

included tending the cow that was kept in the grounds. My own mother was cook at the rectory, receiving the magnificent salary of £12 per year. What a bold venture to take on the duties of a wife, with a husband earning ten shillings a week, with sometimes a few "perks" such as vegetables from the garden, milk, and wood. The first cottage my parents rented, was rented to them for 9d. per week, and despite what must have been a struggling life, my mother reached the ripe old age of 92.

It was unheard of to absent oneself from a place of worship on the Sabbath. There was a choice of places to worship, there being a Congregational Church, also a Primitive Methodist besides the magnificent twelfth century Church of England, St. Andrew.

Of industry there was very little. After leaving school, most of the girls were sent into service, and the more enterprising lads went into towns to work, and some joined H.M. Forces. How some of the families with a mixed offspring of about eight managed to decently bring them up still remains a mystery. One source of income was from the breeding of ducks. Children were offered a copper for a tin full of worms which they used to go out hunting at dusk. When the ducks were ready for market, a local carrier would load them up for a journey to London. Another occupation was making of chair legs. Lengths of tree wood would be brought into a mans yard, chopped down to the right lengths, lathed, and came out as nicely rounded chair legs. One public house was named the "Chairmakers Arms". I can remember seeing the lathe which Mr. Fortnam used for rounding off his chair legs. Another yard well used for the same purpose was next to Hill Farm, where a family of Seymours lived. The pay for the finished chair legs, was twelve shillings per gross.

A lot of the trades-people would exchange their wares for services rendered.

About the year 1894 a man was having a stroll on the hills and discovered the useful chalk of which the hills are mainly built. From his discovery at that time a lime factory was set up, and eventually a cement factory which meant a complete reversal of the quiet life. gone was the time when women quietly sat at home making lace with bobbins or tending the ducks.

School was what is now known as the Old British School, and the 'playground' was Mill Lane. Not every child attended school, because the cost was 2d. per week for each child, and four or five 2d.'s out of a small wage meant a lot to a busy mother. Both boys and girls were taught in the same class.

Generally speaking, 'Hatches', 'Matches' and 'Dispatches' (births, weddings, and deaths) were the main interests of the people. A little excitement flared up sometimes at election times. Every Easter Monday fairs with stall-holders would fill the road from the school corner to the station — a great event to look forward to, and children saved their pennies for months in anticipation of this great event. Youths sometimes thought of little irritating games, such as window tapping, and lifting gates off hinges. One story has been told of how, when a man was in the 'local' lads turned his donkey back to front in the shafts of the cart. His state of mind can be imagined when he returned to the cart, and started off going backwards. Another story tells of how, when a gentleman's hat blew over the churchyard wall, he went to retrieve it, and as he had heard footsteps he thought he would play a 'game' on the approaching person. Conscious of the fact that the moon might light up his bald head, he spoke, and a terrific shriek and fleeting footsteps may be the origin of the tale that the churchyard is haunted. The schoolmaster was once walking along by the churchyard, and a mother owl fiercely attacked him.

To cover the 'hatches' off and on a State Registered Nurse lived in the village. During the 'off' periods Risboro and Thame were the nearest places where medical aid was available. Often a birth occurred with inexperienced helpers around. The 'matches' were occasions of great rejoicing. The bride usually walked to church, with crowds following. A funeral meant that everyone who possibly could, attended, and to put on any colour other than black, for a year, was frowned upon. After a year one graduated through greys and mauves for the next six months.

During the stage between the big events of life, woe betide the person who suffered a raging tooth-ache. His choice of extraction was one man who used pliers, and another who fixed a cord round the aching tooth, attached the other end of the cord to the handle of the door, then shut the door quickly. Despite the poor medical facilities lots of people lived to a good old age, as the head-stones in the churchyard show.

Loose morals were not tolerated. If the rumours were considered to be facts, then the youths of the village would 'rough music' the offender. Knowledge of this treatment might have meant many a would-be strayer was kept on the straight and narrow path.

All the water was obtained from wells and soft-water (rain water) tanks. Oil lamps and candles were used for lighting. For cooking most people took their joint of meat to the baker, who would cook it for them. He would also bake their cakes.

The time honoured form of greeting was "How be on then?" (spoken without the "h".) The reply would be:— "Steady! how be yen then?...According to the season the men would ask of each other:— "How's yer pays and banes coming on?" Pays and banes being peas and beans. That was the popular trend of conversation, for of course the garden produce was a great help to the housekeeper.

The Chinnor so called, "Temperance Band" was in existence at that time, and despite many drawbacks and 'ups and downs' a prosperous, well known, Chinnor Silver Prize Band now functions.

The village was built around a rectangle (a square mile) not correctly measured of course, but generally one was supposed to have walked a mile if they walked round the village.

Well I think this about describes Chinnor at that period. A previous history of the village written by a curate is now in the Bodleian Museum at Oxford.

*Article reproduced from the Chinnor Guide 10 years ago.*