live in Studwell Lodge, which they bought from the Bruce family, when my father retired from farming in Berkshire at the age of fifty five. It was then 1959 and I, as a teenager, was overawed by the sheer size and space of the property. The village was very welcoming to us newcomers. Barbara Wade was one of the first to cross the doorstep bearing a fruitcake that she had made. She was a legend in Droxford history with her riding school and stern attitude towards car drivers who dared to pass her clutch of Thelwellian students. She was a pillar of the church who ably supported Pagey (Rev Page), the first rector that I knew. His rectory is now Willow House, just across the treacherous A32 from the Square.

The village of Droxford was, at that stage, a self sufficient community with Harriots, the butcher's shop (I too remember Brian Harriott and other family members, Pamela). Nearby in School Lane there was the local village provender in the form of Clarke's Stores. Herbert Clarke was the owner and capably managed his attentive staff composed mainly of the family and Mr Lodge, a jolly fellow and talented musician who tried to teach me guitar in those early 1960s. He hailed from West Meon, a neighbouring village. There was Rodney Clarke who taught me the rudiments of golf at the 9-hole course of Corhampton where he was Captain. I recall that he died an early death, actually on the course, and is now buried in the graveyard at St Mary's. Then there was also Henry Clarke who went on to run the sister shop in Hambledon successfully until selling out and retiring in the 1980s, I believe. Moving up from the Square northwards, was firstly, the village chemist. I think it was then run by Ken Ward, I believe. Next door was P W P Smith, the Saddler. He was a charming man who was ready to turn his skills to any 'leathery' task, be it shoe-mending or other. His shop was opposite the Old Post House (or telephone exchange). Then came another village store which later was to become a Mace shop. Climbing up the North Hill was the antique shop on the same side as the Baker's Arms. Above the Baker's Arms was the Post Office which sold many items such as sweets, magazines and stationary. On the opposite side of the road was Taylors Garage run by Laddie Taylor together with his mother Old Mrs Taylor. She was always ready to serve customers with the Shell petrol at 3/6d a gallon with a squirt of Redex! I spent many a happy hour in the workshop as a boy and actually had a holiday job as a cleaner-up and assistant pump attendant! Moving up from the garage one came to the Off Licence which I didn't frequent. Then, over the brow one plunged down to the outer extremity of the village to Merington's Garage, who drew their clientele from the surrounding villages and appeared to be in direct competition with Taylors.

In the opposite direction, going Southwards, there was Watts, the electrician (a somewhat apt name I always thought). Of course, I must not forget the police station in Police Station Lane. This establishment was the hub of the Meon Valley jurisdiction. Every month on a Thursday the District Court hearings were held there presided over by three local JPs. It contained two holding cells for prisoners which, I gather, were used on occasions by the previous owner of Studwell to lock up his children when they had been naughty. It was only for a short hour or so, just to teach them right from wrong. Opposite stood the White Horse Inn of which the reputation spread far and wide. Its landlord was, initially, Philip Marshall who soon after our arrival, moved to the West Meon Hut. Most mornings a motley crew of Meon Valley aficionados would gather in the 'quarter deck' as the little back room off the main bar was called. Jackie Slaughter lead the pack, recounting tales from his past as a submariner, and passing scathing remarks on all and sundry amongst the locals. My father Philip S-T, Ted Stokes, Robert Hennessy, Stalky Lukis, Bob Sellon, Bill Simonds and many more were members of this auspicious gathering.

Then there was the village hardware shop. In fact this was the headquarters of Westbrooks, the local builders. I can only recall Neil, John and Cyril Westbrook; but they were major players in the team that did all the changes and modifications to Studwell. Beyond this point there were no more traders.

People who I knew, of my parents' generation, were the Lanyons in South Hill House, Bill and Lette Simonds, Maxie Hines and family, Dick Mack and his daughter Libba and son Richard, Favel Stewart and her son Ninian, Martin Thornycroft, the subsequent landlord of the White Horse with his wife, Bunny and that huge white Rolls Royce Hearse that was used for trip to the cash-and-carry. Further on towards the river down Mill Lane were the Hulbert family, Elizabeth and John with their two sons Anthony and Gervaise. Back up to the Square was Lady Mary Clough-Taylor in the Manor House, Richard Martineau (an Eton Housemaster) in the Old Rectory. Then, on North Hill was Robert Hennessy (of the Cognac family). Further on up were Ted and Pat Stokes opposite

How does Droxford feature in your personal history?

What are your best memories of Droxford?

How has Droxford changed over the years?

Share memories about your local community, its history and people.

Taylor and Peter Rowseil at the farmhouse on the top corner. He eventually bought Studwell from my father.

Our in-house team of happy helpers was composed of Mr and Mrs Giles with their daughter, Lynda. They lived in one end of Studwell Lodge. Mrs Giles was a supreme country cook. Every meal was delicious. Her husband looked after the garden and drove round in his black Humber Hawk which lived in a coach house in the stable yard. These valiant people were assisted by others that lived in the village. There was Mrs Miles (Dot) who lived in The Park. My mother, Barbara Skipwith-Tyser, was godmother to her son, John. He had, I recall, two sisters as mentioned by another subscriber to this site. Mrs Lacey was another.

The property was purchased for the princely sum of £8,000.00 in 1959 and had a further £4,000.00 spent on it to bring it up to date. At that time it comprised a large garden (2 acres approx), a sunken kitchen garden (0.5acre) with an access tunnel from the stable yard where there were 5 or 6 loose boxes, 2 carriage houses (with accommodation over and beside them for Mrs Bushell, who was re-located there from the London Blitz during the Second World War), 1 tack room, a potting shed, a squash court which was turned into an aircraft component factory during the war and two paddocks beyond the footpath to the river Meon and the church.

Of course, many people knew of the tunnel that joined the stable yard to the sunken kitchen garden. This ran a distance of approx 150 yds under the main lawn and it was the handiwork of the crew of Captain Bower's ship. Firstly, the Captain's wife asked her husband to overcome a problem that she had. When the Captain was away at sea, she was in the habit of giving tea parties and soirees. Her guests were unable to admire the view down to the Meon across the carefully tended borders of colourful blooms since the runner beans and other vegetables beyond created a screen. The good Captain brought the ship's company over to Droxford when they were next in Portsmouth and had them dig out the area by some 12ft graduated to 6ft at the lower end. That was all OK; but in the fullness of time they were asked to return to cut through a tunnel high and wide enough for a man and wheelbarrow to pass through. Mrs Bower was not keen on her guests viewing Adam, the gardener wheeling barrowloads of manure across the lawn and dumping it over the wall of the sunken garden then climbing down a ladder to distribute it. A good story, but maybe glamourised slightly.

Memory 1. During the harsh winter of 1962/3 a bunch of us gained a little pocket money by pushing cars that got stuck on the snowy A32, up the hill. We ran round to the window at the top in the hope of getting a tip. If this wasn't forthcoming, we'd push 'em back down again!

Memory 2. Christmas postal duties through Soberton (supposedly the longest village in England) after leaving the warmth of the Droxford PO where we sorted the mail early in the morning. I felt like Scott of the Antarctic struggling through the deep snowdrifts to the outlying farms and cottages.

Memory 3. Shoving the small change from our drinks in the White Horse into the heavy beams over our heads by the fireplace in the Quarter Deck'. There were some 400 old pennies firmly wedged in and we strongly believed that the place would have fallen down if it wasn't for the added coppers. Some hard-up landlord in times to come took great care in removing them!

There are so many memories of which I could write; but it would take a book to do it. Droxford was, to me, the absolute epitome of what a village and village life should be. That has all changed now, and the place has become a dormitory to the surrounding towns of Winchester, Portsmouth and Southampton, even Basingstoke and London. It seems that the heart has been wrenched from it slowly but surely over the generations. Maybe I'm just too sentimental. I long for the moment when I can return to live there once more.

Written by Charles Skipwith. To send Charles Skipwith a private message,
A memory of in shared on Saturday, 17th January 2009.

This is an absolutely marvellous evocation of Droxford in the 1960s.

A few comments:

The Hulberts had moved from Firhill to the Mill House, and Anthony and Gervase

had a sister, Vicky.

I think that the chemist was Mr Ward, a keen photographer who may well have taken some of the photographs in this collection.

The village schools deserve a mention, although you didn't go to them. I went first to "Miss Ethridge's" in the stables at Firhill and later to "Kingcups" in Miss King's house in the square and later elsewhere. I have written about it here <http://lawfordherry.blogspot.com/2008/02/schools-1950-1967.html>
Barbara Wade taught me to ride; I have a photo....

Herry Lawford
Meonstoke

Comment from [redacted] on Thursday, 22nd January 2009.

The only thing I can remember about the stud farm, was my mother was great friends with some very popular horse rider ?? She left the stud then moved on to America. I can remember mother saying that the horse riding lady was in the Portsmouth newspapers .

Comment from [redacted] on Saturday, 11th August 2012.

Great memories, Charlie. I realise it was just over a 100 years before your tenure; but John Bower was an Army Lt Col (longest ever on the Active List dying at 101 years of age in 1910) and he bought Studwell from (soon to be Admiral of the Fleet) Sir Henry Keppel, whose wife of course had the crew dig the tunnels.

Comment from [redacted] on Friday, 1st February 2013.

have been shared so far in response to the memory "**My Time at Studwell Lodge And in The Village of Droxford**".

Why not get involved and post your comments using the [comment form](#).

To post a comment about this Memory, complete the form below. Your comment will appear alongside the original Memory on the website. If you wish to send a private message (not published on the website) to the person that wrote the Memory,

Subject: **RE: My Time at Studwell Lodge And in The Village of Droxford**

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