Edwardian Pershore by Arthur Dowty

Martin Coombs writes:
In the annual report of the Friends of Pershore Abbey, I wrote an article about Bishop George Bell, Bishop of Chichester 1929-1958, ecumenical leader, and friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and in the 2nd World War an outspoken opponent of the indiscriminate allied bombing of German towns. George's father, the Rev. James Alan Bell was Vicar of Pershore 1894-1898, and George spent those four years of his childhood in Pershore. Of the three parishes they lived in, George and his six brothers and sisters regarded Pershore as their favourite home. As a result of this article, I received a letter from Mr. Arthur Dowty of Lifford Gardens, Broadway dated September 1985. He wrote as follows:

Your article reminded me of the friendship between the Rev. Allen Bell and my father. I was born in 1893 so I am now 92 ears old. My father met the Rev. Allen Bell when they were both visiting sick and old folk in the Newlands area.
I do not remember him, but I have heard of the good he did. My parents came from Evesham, and both were of Wesleyan families. As there was no Wesleyan chapel in Pershore the children were christened in the Abbey. The Rev. Allen Bell told my parents that they were to feel free to take Communion in the Abbey. I understand that he expressed great hopes for a better relationship with other churches. His son was following his father's opinions and actions.
I shall endeavour to come to a Friday morning service in the Wick Chapel during October, where the altar rails are a memorial to one of my brothers. A plate on the side of the organ is a memorial to my father and mother.
I came to a Friday morning service last year in October, just one year after the death of my sister, Mrs. Fell. She was then 98. I had one sister and six brothers. Now I am the last of the old family.

I visited Mr. Dowty several times at his home in Broadway where he lived with his wife and daughter, and he wrote me the following account of his early memories of Pershore:

My memories of Pershore are of the years before the 1st World War.
My parents were married in March 1883 and lived in Evesham where their first two. children, a boy and a girl (Jessie) were born. In 1885 my father bought the business of Mr. Lunn (who had been the apothecary on St. Helena) in Pershore. In the next three years three more sons were born. After a gap of about 4 1⁄2 years I was born in August 1893. In 1901 twin sons were born.
In 1906 I started school in Worcester. Holidays were spent helping at home and in the business. When I left school, I worked in Worcester and in 1911 enlisted in the R.A.M.C.
In February my father died, and I returned to Pershore for a short time to help with his business.
In September 1914 I was commissioned in the Army, and left Pershore, and except for one or two short leaves, that ended my life there. In 1915 my sister married Sidney Fell who was killed in France in July 1916. During the war most of my brothers also left Pershore.

Three served in various services and my mother and sister moved to Worcester. The last brother left Pershore about 1921.
We have traced the Dowty family back to 1720; damaged records prevent further search. My grandfather, John Dowty, died in 1886. He manufactured wheels for wheelbarrows. Some had iron rims and were very strong, some had thin wood rims with eight turned spokes. These were for ladies' wheelbarrows. Between these was a variety of wheels. It is interesting that Grandfather made undercarriages for wheelbarrows, and one of his grandsons, my youngest brother, George, made undercarriages for 16,000 Lancaster bombers and equipment for other planes, and the undercarriage for the first British jet plane.
My memories of Pershore are based on the Abbey and the Avon. Both in their way played a great part in my early life. From about 1896 the river fascinated me.
The steam tug Bee carried grain to the mills at Wyre and Pershore, and sometimes towed the barge Wasp, returning with flour. The banks of the mill meadow were used for undressing before swimming. Fishing was always popular. Flooding happened quite often in the winter and once three horses were marooned on a portion of higher land. The whole of the weir meadow and some of the allotments on the town side were.
flooded. The flooding of the Wyre meadows which were at the back of the Pomona jam Factory often occurred. If there was a severe frost, there would be hundreds of skaters.
the ice was very firm as it was not deep.
Another attraction was the pleasure steamer Jubilee. This was joined later by the River Queen, a much larger boat. It was interesting to see two or three punts with the men cutting the osiers. These were treated by Messrs. Spiers at premises near the mill and the resulting rods were made into hampers of various kinds, baskets, and similar wicker articles. They supplied large quantities of these to market gardeners in Evesham.
The mill land between the public footpath and the mill pool was fenced with tall metal fencing. At the corner near the Mil House were two large iron gates. When a circus came to town these gates would be opened and the circus horses, elephants and any other suitable animals were brought down through the gates to enjoy a bath in the Mil Pool.
The town had no sewage system, but there was some form of disposal of water from road drains. On one occasion, about 1903, a very severe storm flooded part of High Street, between Church Lane and Phillips the Grocers; the drains for that part had become blocked. Houses in that part were flooded to nearly two feet.
The Mill was operated by a large water wheel, but about 1904, a turbine was built. The flour produced by the mill supplied most of the bakers in the town and the near country bakeries. This was delivered in a magnificent wagon. It was always beautifully clean, and the metal work shone. For local deliveries they used two large and beautiful horses, and for country work a third was attached as a leader. I can still remember the jingle-jangle of the harness and see the horses? "nosebags" containing the midday feed hanging at the back.
In 1898 the volunteers for the Boer War, any who offered, marched to the station to join one of the Worcestershire regiments. They were dressed in their black uniforms and took their spike-top helmets with them. Maybe twelve to eighteen months later those who had volunteered were dressed in light khaki of t h e same type as was used in the 914-18 war, for service in hot countries.
I believe that out of their pay of one shilling per day, if they were married one half was deducted to be paid to the wife. There was no allowance for children. There were several

songs describing the conditions and appealing to the public to give money to help those whose husbands had gone to fight.
Weekly illustrated magazines gave graphic reproduced drawings of battles and events in South Africa. The siege of Ladysmith was very well covered and there were rejoicings when Baden Powell and the remnants of his men, together with certain ladies who had also suffered, were relieved.
The Boers did surrender in 1902 and there was rejoicing in England and Scotland; but there was no attempt to reward those heroes or to compensate them for the suffering of those who were left to maintain themselves as best as possible. In Pershore a Grand Parade of decorated vehicles took place but it was quite a long time before some of the men returned home. Mr. Ballinger, who lived in Station Road, was the clerk of the Workhouse Guardians and doled out a certain amount of relief. But there was no definite amount.
The Abbey is and always has been the centre of the town. I have not heard the bells for 40 years, and then only to hear them strike the hour. My memory of them is at least 89 years, and in my brain, I can still hear them as I went to school. My favourite tune is "Ye choirs of New Jerusalem".
Another memory is of the gas standard lamps in the Abbey. The light was enclosed in a wide circle of filigree brass, about 20-24 inches in diameter and the depth about 4 or 5 inches. Those standards were a thing of beauty, at least I thought so. Then the "Lantern 'Tower". There were open burning gas jets about 6 inches apart around the tower. These gave a soft but pleasing effect to the tops of the four arches supporting the tower.
A most important person must be mentioned - Mr. Need, the Verger. He was always on duty, and maintained the interior in the best way that was possible in those days. He was kind.
.The dates of their coming and departure I do not know but I do remember the Rev. Bridgewater, and later the Rev. Freddy Lawson. Lawson used to cycle quite long distances. Chiefly I remember him because of his eldest daughter, who had possibly the first motor car in the town. One day she was travelling up High Street from Broad Street, the engine making that well known popping sound, until about opposite the International Store the car could not climb the hill' to the Post Office! Several men got behind and pushed, and so the summit was reached!
The organist Mr. Mason must be remembered. I do not know any other person who played while I lived in the town. He often gave recitals, and always played for a period after all had left the Abbey.
There was a very fat, very tall and very big parson in every way. I believe his name was Wilding. One evening he slowly ascended the pulpit. He announced his text - "I am but as a little child. I know not how to go out - or - how to come in." That caused much merriment for weeks.
There were some outstanding weddings. One from a particular house on the Worcester road about 4 miles from Pershore. The bridal party and some of the guests travelled to the Abbey in small carriages drawn by two rather small white horses.
The Cemetery, in the care of Mr. Smith who was later joined by his son, was beautifully kept, and had many large and colourful flower beds. The grass was always well cut, and the paths maintained in perfect condition.
The Hospital was always to the writer a place to marvel at. How was it possible to stick legs and arms together? I often used to wonder if they used glue or paste. The doctors were

regarded as something divine. Dr. John Rusher I knew well. I once kicked his legs when he was dressing my finger. I had lost the tip playing.
His brother Dr. James Rusher visited his country patients on horseback and became known as "Jockey" Rusher. Dr. Emerson I only spoke to once, and that was to say "Goodbye".
In Defford Road, not far from the Cemetery there was the Racecourse. The grandstand backed on to the road. About 2 meetings were held each year. The course took in 2 or 3 meadows, and part of the course was along the riverside. Horses came in by train, as well as local ones. Hounds from the Croome kennels hunted 2 or 3 times each week during the winter.
About 1910 Gustav Hamil landed a plane on the Racecourse. Later it was surmised that he was a German spy.
About 1910 Mount Pleasant was sold to Mr. Deacon. He also bought plum orchards near and a large orchard at Toddington. These purchases were for jam manufacturing. I believe his company was based in Yorkshire, not far from Leeds. He used Mount Pleasant as a rest home for members of his staff. The Deacons were friendly folk.
At the rear of the International Stores in the High Street and other shops were the workshops of Messrs. Watt the coach-builder. 'They made some beautiful vehicles. From various carriages to the ordinary drays, farm wagons, milk floats, dog carts, baker's vans etc. Some of these were painted in very bright colours.
The International Stores opened at 8am until 8pm and 12 midnight on Saturdays. The prices charged were normal for that period. Cheese 6d. (21⁄2d.) per pound and tea about 5d. Butter they received in wood buckets. These when empty were in demand. Woodbine cigarettes were 5 for one penny. Wills Navy Cut cigarettes 10 for 21⁄2d.; 20 for 41⁄2d.
'There were several butchers shops, Elkington, Wood, and Willis being the three largest. Al used to slaughter their own animals. Several pork butchers' shops also sold certain cooked meat products. The butchers remained open on Saturday night until their stocks were al sold, and this could be from 9pm to 11pm. It was quite an accomplished art for some buyers to remain outside, watching the prices of the various joints decline, until they were afraid of another bidder suddenly agreeing to the price. A shop in Broad Street sold New Zealand lamb.
There were several grocers, Prothero, Phillips (corner of Church Lane) and Phillips (who owned the Music Hall). It was possible to buy twenty-four large oranges for one shilling. Biscuits were displayed in those large square tin boxed with glass fronts, so the customer could select. The last named of the Phillips also had a horse drawn cart which visited some of the villages and always on the footboard was a large can of paraffin. The country folk depended on paraffin for light.
Water was supplied by pumps from wells, some quite deep. Some houses shared their well. This was difficult in winter as quite often the pumps would be frozen. It was the general practice to keep a bucket of water in the house. In one house a concrete well was fed with rainwater from al the roofs, and a pump in the outer kitchen supplied soft water, for washing and similar use.
At the side and rear of Phillips the grocers was a fair-sized Hall with a stage, with other rooms behind for small meetings and for use as dressing rooms when plays were produced. Each year for al one week the local Operatic Society produced a musical, (of course Gilbert and Sullivan). Sometimes it was used for political meetings, sometimes for a play.

In Head Street there was a very large building known as The Gymnasium. This was used by various societies for gymnastics, tennis, boxing, and the Scouts. But there was one outstanding event held every January, the Parish Supper. There were three lines of trestle tables from the stage. Seating for some was by chairs borrowed from everywhere possible. Forms were also in demand. I cannot remember fi knives were provided, but I seem to remember that those invited brought their own. Sandwiches were cut in huge mounds by many willing workers. But the chief item was the mince pie. Miss Ridgeway was the organiser of this item. She asked, persuaded, and forced housewives to make one, two or three dozen pies and to promise delivery at her house the day before the great day. How all these were transported from her home to Head Street I do not know. I did once see the collection at Miss Ridgeways, and it was frightening. Some of the pies were white, some a very dark brown, almost black, and every shade between. some had sugar on, then some had not.

Miss Ridgeway lived in a High Street house. It is near Broad Street and used to be between the grocer Prothero and Greenhouse the ironmongers.

After the supper the tables were removed, and various artists provided entertainment. There was one particularly good turn. The Rev. Fowler, (I believe of Elmley Castle), was always popular, and full of up-to-date cracks.

The Road in country and town were stones and dirt. They could be very dirty in wet weather. Sometimes there appeared holes, due to a stone being displaced by a horse becoming restless. I once asked the man responsible how they repaired such damage. He kindly explained to me the process, not just shovelling in dirt and stone, but rebuilding it. The town roads became very dusty in dry weather. To help keep this from becoming a nuisance a Water-cart was used. The first was a tank on two wheels, and later a very large tank on 4 wheels, with a pipe leading to a long-shaped pipe at the rear, about a foot from the ground. Water was fed down by the driver operating a valve. The
result was like a large watering can.

At the station there was a weigh-bridge. Carts when loaded with coal or other materials could check the weight of their load. When we ordered a ton of coal, we could get extra or less and the weigh bill was attached to the invoice. Coal was 18/- a ton delivered.

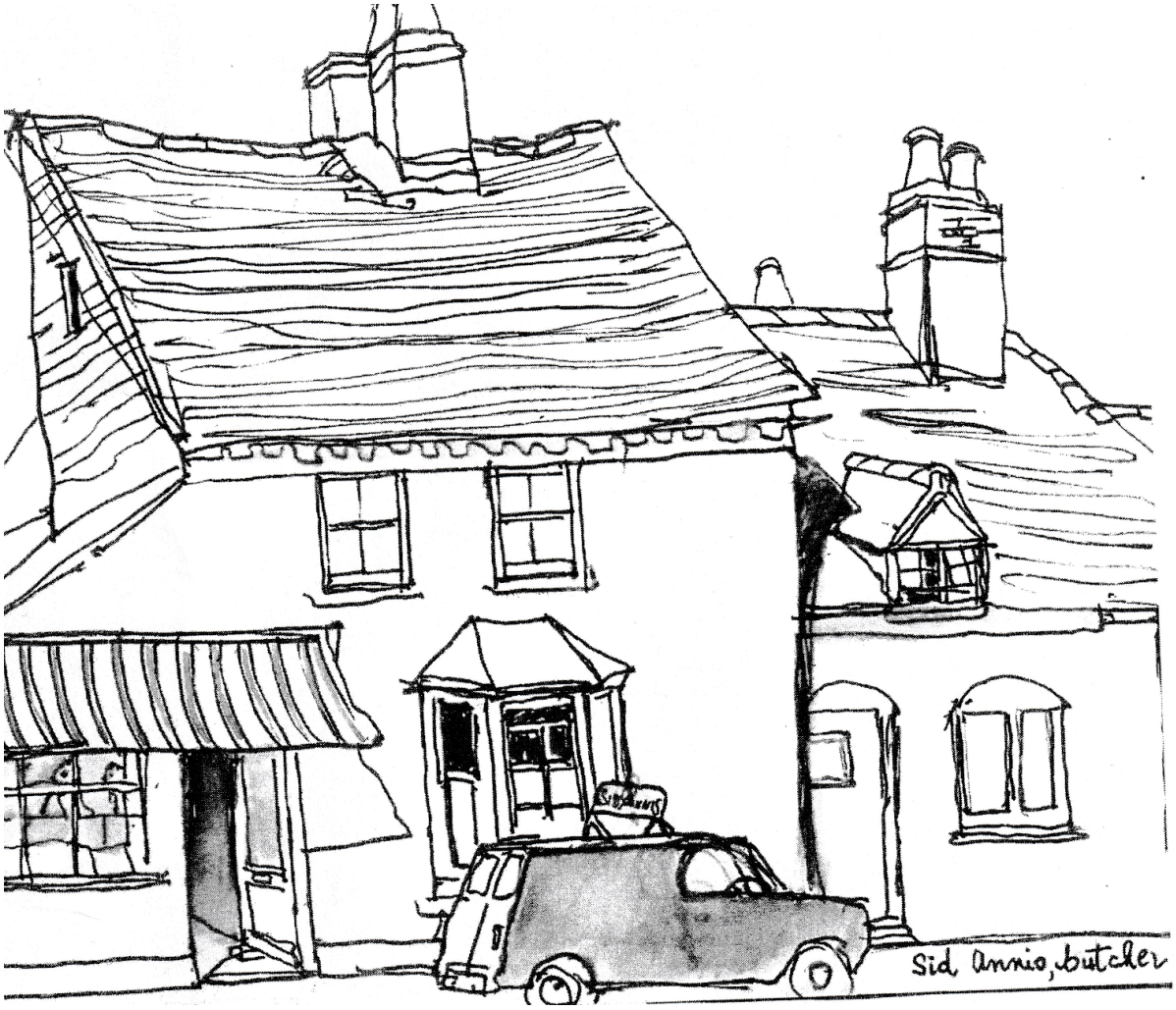
Newlands had many very old timbers after timber lath and plaster houses. A number had an earth floor, others were floored with old bricks and some with slabs of stone. Such floors were difficult to keep clean, resulting in a gradual lowering of a
healthy standard of living. There were some reasonably good houses, some quite good. and modern. At the top of the road where it joins the Three Springs Road was a substantial house, Amerie Court, occupied by Capt. and Mrs, Cartland. He was agent for the Tories of the area. There as a child lived Barbara Cartland, their daughter, and world-famous writer of romantic novels.

At the end of Head Street, where it joins Newlands, was a Cattle Market. I can remember the land being wrecked and cleared and the market built. It was quite an important market for cattle and sheep.

In Broad Street a fruit and vegetable market was held and as it proved a great success a company was formed. It had its logo, the 4 P's - Pershore Product Properly Packed. It was open to any buyers, and they would sell small or large quantities. One of my youngest brothers (he was aged about 9) used to buy for the house. He often bought a chip basket of beans, and in the season often 14lbs of strawberries, some to eat, others to preserve. Then

there were plums and apples and potatoes. After about 2 years the Market bought property near the schools and started on a programme of buildings, so that soon goods were undercover.

In Broad Street there was a bakehouse belonging to Prothero the grocer. The ovens were on the side of an outer wall. This wall was the spot where those with time could stand against the wall and warm themselves. In the roof of this or a nearby building was a water tank. How this was filled I do not know, but a pipe led to a drinking fountain on the roadside.
There were two banks, Capital and Counties in High Street, and Midland in
Broad Street. There were several building society agents, and also agents for insurance companies.
Gas was provided by the town's Gas Works. I remember being taken there with other pupils by the headmaster. 'The method as explained was quite simple, for it seemed to be run by the manager and one other man. What has remained in my memory was the often mentioned "Ammoniacal Liquor of the Gas Works". Apparently, this was the water through which the gas passed on its way to the Gas Holder. The streets had gas lamps and were individually lighted and turned off. The streetlights were gas. They used to be a naked flame, but I remember these being changed to mantles.
The shops provided for the townsfolk and for the many villages.
Nickson in High Street stocked materials, bedding, household linen and certain garments only seen in shop windows. But the real centre of that business was Mrs. Nickson, who created hats for ladies. Some of these, if they had been real, would have won gold medals at Chelsea Flower Show; others would tempt the sporting shooting man, to see the birds in flight upon the head of some lady.
Nearby was the shop of Cooks who had fresh fish delivered 3times each week. They also had the next shop for china and glass.
Greenhouse was a large ironmonger which sold all kinds of ironwork and cycles. They were the only stockists of petrol, and this was in the well-known 2 gallon can,
which required another can to start the cap turning.



The butcher shop of Mr Annis. Its deep freeze was formerly the Town jail (in Newlands)

Opposite, in High Street, and next to the Angel Hotel was Milward the Sadler. I have watched him at work, he and his men made some beautiful harness, and it was interesting to see them repair and patch up some old harness for a farmer.
Peter Hanson had quite a large shop next to the Three Tuns Hotel. He specialised in things for men. He once attracted great attention by a rather startling window poster at the time of the annual sale which stated, "Peter Hanson's trousers down again".
Peek had a material and Ladies dress and garment store. It was alongside the entrance to The Angel Hotel. Next door was occupied by Field, an ironmonger, but more importantly they dealt with farm machines. Often in the centre of Broad Street could be seen a great display of grass cutters (field grass), rakes, corn binders, elevators for lifting hay and straw onto ricks or into barns.
Fernside in Bridge Street, and Hall in High Street had large stocks of books and writing materials. They both had extended showrooms at Christmas when they displayed fancy. goods and toys.
In the upper part of High Street, there was a greengrocer named Hall. He was a great character, being a very ardent supporter of Free Trade. One day someone told him that the French were importing large quantities of apples and were paying no tax. "Oh", said Tommy, "We will of course tax the apples".
Next to the Baptist Chapel in Broad Street lived Mrs. Nutting. Twice each week she made the most delightfully sticky toffee. For one penny you could get a handful, all wrapped up in yesterday's newspaper.
A.W. Smith was a chemist, next to Field at the top end of Broad Street. He was secretary of the Cottage Hospital.
My father was also a chemist, but combined with that had a photographic business. He extracted teeth and tested eyes and supplied spectacles.
The Post Office was most efficient. Letters were 1d., postcards 1⁄2d. and newspapers 1⁄2. They also provided wrappers with the stamp printed on them for 1d.
Deliveries commenced at 7am. We had 5 deliveries each day, with parcels extra. Should we be expecting something urgent we could go and collect, or as sometimes happened they would have it delivered. Our chief postman was Mr. Chick. He lived in the house which stood alone and nearest to the first of the Flood bridges. The out-of-town letters were delivered by postmen who walked and carried the mail. I believe Little Comberton and Great Comberton, Elmley Castle and Bricklehampton, and odd farms were on one round. Burlingham, Defford and some other villages towards the west. Pinvin, Wyre
and some other areas. These were the principal rounds. About 1900 there were some cycles, but some of the postmen could not ride. Telegrams were delivered by boys, and they had cycles.
About 4.30am each morning except Sundays, a mail cart left Evesham and arrived at Pershore Post Office about5am. They brought mail from Evesham Office, including the various villages for delivery in Pershore and its villages. They put into the cart Pershore letters for Gloucester, Bristol and that area and had similar mail from Evesham.
The mail cart then drove to Defford to catch a train from Birmingham to Bristol. About 2.30pm the mail cart collected from the station mail from Bristol and other towns for Pershore and Evesham and did the return journey - Pershore about 3.30pm and Evesham 4pm. This mail cart was like a very large box on two large wheels. The box was above the

axle. The driver sat on top of this box, and on both sides of his seat were flat boxes. These- so I was told- were for his pistols!
Telephones were a private concern. The local office was in Broad Street and occupied the front room of a house. Calls made from there were paid for at the time. If a call came for a non-subscriber a message would be sent to that person, who would then go to the office and make a call to the enquirer from the office in Broad Street.
Messrs. W. Nicholas and Messrs. Nicholas Brothers were the local builders. Both were very efficient and employed about 8 to 12 men each.
Amos Cross was the principal painter and plumber, and he employed 10-12 men. He lived in that large house, the last house in Bridge Street, opposite the Mil. He rode a marvellous pushbike. His office and workshops were in the High Street, between the International Stores and the Post Office. He stocked lead for the builders and others.
Mr Coombes was a "Gentleman's Hairdresser'. His premises occupied an important site in lower High Street (about opposite Mr. Nickson). It had two large windows and two doors. The hairdresser and his two daughters had a large sweet and toy shop.
Mr. Coombe had the only powered hair brushing machine I know of.
St. Andrew's Church was a nice quiet place until on Sunday afternoon the children arrived. Its pillars and tower always fascinated me.
in Broad Street there was a Baptist Chapel. The parson in charge, Mr Feek, lived in the end house at the bottom of Broad Street.
The Plymouth Brethren had a meeting place in Newlands.
There was a very small chapel at Wyre run by local preachers of the Wesleyans.
In the autumn was held the great Chrysanthemum Show and Concert. For this many folks laboured in their gardens and glasshouses for a whole year, for if they should win, they could proudly display a large ornamental card to show they had 1" prize for carrots or whatever it might be. Of course, all kinds of flowers, fruit and vegetables were there. The judging took place on Thursday afternoon. On Thursday night and Friday and Saturday nights a Grand Concert was given by local talent. This was held in the Girls and Boys School in Defford Road
I started at the Church of England National School in the early part of 1898, when I was 41⁄2 years old. This school in Defford Road was in 3 parts. First the Infants in the charge of Miss Brickell and other teachers. Adjoining this was the house occupied by a senior teacher. Next were the classrooms for girls, the headmistress being Mrs. Brickell. Adjoining was the Boys School with Mr. Brickell as headmaster.
I did not go to the Infants School but direct to the Boys. There we were taught to write and do sums using slates and slate pencils. One thing in favour of slates was that fi you made a mistake you licked a finger, and the error was gone! In the classroom where I started were two other classes. A second classroom attached was for the more advanced.
After about one year Mr. Brickell retired and was replaced by Mr. Chapman. He was stricter but was a better teacher. Slates were quite good for some things, but very cold in winter.
After about 18 months I had a paper book to write in using a pen and ink. This was an awful mess.
The pen nibs got broken, or bent, and the ink made blots.
When I was 1, I went to a school in Worcester. After 2 ears there I was moved to the Grammar School. Going to Worcester meant being up so that I could walk the 2 miles to the station to catch the 8.15am train. Then at Worcester Shrub Hill a walk of about

13⁄4 miles to school. In wet and cold weather, it was often arriving at school cold and very wet. There were no canteen provisions, so we had to take sandwiches which we ate in the cloakrooms and had water to drink from the washbasins. It was not a happy arrangement, but there was no alternative.
Sometimes Bussey Caldicot would give a lift to one of the schoolchildren. Mr Pearse, who lived at Perrott House and had his own carriage, also on odd occasions gave someone a lift to the station. He used to go to Birmingham about three times each week In Pershore there was a "Pop" factory.
'This was in Newlands. Mr. Ernest Smith was the manager and had some interest in it financially. The Smiths moved to Little Comberton, and from there the eldest daughter walked to Pershore Station, about 31⁄2 miles, took the 8.15am train to Worcester and then walked about 11⁄2 miles to school. That journey each day, winter and summer, rain, and snow, had to be contended with No wellington boots, no plastic macs. But on wet days just soaking wet clothes and boots. I know about this for I was travelling to school at the same time. Some years later she married one of my brothers.
In those days when we took the Oxford University examinations, seven subjects had to be taken and all had to be passed. Fail one and all had to be taken again.
In the High Street opposite Church Lane there is a large house. It is now a club and is at the entrance to a car park. That used to be the School of the two Miss Taylors. It was part residential, and some pupils came from as far as Cheshire. My sister was a day pupil. Amongst other things they taught painting, a subject my sister liked. One of the assistant teachers lived near my home. Another private school was in Bridge Street and was for beginners and the rather young. This was run by the two sisters, the Misses Brickell. My two youngest brothers went there (they were twins. Children who went to such schools had a great advantage over others who started their education at the Church of England School. That is not decrying the very good ground teaching received at the Church School.
Mr. & Mrs. Boulter had a bakery and sold bread, cakes, and sweets. This shop was near Church Lane. One of the chocolates they sold was a block about 3 inches square. This was divided into 4 squares and the two opposite corners had the word "Fry" indented while the alternate ones had a shield. I have seen tiny children hold up to Mrs Boulter a farthing and she would break the one penny square and give the child the quarter and it would be in one of those pointed paper bags.
One day when I was about 10 my sister and I walked to Wood Norton, the home then of the Duc d'Orleans to see the many important persons assembled for a great wedding. There were lots of seemingly important folk walking along the paths on the roadside. The only one we saw was King Alphonso.
On the August Bank Holiday (the first Monday) was held a great Flower Show and Sports Day. The chief organisers were Mr. Wood, Mr. Hook and Mr. Milward. This was a most splendidly run affair. It was held in the Abbey Grounds of Abbey House, the home of the Hudson family. The entrance was by the large double doors at the Broad Street end of Church Walk, which was close to the headquarters of the Volunteers. There were large marquees for the flowers and fruit exhibition, and other tents for various other purposes. The drive to Abbey House was closed as the quarter of a mile racetrack crossed it in two places. There were erected two very large stands for those who wished to pay and sit. The races were well organised and run according to the rules of the National Associations. There

were races for runners and cycle races. These latter attracted riders from as far away as South Wales. One of my brothers used to ride in these and he won many prizes.

In the evening as soon as it was dark there was a magnificent firework display. There were several set pieces, and the waterfall which is still popular today. Horses were the only means of transport, so there were several blacksmiths. One was near the Pomona Jam Factory at the top end of High Street. Another was in Newlands, and another was, I think, in lower Bridge Street.

Passenger transport was by Brake drawn by two horses and could carry about 20 persons on two seats. A smaller vehicle was the Wagonette which could carry about six passengers and was drawn by one or two horses. Bussy Caldicot drove an enclosed vehicle which could seat six persons. He met most trains. He had a contract with the Post Office and took the bags of letters and parcels to the station and brought the incoming mail back.

The local Fire Brigade was voluntary. Members were summoned by the ringing of a large bell hung outside the engine house. In about 1902/3 the town acquired a wonderful steam pump, all bright red and gleaming brass. When called out the engine was run into the street and the engineer had the fire blazing so that by the time the horses were harnessed and brought from Mr Woods in High Street the steam was getting up to full pressure. Such happenings always caused great excitement.

Those horses were in demand for the fire engine, the hearse, weddings, station journeys, club outings, cricket teams and hockey teams visiting other towns.

In the winter of 1913, I helped with the Scouts. It was then planned to have an August Bank Holiday outing for the weekend on Bredon Hill. We arrived there and spent the night. On the morning of August 4 two boys went down to Great Comberton to fetch a can of drinking water. There they were told that war was declared with Germany. Immediately we packed up camp, for the acting Scout Master, who was in charge, was an Army reservist. The Scout Master was Mr. D.E. Towers - but he did not like camping.

In a part of most homes was a place for washing clothes, and household things.

We were more fortunate than, many as we had a separate building. This was about 20° by 15'. The floor was of bricks, and these were laid so that they sloped towards a central drain. At the opposite end to the door was a large boiler. This was shaped like half an eggshell. Beneath was a fire box and the smoke and flames, surrounded the boiler and then went up a chimney.

A long low bench had three large earthenware pots. These were wide at the top and narrow at the bottom. They were used, one with soap, another to rinse and the third for final rinsing.

On the opposite side was a large wooden roller mangle to use on blankets, sheets, and other heavy articles. Often during holidays, I turned that handle. Near it was the very latest in washing machines. This was of heavy timber on an iron frame, and it also had a geared handle to be turned. Above this was a rubber-covered roller wringer. This was for more delicate articles. The soap used was "Hudson's Dry Soap Powder" and bars of soap. The floor was swimming with soapy water and to prevent shoes becoming soaked there were pattens. These were wood, shaped to a shoe sole with pieces of leather to fasten over the shoe. Beneath the wood was a circle of iron on two short stays so that those standing

among the wet and soapy mess could keep their footwear dry. Drying the clothes was done on lines in the open and could be very troublesome during wet spells. I have a constant reminder of the wooden roller mangle for one day I caught my finger in it and lost the tip. After wash day there was a considerable amount of ironing. The irons were those heavy metal ones, heated on a "goose" in front of the range fire. Two could be heated at the same time so it was generally three irons in use at a time.
Later in the day there was a basket full of socks and stockings to be looked over, and much darning and mending. In those days some boys wore Eton collars. These, together with my father's shirts which had starched cuffs, and his collars and his white piqué ties, al went to two ladies who undertook this laundry work.
In late November and early December each year the hot water boiler was put to another purpose, to cook the Christmas puddings. About 8 or 9 large puddings, covered with greased paper and a special cloth, were stacked into the boiler, and a circular wood lid placed on top, and they were cooked for several hours. Then they were stood out to dry before being stored for Christmas.
Many young children want to question things they do not understand. I give two examples from my own life.
My father was a very busy man, with eight children to be fed, clothed, and educated. There were train fares and school fees and the usual school clothes. Nothing was free in those days. My mother was fully occupied in providing food and many household matters. She also made clothes and garments. So, I could not find answers to a lot of my problems.
Nearly opposite to our house were the office and workshops of Mr. Amos Cross. On his door and vehicles, he had "A. Cross". On sunny afternoons the shadow of his building was on the road. Everywhere I was taken ladies, including my sister, were singing the latest song "The Holy City". Part of the words were "When a shadow of a cross arose upon a lonely hill". What puzzled me and I dared not ask was that part that said, "A shadow of A. Cross the road upon a lonely hill". Why had they to sing about Mr Cross's shadow from across the road? And the road was not lonely. I knew that the road was rising towards the Post Office, but that was not a hill.
Then another worry. I used to visit my grandmother in Bengeworth, Evesham. Often, I was taken to visit an uncle who lived at Greenhill. On one of these visits, I noticed that a hedge in front of his building had been removed. This was to allow for three or more drays to be loaded at the same time. Greenhill was, to me, a long way from my grandmother's home, so the hymn "There is a green hill far away, without a city wall" puzzled me. Yes, Greenhill was a long way, but it was a hedge that had gone, not a wall. And why sing about it in Pershore when it had happened in Evesham?
I was worried and tried to ask, but I was told not to be naughty and not to talk like that about religious matters.
In the lower end of High Street next to Coombes the hairdresser and opposite to Nickson’s there was a Coffee House. It was a strictly teetotal establishment and offered. accommodation and meals. It closed about 1904 or maybe earlier. The building was demolished and on the site a building was erected to be known as the Picture House. It was a single story. There were several steps to the front; inside, the floor sloped gently towards the screen at the far end. The seats were wood and had wooden backs, and they all provided very good viewing. Of course, the films were as might be expected in those days, but we thought they were wonderful.

My favourite part of the Avon was opposite the Mil. To reach it we crossed the Old Bridge and walked along the bank of the Wick meadow. Here was that large waterfall. Sometimes there was no water coming over or perhaps only a trickle, so with bare feet we would explore the gradual slope and quite often found fish in the pools between the stones.

The river above the fall is wide today as it was in 1900. When the water was coming over the weir in a normal way there was a wide stretch of tiny stones and a few shells; the remainder was rather rough grass and weeds. It was fun paddling here for fish used to swim in that shallow water around our legs; sometimes quite large ones and one day a large pike swam by only a few inches from my legs.

We could not afford seaside holidays, but we were lucky to have such lovely and interesting places to visit. We used to go to the Weir meadow and cross the river using the lock gates and then cross the weir. So, we got to the lower slopes of Pensham Ashes. My sister used to come with us. We also used to fish and often caught bream and roach. And always we could hear the Abbey bells, a sound I shall never forget.

In Defford Road opposite the National Schools lived the retired Canon Gauntlett, his wife and daughter Mamie. Miss Gauntlett was the local secretary of the Dr. Barnardo's Homes. About 1899 or 1900 she organised a Grand Garden Fete to raise money for orphans coming into care due to the absence or the death of their fathers in the South African War. The first part of the entertainment was about 60 or 70 young boys and girls about 5 to 8 years old who were assembled on a tiered stand. There they sang the usual songs of their age. I can remember it quite well as I was on the back row and high up. Of course, our efforts were applauded especially by our parents.

We were told if we would be good and sit still and not make a noise we could stay there and see the main attraction. This was Living Whist. For this, 52 senior schoolgirls and boys and young ladies were chosen. Each wore costumes resembling playing cards, the older ones being the Kings and Queens. All carried cards like the playing cards. There were four heralds to act as the card players, and a further person acted as the announcer. The four heralds took their places, well-spaced on the large lawn. Then the fifty-two cards danced into the centre whirling around representing the shuffling of the pack.

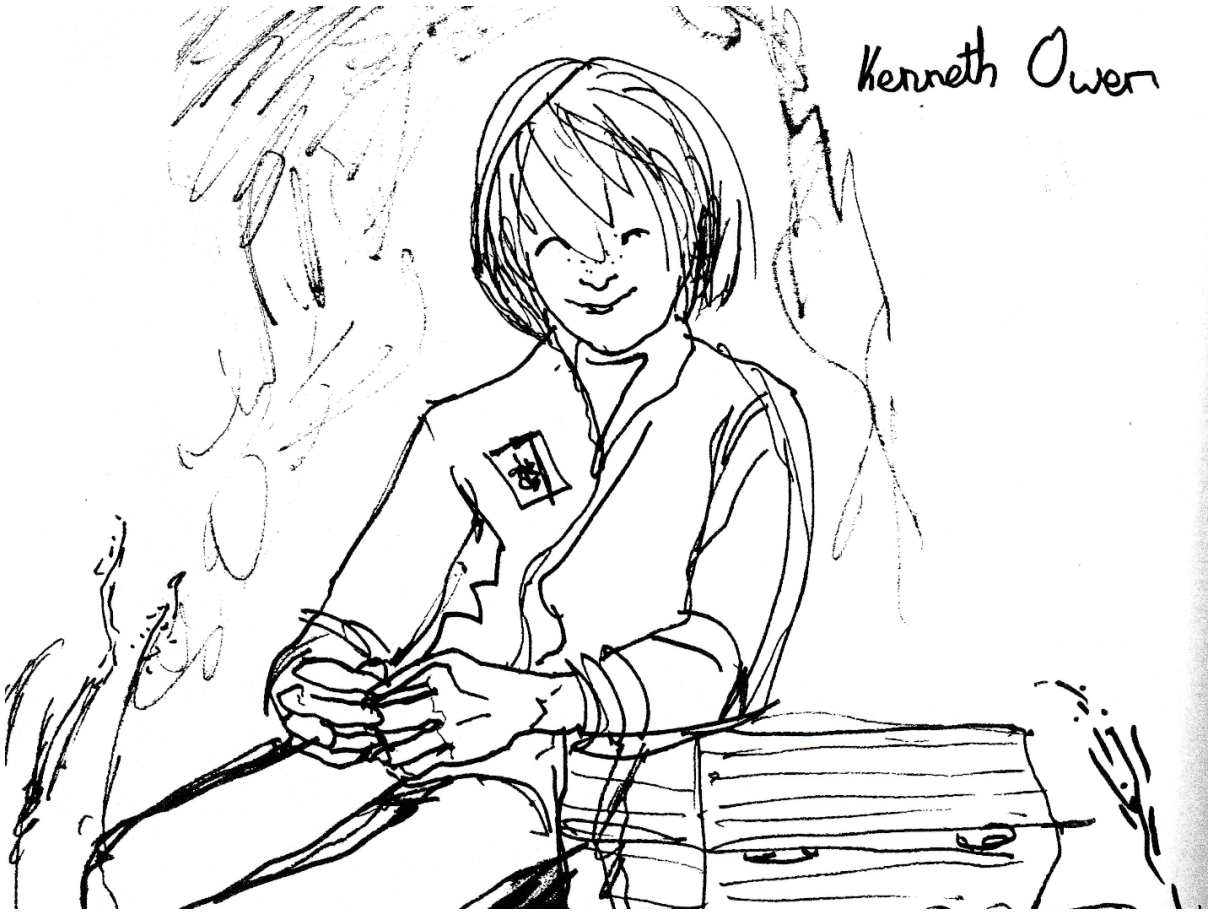
The announcer called for the pack to be dealt and so the fifty-two players slowly turned round and one by one went to the heralds - until each had 13 cards. The announcer called for the game to start and each herald in turn played his card. The tricks were assembled on the heralds' left side until the game was finished.

The whole of this was delightful for the setting was so perfect. The large lawn surrounded with dark green conifers and the highly colourful costumes al helped to make it a wonderful display.

The result was a demand from those who attended to see it again and from those who heard about it wanting to come for another performance. It was, I believe, repeated several times and was done in some of the villages. It must have raised a useful amount for Dr. Barnardo's

'This account has been written by me in the autumn of 1985. Most of it has been typed for me, but these last memories are in my own handwriting, the last being written on December 5th, 1985.

Arthur Dowty, aged 92.


Kenneth Owen