

MRS. E.K. WILTSHIRE, CHINNOR.

Past History of Chinnor, Oxfordshire

The following Personal Memory has been kindly loaned to us so that we may publish it in its entirety for the interest of the people of Chinnor.

In the 1960's there was a county competition organised at Oxford in which people were invited to write an account of their earliest recollections of life within the boundaries of the county. The late Mrs. E.K. Wiltshire (who at that time was a member of the W.V.S. Darby and Joan Club) entered the competition and was a successful prize-winner.

The original copy of her 'Memory' is believed to have been kept as a contribution to a permanent historical record now on file at Oxford.

I was born in this village in 1892. I started school at the age of 5 years, I left when I was 13 years old.

The main work in the village then was farming, chair-turning and lace making.

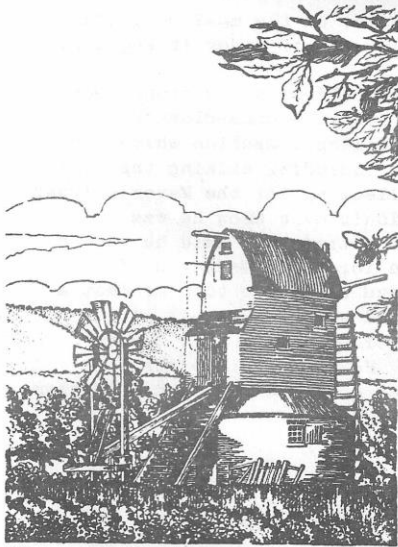
The farm wages in my Father's early day was 9/- per week. The Cattle man an extra 1/- for Sunday work.

In my Grandfather's time the farm hands would have to go to Church on Good Friday for half-day or be stopped a days pay. They also had to wear a clean smock and clean boots. There was also a Squire of the village in those days, also a large number of poor people, living on Parish relief of 2/6 per week

Women used to work in the fields cutting the corn with hook and stick. They used to take what they called a land, a piece of the field pegged out, there were several working together. The corn was then conveyed to the farm by wagons and horses. Often the fields were cleared. We children were sent gleaning and when we had enough we had to cut the ears off, then they were taken to Chinnor Windmill to be ground into flour.

Here is a sketch of the mill which has since been demolished.

Silverwings House 53 St Lower Road
18 Butternut Tree Oxon



Chinnor Mill : Lower Icknield Way:
Chiltern Hills: Oxon. July 1924. A.O. Collard.

The chair turners used to go to a wood sale, which was held at the Crown Inn every year, then it was carted in to the buyers by horses and timber carriages.

After the chair legs were made, they were dried and sent to the firms in High Wycombe where the chairs were made.

For most of the women, it was lace-making and the only light they had, as they sat with their pillows, were tallow candles, not wax like we have today.

When they had made enough to send away, it was taken to a cottage, it was then measured and inspected to find any faults and then collected by a carrier and taken to Aylesbury or High Wycombe. He would then bring their money back to the cottage to be collected.

If you went to Thame market you would have to go in a carrier's van which would have a form either side for seats, also should you want a Doctor, someone would have to go on a cycle to get him and he would come by a pony and trap or on horseback as there were no cars.

I remember the first car that came into Chinnor. It was bought by a Mr. Jackson who kept a cycle shop in the

High Street. He would let out cycles at 3d an hour. He also done any repairs. We named the car (tin lizzie) but we enjoyed our outings in it.

Mr. Jackson then bought the garage in the Station Road, which was then a Mission Hall and extended his business by buying a bus and more buses so that was the start of a bus service in Chinnor.

Chinnor was also noted for Aylesbury Ducks. People would rear them and when they were ready for market they would pay 1d per duck for picking then they would get a carrier to bring flats to pack them and he would take them to London market by horse and van.

For the children there was not much entertainment, sometimes a concert or a dance in the Reading Room but we would look forward for Chinnor Fair which came on Easter Monday and was held in the meadow belonging to the Nelson public house which has now been made into a private home. The roundabouts were pulled round by a pony and the organ played by turning a handle. It was fun but our parents were very strict in those days and we had to be home by a certain time or we were in trouble.

There were no kilns or buildings in our woods. It was just a free quiet friendly place which we have said good-bye to and hello to a new busy one.

Mrs. Ellis Wiltshire,
3, Keens Lane, Chinnor.

It may be interesting to know there was a workhouse in Chinnor and when it was transferred to Thame, the buildings were converted into cottages and the gardens let to some of the people in the village. For years it was called The Workhouse yard. It was later sold, and re-named The Avenue. The old historical buildings have since been pulled down and made into an estate. The building mentioned was opposite Mr. Eggleton's farm.

There was also stone picking for road making. The stones were hand picked then measured by yards and put in heaps by the road sides ready for putting on the roads. Contracts were

Sent to the council for this work, carried out by stonecarters with their horses and carts

Mrs E K Wiltshire The Chinnor Chronical July 1981