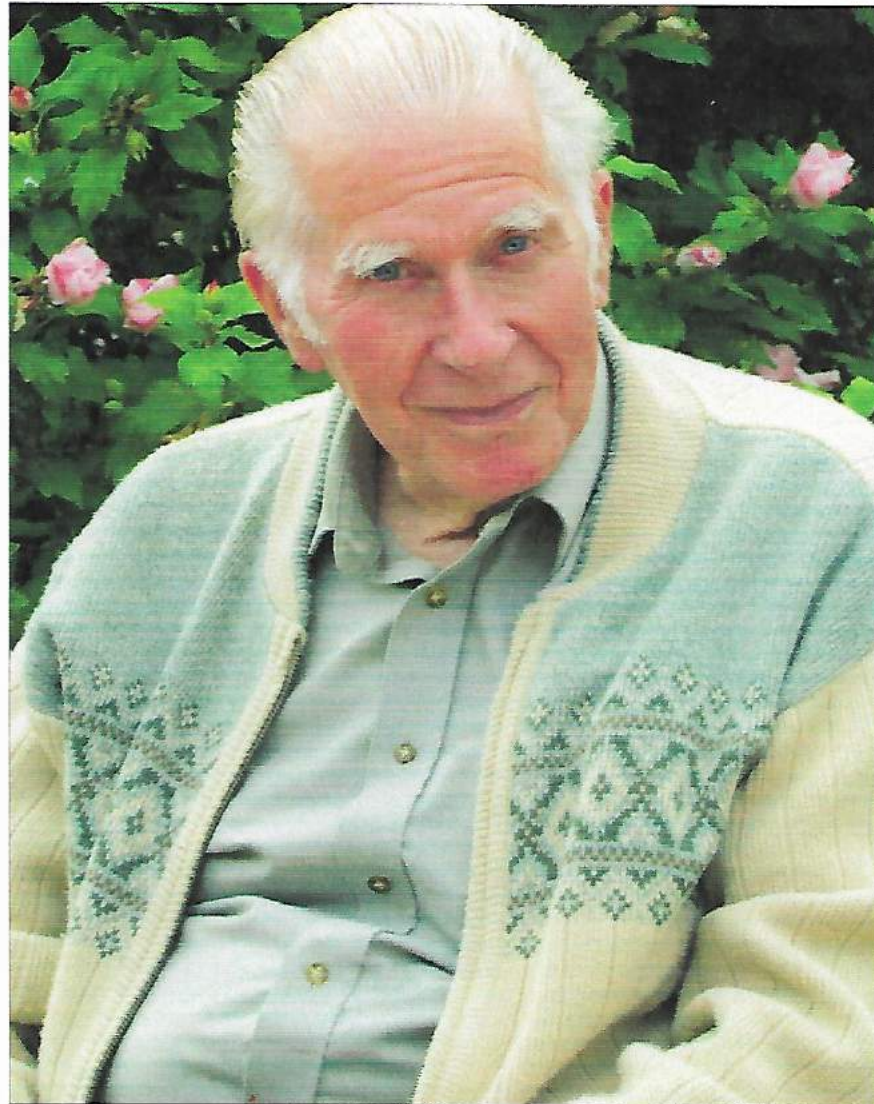


**MEMORIES OF
MY
YOUNGER
YEARS**



**COMPILED BY KEN
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Memories of my early years in Undley and Lakenheath.

The Turner family moved from Little Eriswell to Undley Hall in the spring of 1932, my father, mother, my baby sister Mary, brother Ernest seven years my senior and myself Kenneth, (John William the first-born child sadly died aged 5), infant-mortality was still very high in 1930s. The move was due to the fact that father had applied for and been granted the tenancy of a smallholding in Undley.

My parents, John William Turner, born in Eriswell (1896) and my mother Ethel Rebecca Tuffs, born in Lakenheath (1896) were married in 1919 the same year father came home from France having served almost four years in the Army. They lived a year in Eriswell Road with mother's widowed father Elijah, then moved to Little Eriswell into a cottage (demolished 2016, now a new development,) in a row of three, that belonged to Lord Iveagh who owned a large estate which covered Eriswell, Wangford, Elveden and parts of Icklingham.

When we moved to Undley, agriculture was in a poor state due to the Depression following the Wall Street Crash in Oct; 1929, the same month I was born. The previous tenant before father had money problems and had thrown in the towel. Father's brother-in law told him that he could also go bankrupt, but he went ahead despite.

I have no memories of my two years in Eriswell, nor many of my first years in our new home, I have two photos, taken when I was about three months, one in my highchair with my seven year old brother beside me, also one of my mother holding me. One photo of my mother, brother, and a boy from next door, also a little blonde boy of about three, me. The next one of me is a school photo sitting in a chair, again very blonde, aged about seven, those four photos are all the proof I have that I too was a once a youngster.

The next I have of myself is when I must have been 17 taken on a day trip to Great Yarmouth, that was in the days when you could order a box of kippers and they would post them to wherever you wanted, therefore not many photo albums to bring back memories

We moved into the Undley Hall which was divided into three households, we had two large rooms downstairs and four bedrooms, the kitchen (scullery) was a lean-to room built onto the main building which had a cooking range, pantry, a large sink with a hand pump that pumped rain water from a well just outside the back door, I do not think we ever used this pump, our house water came from another pump across the yard, also in the kitchen was a large built in copper with a fire grate underneath. This was where water was boiled for wash day. The two downstairs rooms had fireplaces and also two of the bedrooms, but we spent most of our time in the kitchen mainly because, due to all the cooking being done in there, hardly ever did we have a fire in any other room. Probably that's why the house was cold, some of the reason could be due to the size of the rooms and that the walls were of chalk blocks and were about 18 ins thick. There was also an outside privvy across the yard.

To describe Undley which is rather spread out, travelling from Lakenheath, first is the Claypits which in the thirties consisted of just four dwellings, then comes The Common with nine, then Undley which in earlier years had been one large farm. In the Twenties it was purchased by West Suffolk County Council and split into twelve smallholdings, at that time there were only one detached and one semi-detached cottages and a larger house The Lodge. On the top road, in the semi lived Mr Sammy Talbot his wife and teenage daughters Margaret and Mabel, next door Mr and Mrs Wing. In the Lodge, Mr Sidney Webber jnr, and two sons, after a few years they moved away and Mr and Mrs W Rolph arrived, next door was Mr Jimmy Rolph and his sister. In the other cottage, Mr and Mrs Coleman and teenage daughter, Mrs Coleman sold 'Fags' and sweets. There was no land with the cottage so Mr Coleman did casual work where-ever.

Off to the right of Undley Road was the Hall Lane of about three quarters of a mile leading down to the Hall itself, it was not surfaced, in summer it was dusty, in winter the bottom half would very often be a sea of mud, with poor drainage it was simply churned up by horses and iron rimmed cart and wagon wheels. Our garden fronted onto the lane at one of the wettest part, you literally stepped off the garden path onto a lane with six inch deep cart rucks filled with water and four inches of mud in between. There were not many shiny shoes in Undley in those days. Down the lane the council had built seven new brick houses and farm buildings to add to the Hall and one cottage already there. First on the right lived Mr and Mrs Oscar Harding, next one down in an old cottage lived Mr and Mrs Gerald Tuffs and son Eric, no land with this cottage, therefore Mr Tuffs and Eric never worked in Undley. Half way down on the left, Mr and Mrs Harry Lomax and son George, next were Mr and Mrs Prior and son Cecil, they too soon moved away and Mr and Mrs Tom Gathercole arrived, then Mr and Mrs Charlie Mortlock and teenage daughter Dorothy. At the bottom of the lane stands Undley Hall, Mr Smith snr, and his wife lived in the front part of the Hall, Mr and Mrs Frank Morley and son Len lived in the centre part and we Turner's the other third. Round to the left was Mr Webber snr with his wife, soon they too would move on like the other Webbers, and Mr and Mrs Don Jaggard replaced them, round to the right in a semi was Mr and Mrs Tom Kent who moved to Lakenheath four years after we arrived in Undley, they were replaced by Mr and Mrs Joe Allsop with teenagers Vic and Vera, and next door were Mr and Mrs Borley who took me for rides in their pony and trap,. They were soon replaced by a bachelor Mr Bert Parnell. They were all the inhabitants of Undley during my first years there.

Just before The Kent s moved, Mr Kent inquired if I would like a ride in his Vauxhall car down to the village to see the progress being made on his new bungalow in Broom Road; it was being built by a Mr Bennett, who was helped by his father. I readily agreed , we set off and I watched the speedometer climb up to 70 m p h, I held on tightly to the seat , I had never travelled that fast before, there were no seat belts in the thirties. The bungalow was almost complete, at that time there was only one other house on the right side of Broom Road, it still is highest building on that side of the road, being slightly exposed they named it Windy Way s .

The name of the builder was Mr Josh Bennett; it was the first bungalow of thousands the subsequent firm of J F Bennett would build over the next fifty years .

Josh had recently been invalided out of the R A F; he went on to be a very good employer of many local men and women, at the same time reaping a good return.

One of the ladies is our oldest daughter, who joined the firm in 1977 straight from school and is still there, probably now the longest serving employee . Josh although a wealthy man, he never forgot his village roots. .

After we had been living in Undley only four years mother was taken ill to Bury St Edmunds and sadly died, and father was left a widower with three young children.

Ernie 14, myself 6, and Mary 4. Father's sister Ethel and brother-in-law Percy Mendham who lived in Eriswell kindly took on the responsibility of bringing up Mary with their two daughters Ivy and Jean, she stayed with the Mendhams until she left school and came back to Undley. She then kept house for father and her two brothers, or in her words later on "General Dogsbody".

It was in April when mother became ill; I can remember seeing her sitting in a chair being very sick into an enamel bucket. Some days later Mrs Lomax came to see mother, and I must have taken her upstairs where mother was in bed , I stood in the hall eavesdropping as I remember mother saying that she would NOT be coming back. I possibly never took in the significance of this as later I was looking out of the kitchen watching two men carrying mother down the garden path on a stretcher to an ambulance and that was the last time I saw my mother.

That evening we children had been taken up to the Tuffs, our friends and we heard a motor-cycle go past and were told that was George Lomax taking father to see mother in hospital.

We slept at the Tuffs that night and then next I found myself staying with Uncle Arthur and Aunt Beatrice and Cousins Arthur and Gordon, in Eriswell Road, and stayed there several days, I know we went to the Baptist Chapel one Sunday, I may have gone to school from there, or it could have been Easter holidays. One day while playing in the field opposite, a boy from school came up to us and stated that my mother had died, that was when I found out that I was now motherless.

I do not think that the four years mother had in Undley were very happy years for her, with two young children under school age, and rather isolated from her relatives down the village with only a bicycle for transport, and a great deal of mud to negotiate, trips to Lakenheath were few and far between.

I am not sure if I started school late 1934 or early 35 but I remember being in one of Mr Stanley Watts lorries with teachers Miss Rolph and Miss Burrows touring round the village streets that were all decorated, it must have been May 35 the celebrations for George V Silver Jubilee. I can remember Plough Lane and Anchor Lane,

When researching for my Family Tree I found that many of my ancestors had lived in Anchor Lane. In one Census there were 46 families living in that lane, around 200 persons (large families in those times), and it wasn't until 1937 or 1938 when they started to re house people from Anchor Lane into the new Council Houses in Eriswell Road. They then started to clear some of the worst cottages

We ended our tour in the Camping Close field behind the Village Hall, the youngsters engaged in sports. I went in one race and trailed in last, slightly hampered by not removing my coat. The older children including my brother had a tea in the hall, I can remember hearing them singing "Here's Health unto his Majesty," my mother was with me at the sports. We were not to know that within a year both King George and my mother would pass away.

There were only two other boys that lived close by, both about 3 years older than I, Len Morley, he lived in the Hall next door to us, and Eric Tuffs. Eric's parents were very good to us when mother died, they knew mother from their Lakenheath school days. Mr Tuffs took Eric and I to Beck Row to see the aircraft that were going to take part in the 'London to Australia Air Race', with me riding on his crossbar, I would have been 4 years old, I can remember being in a crowd of people standing on the road watching these planes coming into land over our heads, and people pointing to one and saying it was Cambell-Black and Scott, who later would be the winners of the race. From that day to the present I have had a great interest in aircraft.

Beck Row aerodrome was its infancy, many buildings were being built, and Mr Tuffs had a job there as a bricklayers labourer and later when it was open to the public on 'Empire Days' he would take Eric and I, on one occasion he took us up onto some scaffolding where he worked, to get a better view, we were called down sharply by some official, and had to watch from ground level with everyone else. I spent a large part of my free time on my own, there were no others of my age, and I had to amuse myself.

At the top of the lane opposite the Lodge stood an old pollard elm tree about 15 feet high, at the top it had a flat area in the centre where you could sit, this tree was leaning, its top almost touching a telephone pole. I think I must have spent hours up there watching people passing by who were oblivious to being spied on. When I wanted to come down I stretched out, put my arms round the telephone pole and slid down, considering I was wearing short trousers I was lucky not to gather a few splinters.

I spent more time with Eric than I did with Len, there was never a threesome, as Len was more likely to lead me astray, like the time when one very hot Sunday afternoon when we walked about a mile down the footpath that led to Lakenheath to a Mr Coleman's rubbish dump where he deposited the rubbish that he collected with his lorry from Beck Row aerodrome. There would be

wood, paper, tins, jars and all other rubbish; we hunted through this rubbish hoping to find aircraft books or magazines with girly pictures to broaden our minds. Len called my attention, I turned round to see that he was holding a long strip of exposed film negative (there were yards and yards of this,) to which he had put a match, it was flaring well, but when it came close to his fingers he dropped it into this tinder dry rubbish, the result was a fire that we could not put out. We took off quickly heading for home now and again looking over our shoulders to see this large cloud of black smoke rising up into a blue sky. The local fire brigade had to attend, we hoped they would think the cause was the sun shining through a glass jar, only Len and I knew the truth, anyway we were not blamed.

Len's home had two attic rooms above, from where you could gain access to the roof space of the Hall, it was dark and dusty and we had to be careful not to put a foot through the ceiling, I did not like it at all. We did wonder if it was where the Undley murderer Roger Benstead hid in 1791.

He persuaded a young man to shoot Thomas Briggs in a dispute over a cow. Benstead was caught; he was taken to Bury St Edmunds and tried, found guilty and hanged. His body was brought back to Undley, he was then hung on a gibbet on Undley Common.

Another escapade with Len was in an area between Lakenheath and Undley which was known as Turf Fen,, we knew it as The Pits, it was a bit boggy with water, bushes and high reeds where years ago turf/peat was dug for household fires, this was not far from the rubbish fire incident. Len's father was in the Home Guard and we heard they were having an exercise there one weekend, Len decided we could get involved, we entered our side of the Pits, Len was armed with a home made hand grenade, a glass bottle inside were a few lumps of carbide(used in cycle gas lamps which gave off an inflammable gas when in contact with water)we heard the H/G in the distance, I don't think we even saw them, Len decided to try his hand grenade, so with a little spit added, there was a hissing sound, Len hurriedly screwed on the bottle top and prepared to throw. Not quick enough, it burst in his hand, with a bloodied hand Len called off our campaign.

The carbide used in cycle lamps at that time we used in another way, with a large Golden Syrup tin into which we punched a hole in the centre of the bottom with a nail, put in a few lumps of carbide plus a drop of water or spit, it would start to react, then put the on lid, stamp it tight, lay it sideways, place a foot on tin, put a match to the gas, escaping from the hole and 'Bang', off flew the lid 20 yards or more. Marvellous.

From an old cycle lamp the double convex glass, (curved both sides) was a prized ^{possession} ~~position~~ for a schoolboy, it was a magnifying glass, and on a sunny day was a means for lighting a fire, it would soon burn a hole in paper when you concentrated the sun's rays onto one spot, or if in a cruel mood somebody's arm.

One other memory of my mother, I am not sure if it was at the start of the 1934 or 1935 harvest, I would be 4 or 5, father was cutting wheat on the field next to our farmyard with his two horses pulling the binder, which cut the standing corn and neatly tied it into neat sheaves. I and another youngster were running a few yards behind watching this clever machine when I was suddenly enveloped in hundreds of bees or wasps. Father jumped down, and with his waistcoat tried to knock them off me, With bees still chasing us we ran home, at least half mile getting stung all the time, mother was very upset but then started to dap my stings with Reckitts Blue Bag, which was used to whiten the linen on washing day, it was supposed to relieve stings. It may have helped, but due to the fact that I was only wearing shorts and shirt I had been stung every where, I finished up looking like an Ancient Brit painted all over with woad. I was very likely hard to live with for few days.

One incident I recall, is the time (in fact the only) in which sister Mary was involved, also our dog Bob. Mary and I at that time were 3 and 5, we two and Bob were up on the top road, perhaps we had 2 pennies to spend as we were close to Mrs Coleman's, who sold a few sweets. Two

teenage girls, Margaret and Mabel Talbot approached us, no doubt thinking we youngsters had wandered too far from home. Bob thought his job was to protect us and made a beeline for Mabel's ankle, I do not know if he bit Mabel but she screamed out and headed for home, we did the same only in the opposite direction back down the lane, both shedding a few tears. I do not know if there were any repercussions, if so I have forgotten.

Before the coming of combine harvesters, all corn crops were cut by horse drawn binders, or in few cases tractors, it needed a great deal of labour to fetch in the harvest, all the sheaves had to be stood upright into stooks, about 10 to 20 sheaves for about a week to dry out, with no weed killers in those days, they always included plenty of rather green, charlock, poppies and thistles. When dry it was carted to be built into stacks in the farmyard, sometime in the next few months it would be threshed using Mr King's threshing tackle that travelled around the area.

From the age of about four I looked forward to see the threshing tackle arrive on its annual visit to our farmyard, It consisted of a huge steam engine, with huge iron wheels as tall as man, pulling the threshing drum and a straw elevator., Undley lane as well as the farmyards were always wet and muddy in wintertime and I loved the sight of this machine, belching out clouds of smoke and steam as it slithered around in the mud, as Mr Fenn and his crew set up the machines between the stacks, they were experts, as all the machines had to be level and chocked up to do their job properly, using planks and blocks of wood as the yards were not very level.

By the age of eight or nine I was reluctantly included in the labours of threshing time, the first job I fell for, was compacting the chaff (husks of wheat and barley that was used as animal food) in the chaff compartment in the barn. The chaff was carried to the barn in sacks by one of the team, my job was to tread this chaff tight with my feet, space was valuable in the barn, wheat chaff I did not mind but barley chaff was terrible, it pricked and stuck in your clothes, the chaff got higher and higher until my head would be touching the roof felt, where the rats resided and bred out of the reach of the farm cats, I hated rats..

The next job, the engine used vast amounts of water and when I was strong enough it was water carrying for me. With two large buckets carried with the use of a yoke, (a shaped wooden bar that fitted across the shoulders with two chains to attach buckets,) I had to keep a tank topped up placed close to the engine which sucked up water as required. The threshed corn was carried by father to the barn. I never had many muscles. and never did I think that twelve years later I would be carrying sacks of corn on my back, (18 stone/252lbs/ 112 kg)almost double my body weight(10 stone)perhaps stagger would be a better the word.

One instance involving the threshing crew, that I was reminded of in later years, was when asked if I had a cold, perhaps showing signs around my nose, I told them I had two, my mother had stated that I had another cold, having just started to count I thought that having another one, meant two.

I started school aged five, roughly a year before mother died, on starting I had to be transported there, about two miles, sitting on a metal carrier fitted over the rear wheel of Ernie's bike, not very comfortable but better than walking, Ernie was seven years older than me and when he left school at fourteen, he had a spell doing two trips a day., morning and afternoon. Father then bought a bike for me, it was really too big and he had to fix blocks on the pedals so that so my short legs could reach, then my brother taught me to ride, he did with difficulty.

When I first started to cycle to school by myself very often I would be a few minutes late, I left my bike in one of my Aunt Emily's sheds 150yds from school in Mill Road, if late I ran the rest of the way, on entering school out of breath I was waved to my seat, (I do not think I was ever admonished) the teachers knew that I had a way to travel and that I had no mother to get me ready and hasten me on my way.

We usually had two horses at the least, on one occasion I was told to get a halter and take Blossom round the corner to father's other meadow, going along the road for some reason I found myself with one foot trapped under her huge foot, as I was not very tall at that time, pushing hard, only her head seemed to move, but after a couple of painful minutes she decided quite unconcerned, to move her foot, the result was a rather sore foot for me.

Another memory, just a short time after mother had died, one dark night the three of us were walking home after a very rare social visit, and ahead of us the sky was coloured red and green, having just heard of a big fire in London I asked father if this was the Crystal Palace burning, and was told that it was the Northern Lights, that was the only time I have seen this display.

When we were down to only three in the household I began to be given little chores to do like laying the table for tea when I arrived home from school, that did not take long it was always covered by a wipe clean oilcloth, I put out the utensils, bread, butter/margarine, home made jam, cheese, pickled onions, teapot, cups, milk and sugar, job done. Make sure oil lamp was full, enough coal for the fire and kindling for the morning, I also collected the hens eggs from where ever they decided to lay, all around the farm buildings, straw stacks and even various patches of nettles around the yard. I liked collecting the eggs, but not the washing of them, as the egg merchant would not take dirty eggs, clean eggs were placed in paper Mache trays, of two and a half dozen, thirty dozen to a box, these were collected every week.

When war broke out and the Blackout came into force, father made shutters to put on the outside of the downstairs windows only, father thought we would be safer sleeping downstairs in case of bombs, as a veteran of WW1 he knew what explosives could do. He made the shutters with a wooden frame covered with roofing felt easily fitted, in between two blocks tacked to the top and bottom of the window frame. It was my job to put these up before any lamp was lit when it started to get dark. The black-out meant no lights were to show after dark, nights were pitch dark, it caused many deaths and injuries, motor vehicles lights had to be masked, the masks had three or four horizontal slits that only allowed a few yards of road to be dimly lit. In towns and cities the death toll increased enormously.

When the enemy started to bomb this country, the men of Undley together dug two large dug-outs big enough to hold the locals, being mostly war veterans they did not have to read a book for instructions. One was up near the top road, the other was in the garden of the Hall, for the roofs they used large timbers and corrugated iron then covered with earth, and they were well made but were hardly ever used.

The night we heard the most enemy aircraft was a lovely starlit night, when we stood in the open and listened to scores of them on their way to flatten Coventry.

When volunteers were called for the LDV, later the Home Guard, most of the war veterans, including father, stepped forward; they were issued with rifle uniform, boots and about ten rounds of ammunition. I remember playing with the rifle and I think I even loaded it once or twice. Father stayed in H.G for three years, but due to always having weekend work to do when the threat of invasion receded, he was given the chance to leave and he left.

Brother Ernie was in the Fire Watchers whose job in our area was keeping watch through the night for any fires from bombed buildings and even standing corn when it was dry just before harvest. Two volunteers every night, Ernie shared these nights with our friend Mr Fred Leader, on these nights I would go with Ernie up to Mr Leader's early evening and we would play darts with Fred and his wife Maud, they were lovely people and we spent many happy evenings with them.

For many years Fred helped father with all of the seasonal work on the farm through the year, Fred rented a few acres himself and father helped him by supplying horse power and implements. Fred was a good friend to us two boys. I loved to go fishing, when I first started it was in the

Lode usually by my-self, I rarely caught many fish, but I was happy to spend a few hours, hoping for more success.

When I was about 15, Fred began to take me with him on Sunday fishing trips cycling through the fen, through Chivers and down to the Green Dragon, over the Little Ouse in the boat to fish on the Norfolk side. Some days we caught a good number, some days we hardly had bight. I enjoyed all these fishing days and I am sure Fred did also.

One task for me was to make sure there were enough mangols (large round roots similar to sugar beet) cleaned of dirt and roots to be shopped up in a mangol grinder for the animals. An evening job would be to go in the barn after tea with an oil lantern to hold bags open for father to shovel, chaff, cornmeal and chopped mangols that he had mixed up on the barn floor, these bags of animal food were for the next morning, and saved time for him. I was scolded many times for not holding the sack properly, I was always thinking RATS, which would occasionally run up the wall or across the beams to hide between the roof felt and the tiles, where they lived and bred out of reach of the farm cats. On many occasions when called on to help father with a job in the barn, he would say "Come on Never Sweat", I never did find out if it was a compliment or a hint that I was "Pulling a light Harrow" as farming people used to say.

Father usually had only one house cow, but he would have several more bullocks and heifers, most of them bought as week old calves in Bury market for a few shillings each, these were to be fattened for beef, these he kept around the farm, when old enough to be turned out to grass, in summer time they went to Wilton Wash to hopefully fatten up. Father bought three Wash Rights which allowed him to put six head of cattle on Wilton Wash free for the summer. The Little Ouse River formed the boundary between Suffolk and Norfolk about four miles from home, the washes were the strips of grassland (which every winter were liable to flood) that stretched from the rivers edge to the banks and included a few yards over the bank. The wash that father used was on the Norfolk side, two miles long and from 100 to 500yards wide this was because the banks were reasonably straight and the river wound along between. There were usually 120 cattle on that wash, owned by 15 or so farmers, on Sunday afternoon's father and I would cycle off to check our animals. This involved a journey of 10 miles or more along rough paths, banks through two or three farms to the Green Dragon pub standing on the Suffolk bank, pulling ourselves over the river in boat that was attached to a chain that passed through rings on the side of the boat, by pulling on the chain we crossed to land on the wash on which fathers cattle grazed. We then faced two miles of rough riding, stopping every time we came across a cluster of cattle hoping all six would be together, that rarely happened, we had many stops and walks before we off ticked all six.

Father usually hired someone with a cattle truck to take his cattle to Wilton, fetching them home at the end of the grazing season was another story, we collected them and walked them home. This entailed cycling down to the Green Dragon, over the river to begin our trek to find, not only father's cattle but two other farmers animals also, there would be roughly eighteen in total. All had to be identified, no mistakes made, they all had to be separated from all others on the wash, then herded two miles to the public road, that was when the fun started. They did not like the hard road and took opportunity to get off, Ernie and I would each block a gateway ahead, when the cattle were past we then had to jump onto our bikes quickly and ride through these trotting animals and get ahead again to block the next gates. This went on all the way through to Lakenheath and onto Undley, in that five miles there were quite a number of garden and field gates, on reaching home we then split up this group of rather tired animals at their various farms. I too was not sorry to think that we were home and would not have to repeat this job for another year.

Another summer evening job was, we three would go pulling charlock from the almost full height wheat and barley fields, these plants stood out as they had yellow flowers which if left to mature produced hundreds of seeds which would germinate the next year in greater numbers, and even two or three years later. Our neighbours were not as fussy as father and did not bother, I think

maybe it was because they did not have two sons as cheap labour ,we had a sack hung round our necks by a piece of string, into which we put these weeds to be thrown into the hedge at the end of the field.. When several years later weed killers arrived charlock was one of the easiest weeds to kill.

Around April the work in the sugar beet fields started, they were drilled in rows 21 inches apart, the beet emerged and, when seedlings were an inch high, men with hoes thinned them into small clumps eight inches apart, there would still be several plants per bunch. They were then reduced to one plant by women and also children, a lady Mrs Lizzie Palfrey did seasonal work for father (she also cleaned up our house and cooked dinner on Saturday mornings also did our washing) and she did most of fathers beet singling, this gave me the chance to single beet for some of our neighbours which was more profitable .Some people went along the rows and just bent down to single it was very bad on the back. Some crawled along on their knees singling a row either side, then sore knees, I crawled with rags or a piece sacking tied round my knees with string it was a very tedious job but I was happy to earn a few shillings.

Pocket money had not been invented at that time; you had to earn your money.

Harvest time was another money earner for me, at harvest time father and two other small holders pooled their resources, labour, horses and carts and worked together to bring in the harvest, depending on distance from field to the farmyards they would use either three or four horses with carts, there would be one loading in the field, one or two on the road and one being unloaded in the yard. I would be on the road taking an empty cart to the field and bringing a full load back, riding to the field, and walking back leading these big farm horses pulling high, rocking loads of slippery sheaves. The loads were roped but care had to be taken to dodge the worst hills and holes in the farm tracks, depending on the skill of loader quite a few loads arrived looking a bit precarious. A responsible job for a 10/11 year old .but another way to earn a few more shillings .I was thrifty, still am in one way, perhaps generous in another. I really enjoyed working in the harvest gang , I had a great affection for carthorses , because of the long hours we stopped for teas ,mainly prepared by a Mrs May Smith , wife the smallholder who lived next door to us in the Hall .She was lovely, and was a marvellous cook ,she supplied flasks of hot tea ,and beautiful sandwiches and lovely cakes, which were not usually in our diet .

The war was going on at this time and most of the money I earned, I saved and bought National Savings Certificates to help the War Effort, school children could buy 6d stamps, thirty could be exchanged for a 15 shilling certificate which they could cash in after three or more years plus a decent interest. How times change, people now spend before they receive.

Our neighbour Mrs Smith sometimes held whist drives in her large front room, up to 40 people would attend, including the three Turners, several would cycle from Lakenheath.

After the whist there was a raffle with good prizes, like a pheasant, a pair of rabbits, half a pound of home made butter or a cake, I think it was the raffle prizes that attracted the people from the village. All the profits were given to help the War Effort.

At school Mr Dent the headmaster, (a very busy man) he did all of the school administration, he taught the two top classes in the school (12 and 13year olds,-we left at 14), he handled all dinner money and sold all the Saving Stamps and Certificates.

Around 1941 some lady volunteers from the village came (two different ladies every day)to cook soup for some of the children who did not go home at lunch time .The soup mainly vegetable cost I think 2d a bowl so we children had hot soup every day, some thin, some medium, and some lovely and thick , all delicious . Later on two course meals were introduced, I know we had to wash and dry the soup plates, I am not sure if we washed up later when proper dinners were provided.

Cycling the two miles to school from Undley was not always pleasant in all weathers ,to me the wind was the worst ,going to school the wind was usually behind me ,but going home into half a

gale, plus often rain too was, hard work . I would zigzag from side to side up Undley road standing on my pedals, thankfully not many cars.

I was at Lakenheath School eight years, the last four were war years, I liked school, one lesson I did not enjoy though was history, I did not like trying to remember dates of things that happened hundreds of years ago, if it had been from 1850 that would have been more to my liking but the Crimean War, Boer War, First World War were barely mentioned except on Armistice Day. Through following the course of the war all over the world, I have enjoyed geography, and military history ever since.

In my time at school the play ground was divided, infants and girls one half, boys in the other. Some of the games we boys played would certainly not be allowed now, one was Hares and Hounds, another was Strong Horse. The first a group of hares would be one side of the playground, and a group of hounds in the centre, hares had to run across and if caught, they were grabbed by the neck, a piece of flesh pinched hard with thumb and fingers, only released after saying 'hounds', if not a thumbnail came into play, the tough guys would walk away with bloodied necks, then the roles were reversed.

Strong horse involved two teams each with a captain and four men,(horses and jockeys), the first horse would bend down with legs apart holding a handy wooden garden fence, the other four then bent down, holding the hips of the horse in front with his head thrust between the horse s legs , this formed a long horse and the jockeys then would run and leap on as far as they could, feet were not allowed to touch the ground . When all safely mounted the horse captain had guess correctly how many digits the jockey captain was pointing up , or carry on until he guessed correctly, if correct the roles were reversed .There were many collapsed horses, a few cuts and bruises but no-one seriously injured. No health and safety in those days.

When war broke out slowly things in school started to get harder to obtain exercise books, pens, pencils and paper. Children sat two to a wooden desk with lift up working surfaces, under which you stored books and pen and pencil, on the front of the desk was an inkwell into which we dipped our pens (no fountain pens for us). The pens were wooden with detachable nibs, when a nib became bent or twisted, on asking for a new one we were chastised for not taking more care, if asking for a new writing book the teacher would check for wasted space before handing us a new one, even pencils were in short supply. Rather different from to-day.

Our cycles were well used outside of school time and in holidays; we cycled at weekends all around the district. One day at school in 1940 we heard that bulldozers were levelling the warren for an airfield, when school finished we grabbed our bikes to go and have a look, when it opened the next year we found that it overlapped both the road to Wangford and the road from Brandon to Barton Mills, so many of our trips went through the airfield, which as an aircraft fanatic it suited me fine.

Three of these bike rides have stayed my memory, they all involved aircraft, during 1941 Wellington, twin engine bombers arrived, on this day we came across one carelessly abandoned to roaming school kids. We climbed aboard and went over it from front to back. Sat in all the different crew positions, when on our way back from Berlin we were rudely interrupted and chased away, I am sure we did not damage anything. Later these aircraft made way for Short Stirling's with four engines, we would stand on the Wangford road and watch them being loaded up with bombs , and sea mines that were dropped by parachute outside enemy held sea ports.

On another round trip, Eriswell, Elveden, Brandon and home, we stopped at Elveden War Memorial to find that an enemy plane had dropped four or five bombs around the memorial which is a very tall limestone column (they probably thought it was a factory chimney) we hunted for shrapnel for souvenirs, I picked up pieces of limestone fragments that had been chipped out of the memorial I am not sure if this was same time that three or four of us helped each other up to the entrance door about six feet above ground level to get into the memorial. We

climbed the spiral stairs to the top, at the top was a small square opening to gain access to the narrow ledge around the top just under the symbolic urn above, some shuffled all the way round on the ledge holding onto an inside rail, there was no outside rail, I was satisfied just to peer out, was I careful or scared?. We had been up there a short time when there was a huge bang and the column seemed to sway. I think we still hold the record for the fastest exit from Elveden memorial, we learned later that a Stirling had crashed on take off a few days earlier with sea mines aboard (a Stirling usually carried 7 parachute mines, each weighing 1500lbs/ 680 kg)and the loud bang was when the R A F had blown up one of these mines.

Another Sunday afternoon I and some friends headed over the hill to the airfield and saw an American B 24 bomber that had landed at Lakenheath , badly damaged re-turning from a raid on Gotha in Germany (its home base was Wendling in Norfolk) we spoke to the three American airmen standing there with a jeep close by, after talking to us for a time , they left. We wanted to examine this plane as we were used to seeing hundreds of these fly over, on the nose of this plane was painted 'Spirit of 46', most American bomber s had a pin up girl or a cartoon painted on the nose , being rather nosey ourselves we climbed aboard, we tried out all the crew positions. In the waist were two gunner positions, the men stood back to back to fire either side, this was where most of the damage was with many holes in the sides and roof, on the floor were hundreds of spent shell cases and a great deal of dried blood.

Many years after much research, in books and visits to the American museum in Norwich I traced 'Spirit of 46' B24 41-29131 , on the internet, the information stated that it had landed at Lakenheath Feb 24th 1944, all the names of the crew, and also that the two gunners had sadly died that day. It also stated 'Spirit of 46 did 87 missions, was then retired as War Weary. In those 87 missions it had a massif total of 2,502 holes punched through its aluminium skin, by German fighters and A/A guns. Sometime after my experience in this plane it flew under the name ' Flying Patch' not surprising after collecting all those holes. In this aircraft two gunners were Killed in Action and one man baled out over Germany when he thought the plane was going to crash. This plane was still regarded as the luckiest plane on the base, such is war.

Any fellow air enthusiast reading this if interested can find a mass of information on the history of this aircraft on web-site www.B24.net 392nd Bomb Group.com ('Spirit of 46' was known as A/C 131').

For a few years I and other younger boys of Undley, I was the youngest, would meet in the summer evenings at the stand on which the milk churns were put for collection, this was beside the road in front of the hall, we would talk , chat and I suppose a number of fags were smoked, not by me. For me these meetings would finish at 9-o'clock when father would appear and inform me, that for me the day was over.

One evening an aircraft appeared and we were trying to decide what type it was, when puffs of black smoke surrounded it, the guns at Beck Row were firing at it, we all raced up the hill to get a clear view of this German bomber, we then saw three fighters coming in pursuit,. Shouting loudly for a kill, we were then disappointed to see them get into formation and fly away, they were all enemy. That was my first brief glimpse of the war in the air.

At this period of the war almost every week there would be a plane crashing somewhere in the district, most we never heard about, but when one crashed in our local area we schoolboys would be on our bikes to view this accident site, on a few occasions only a half hour after, and on some crash site's we saw some very sad things that young kids ought not to see, perhaps that's the price for being too inquisitive.

Aircraft still occasionally crash in our area, two occurred back in the 50 s that I remember, I and three workmates were loading bale of hay onto two trailers to transport back to Undley, we were in Lakenheath fen and had seen 12 American B29 four engine bombers take off from the base heading West , they returned later flying in close formation to the base, turned around and seemed to be following the railway line back towards Ely. They were not very high, one of our

crew shouted and I looked up to see one of these planes simply falling out of this formation and flop into the ground about a mile away, immediately up shot a ball of fire and heavy black smoke, we knew that the crew(11 men) could not have survived that crash, A quarter of an hour later making our way home with two loads of bales we met, police, crash wagons, ambulances and half the population of the base in their cars. We were told curtly to give way to all this traffic but we knew no one could save those poor chaps.

The other crash in 1956, four years later also involved a bomber from Lakenheath base, on a hot sunny day I was sitting eating lunch beside my tractor just outside the village when there was an enormous bang and black smoke appeared over toward the base, a six jet engine B 47 bomber had crashed and burst into flames. The crew of four were all killed. A few people may have known the significance of this accident at the time, but the rest of us only found out many years later,. The base had been evacuated because this bomber had crashed and burned out on top of an bomb igloo containing three Atom bombs each at least as powerful as the ones that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in ww2. These bombs were thoroughly cooked but luckily did not detonate.

This happened only 150 yards from the public area of Lakenheath Warren, little do the younger generations of walkers and dog walkers who enjoy this lovely place today, realise that if things had gone horribly wrong that day the warren , the base and Lakenheath could have been turned into a desert.

Undley is much changed since the 1930s, in those days all the smallholdings had grass meadows for the horses and cows, we actually had two, one about two acres alongside the farmyard and one of four acres about a half mile away. These meadows were surrounded by belts of trees, crab apple, wild plumbs/Mirabelle, ash, horse chestnut and thorn bushes. There were also odd little clumps of trees scattered around in which scores of rabbits lived, over the years many of these trees have been grubbed out. One of my earliest pastimes was to take Bob our Collie dog rabbit hunting in these trees and woods; I do not think we took many home for dinner. In springtime it was hunting for birds nests, I did not take the eggs the fun was in the finding of them .Just up the road from us lived a Mr Prior and his family they decided to move from Undley, (my future employer Mr Gathercole moved into this holding) and their son Cecil gave me his egg collection containing many eggs, I must have broadcast this fact too far for his liking, and he took it back, I was a bit disappointed. I loved reading, books from the school library, any book that I could get hold of, we always took the Daily Mail that was left with Uncle John which I collected on my way home from school, father had the Farmers Weekly too, and I read these cover to cover ,I am an avid reader and still read the Mail 80 years later.

Another thing I loved was tree climbing I must have started when 7 or 8, I climbed hundreds (a thing of the past nowadays) oak, ash ,beech ,horse chestnut ,and even spruce fir trees with their many close packed branches ,I would climb to the topmost branches until they were too weak to take my weight risking my neck possibly. Luckily I never fell, but had many scratched arms.

The fir trees were hard to climb, as I found out a few years later when I declared war on thieving Magpies. These birds were a real pest as they stole many hens' eggs from nests around the farmyard and would even kill and carry off young chickens too. I would go hunting for magpie nests, which looked similar to a round ball of twigs, I would climb up, put my hand into the small entrance, extract the eggs and drop them to smash on the ground, The nests usually had seven or eight eggs, with four or five nests in an evening I think I may have thinned out these pests a little, .but today there are still plenty of magpies around.. At the end of WW2, I climbed the huge elm tree in our yard which I had climbed many times, to place my burning beacon to celebrate, much to father's displeasure.

There were scores of wild plum trees around home which produced masses of red, yellow and orange plums sweet and sour, every tree seemed to be a different variety, all made beautiful jam and puddings. I collected many, from ground level or by shinning up the trees.

Our sister Mary was at this time still living in Eriswell, most Sundays we three males would cycle there to see her. I would go first with faithful Bob running alongside (impossible today) Ernie and father having to feed the animals and other jobs would come later. Aunt Ethel always cooked Sunday roast dinner for all of us. After dinner Uncle Percy would take us five children, our two cousins, Ivy, and Jean, Ernie, Mary and I on long walks around the area, then after tea and cakes it was then onto our bikes for home.

For many, many years during winter/spring the low laying fields between Lakenheath and Undley would be flooded, I remember, very probably 1938, when on my way to Eriswell the flood water was just lapping the edge of the road, when we returned in the evening we had to cycle through six inches of water to get home, a bit scary but we made it.

I think this was the year local men, helped by soldiers with a search light were working day and night, putting hundreds of sand bags along the top of the Lode bank (the Lode was only banked Undley side) in the hope that the low land on the Undley side would stay dry. Unfortunately they failed, the water burst through and flooded scores more acres, Next day I cycled as far as I could towards Lakenheath and I remember watching Mr A Butcher, whose wooden house and buildings were inundated, splashing around in water almost up to his knees trying to move one of his sows, I stayed a spectator.

The aftermath of these floods was that the River Ouse Board decided to heighten the Lode banks with hundreds of tons of chalk. The chalk was extracted from the small millpond beside the Undley road that stood beside the disused mill, the mill was originally wind powered but lost its sails in a storm, the owner Mr Fincham then installed an engine, but after a few years the mill became redundant.

The pond was drained, the resident fish were transferred somewhere safe, they were returned later, the water was pumped across the fields to the Lode, the work to extract the chalk began but because of many springs, the pumps were used almost continually. The chalk was loaded onto small trucks pulled by a small engine that ran on a narrow gauge track across the fields and then along the river bank, which was heightened by three feet, all the way to the river Ouse. When the work finished, the mill pond had increased in size enormously with water 15 feet deep in places.

Around this time, father's sister Ada took Mary, cousin Jean and myself up to London for a holiday, Aunt and her husband John were both in service with a wealthy family in Fulham, she as cook and Uncle John chauffeur- handyman. They lived in a flat, Aunt Ada took us around and about and we children soon began to get to know the area and in time we were capable of walking by ourselves over Putney Bridge to Woolworths in Wandsworth, I think this must have been 1939 as we would have been two 9 year olds and Mary 7 (slightly different today) then came the war and many changes.

I got on well with Mr Gathercole our neighbour two hundred yards up the road he was a friendly man, a bit younger than most of the smallholders and a little more adventurous. In the evenings I would go and help him/hinder? In his latest project, even if it was only handing him nails or tools. He was always making, mending or fixing some thing, he and his wife had two young sons. Being younger than the other tenants most of whom were veterans from the first world war he was a bit more up to date.

Early in the war W S C C decided to improve Undley Lane, lorries brought tons of hoggin from West Stow, hoggin is a natural mix of sand and flint stones of varying shapes and sizes, some

were as large as a mans head , these would be split with a sledgehammer. This material was spread and levelled , damped with water and compacted using a heavy steamroller, this made a good solid base, when it dried out hot tar was put on, this then was covered with stone chippings, rolled again with the steamroller. And Undley Lane was transformed into a nice gravelled road. I could then go to school, shops and pubs in Lakenheath when 18(16) with nice clean shoes.

Mr Gathercole farmed four fields owned by his parents dotted around Lakenheath fens, quite a distance from Undley, he also possessed a horse, it was the only horse in Undley to ever trot when working. He was an inventive man and made a strange contraption, he acquired a rear axle from a vintage car complete with two rubber tyred wheels. He made a wooden box-like frame complete with seat which was fixed above the axle, on the front he fixed pair of shafts from an old cart, fixed behind was a fitting to attach his tractor trailer. The finished product was a one man- horse-drawn articulated tractor trailer. In this way he could use his large tractor trailer when his tractor was busy out in the fields

His trotting carthorse pulling this contraption, with him high up on his seat, at a fair speed, it made quite a sight coming down our new road,

As the war progressed we began to see Italian POWs from the camp between Eriswell and Barton Mills, they were put to work on farms in the area, at first they were transported in buses and lorries with an armed guard, Later when it was realised they had no intention on trying to escape (they knew when they were well off) the guards were dispensed with.

They were then taken out to farmers who needed a few extra workers, and later were allowed to live on the farms .Mr Gathercole had two, Alberto and Angelo who was a very good singer, I became very friendly with them and spent many hours in their company. Conversing was difficult, they taught me to count in Italian also a few Italian swear words that I never did use, if I swore it was in English.

I found the Italians rather animated, on collecting our paper one day (1944) on the front page was a large picture of American bombers destroying a centuries old Abbey, high on a mountain in Italy it was Monte Cassino, the Generals thought it was slowing our advance in Italy and they wanted it destroyed, when cycling down our lane I met Angelo and Aberto, and stopped to show them this picture, there were lots of "Mamma Mia's" and arm waving, but that happens in wars.

At Christmas 1943 I left school aged 14, for a few months I helped father, then he told me there was not enough work for three of us and that I must go elsewhere for Fame and Fortune. I found a job on a fruit farm, that lasted four days, I then threw in the towel ,The manager had taken me first day .into an orchard of large Bramley apple trees, pointed to thousands of twigs that men had pruned from these trees and said that I was to collect and pile up these for collection, I might just as well have been in the jungle, with low hanging branches I could see no more than twenty yards, there were thousands of twigs ,a day seemed like a week I had no idea of the time, perhaps I was slow but this job seemed never ending so on the fourth day I quit. Father was not very pleased. I stayed helping at home for two months then Eric my friend who lived close by, stated that Pearson Brothers in Burnt Fen required someone to drive one of their John Deere tractors, it had three iron wheels, it was started by pulling round a flywheel.. I found it was very hard to start and after three or four weeks I found myself as a labourer, I was put with a potato picking gang, comprising of four men, Eric with his tractor pulling a potato hoover which lifted the potatoes leaving them lying in a neat row ready for the pickers and eight ladies, mostly married ladies from Lakenheath who cycled from there every day. They were always happy, very hard working, and they certainly broadened the mind of this fourteen year old..

They picked the potatoes into wicker baskets that stood in a row two or three yards apart depending on how good the crop. My job was to stand in the horse drawn carts as my friend Mr Tuffs walked beside, one hand holding onto the cart, he grabbed the baskets by the handle and swung them up to me, by the time I caught them they were upside down, the potatoes dropped

out into the cart. I quite liked this job, it was not hard and in a short time I could throw out the baskets to land upright in a straight line, without them bouncing yards away. This saved steps and time for my lady friends and they appreciated it. By the time we had been up and down the field I would be buried up to my knees in potatoes. No possibility of falling out of the cart. After six hours hard work these ladies would head for home with a bag of selected potatoes hanging from each handlebar back to start a second job of cooking and cleaning for their families still happy and jolly.

I worked there just over a year it was long way to cycle although later Mr Tuffs was able to get petrol for his ancient Singer car and I rode with him and his son for a time.

This was the same car that had been sitting up on bricks in Mrs Tuffs parents barn for four years due to the fact no petrol was available, Eric and I would sit in this car, changing gear and steering on imaginary trips around the locality, could not start engine, no petrol in the tank.

Mr Tuffs later would take us to cheer on Lakenheath football team when playing away games, in the late 40 s they had a very good team with some of the best local players and also very good young airmen from the base, some were on the books of professional clubs, who were happy to play in their free time.

While I worked there it was mainly in the harvesting of potatoes, carrots and one corn harvest. All the time I worked for Pearson's I was paid the sum of 4s-4d per day, in to-days money about 23p. Only twice did I earn more than £1- 10s (£1-50p), per week.

As peace returned to Lakenheath my social life started to improve, now I could cycle down to the village in the evenings and enjoy again the company of friends from my schooldays. A Mrs Bailey started a Youth Club in the village, I joined along with many of my friends, and this was the beginning of many evenings of indoor games, table tennis, darts, dominoes and billiards. When the club acquired its own ex-army hut, it was erected in the grounds of the Retreat and was only a short walk from the Half Moon pub where we lads spent many happy hours. I was still a club member at 21; we travelled to other clubs around for sports contests. I enjoyed three holidays in different seaside venues with a group of friends, all male. When packing our small cases on the three Y/C holidays we had to remember to include our Ration Books to hand to the hostel/hotel manager, food was still rationed for several years after the war ended.

As I write this about rationing in 2017 a reminder in the Daily Mail was an announcement by the Food Minister Major Lloyd George on 28 Oct, 1952, that Local Authorities are too be allowed to distribute up to 2oz of 'ration free' sweets to all school children as a Coronation Day treat (the following year)he also stated that he would stop sweet rationing as soon as possible. Three cheers.

After the Y/C holidays, my friends and I enjoyed many annual seaside holidays around the country but in 1952 we decided to try the continent (only seven years after the war ended) as holiday firms were introducing package holidays. We choose a trip to Lake Como in the Italian Alps, we boarded an early morning train at Lakenheath Station for London, then on to Folkestone, ferry to Boulogne, then onto a French train for Lugarno in Switzerland, which was far from luxurious. Seven of us in an eight seater compartment with nice wooden slatted seats, on an all night and much of the following day journey to Lugarno. During the night we had travelled through France all through the night, by dawn we were into Switzerland and for us to see the magnificent scenery of the Swiss vallies and snow capped Alps was enchanting and vastly different from our Suffolk landscape. Changing onto a coach we arrived in Tremazzo on Lake Como around late afternoon, a total of 33 hours with very little sleep, we were slightly shattered. The Buzzonni Hotel was very nice with marvellous views across Lake Como; it was only fifty yards from the lake with only a road and promenade in between.

At breakfast we ate out-side under a roof of grape vines; on the table always a large bowl of fruit and the weather too was marvellous.

On the roads it seemed half the population were buzzing around on Vespa and Lambretta scooters, which Italy was producing by the thousand at that time.

At that time there were many currency restrictions, there was a limit on the cost of any holiday abroad, no-one could take more than £4-50 in sterling out of the country, only £25 to buy foreign currency for spending money so you could not go on much of a spending spree. Italy was in a worse situation than Britain in money matters, there were 1750 Lira to the pound sterling, in issue were banknotes as low as 10 lira and up to 1,000 lira. On one occasion we contributed a hand full of notes to tip the coach driver, they probably totalled one £1, but no complaints.

We went to Venice on very long day trip, in which we fitted a ride in a gondola along the Grand Canal, a visit to a Venetian glass blowing establishment, tour of St Marks cathedral and time for a snack in St Marks square. We ordered tea from the waiter, he brought ice-cream, or was it the other way round, I do not think we had both, my knowledge of a few numerals and swear words in Italian was no use, I was too timid to use them anyway.

One day two went to Milan, the other five of us hired two rowing boats to take out on the lake, when paying we received many instructions, with a lot of arm waving, none of which we understood. We rowed along the coast a distance, someone suggested crossing to the far bank it must have been two miles, people also said it was a mile deep, we landed on a very small rocky area, just as the heavens opened with a massive thunder storm, we watched as the lightning struck the mountains around, we then realised all the arm waving was about the weather. We sheltered under a handy bridge until the storm ended, climbed into the boats for a hard, choppy two miles back, I think a couple may have looked a bit green. We visited quite a number of bars, sampled a fair number of local wines, some good some awful, it was only about two old pennies a glass, with a plentiful choice of fresh fruit and the wine it was hard on head and stomach.

The day before returning home, another day trip took us to St Moritz in Switzerland which had been a neutral country during W, W, 2, the shops were filled with goods we had not seen for years especially watch s, two or three of us could not refuse this opportunity, I emptied my wallet and pockets of Lira, Swiss francs and pound sterling about £4 for a new wristwatch, now I was almost broke. Our journey home and one meal on the train was paid for, there was no opportunity to spend money on train. I remember travelling back to Boulogne with the princely sum of 2 shillings(10p) in my pocket worrying that I might have to pay customs duty on my watch, by wearing it well up my arm, it was not spotted, not so one of our party who accidentally let his show. The result was no watch and a £5 fine. Arriving in London with 2 shillings I then borrowed another 2 shillings from a friend to buy an Egg and Chips in Lyons Corner House.

It was Sunday afternoon and with three hours to kill before our train left from Liverpool Street station we walked around the devastated area around St Paul's Cathedral, there were acres of bombed-out shells of buildings from the Blitz.

So ended my first holiday abroad, I was well pleased; I would get to go on many more but as a married man.

In September the war had ended, and Mr Gathercole our neighbour offered me a job, his tractor driver had taken tenancy of one of the small holdings and I would be his replacement, I jumped at the chance as it was only a hundred yards from home. At this time poor Mr Gathercole's life was in tatters, his wife had left, taking her baby son, who did not belong to her husband, Angelo was also gone.

I still was not yet sixteen and started to drive a Fordson tractor, which had a proper starting handle which was hard to swing for a kid with no muscles, but I managed with a bit of help. Soon I was getting into doing all the different tractor work. In 1946/7 Mr Gathercole bought a new tractor to add to the Fordson, it was a Ferguson T/20 (one of the first in Lakenheath) made in Coventry by the Standard Motor Company. Known as the little Grey Fergie, it was small, very agile, it would turn on the proverbial sixpence and I loved it. The first one we had ran only on petrol and was costly to run, later with the help of a conversion kit they could be started on petrol and when hot enough could be switched onto kerosene, later a diesel engine was fitted in

the next models. They progressed in size; today the modern giants come thundering though our street pulling huge loads with the driver sitting 7/8 feet above ground level.

The early models that I drove were the first tractors that were equipped with hydraulic three point linkage and purpose built implements that could be attached or detached in about two minutes, a great improvement on the old type implements.

About 1950 Mr Gathercole purchased a trailer Class Combine, it was made in Germany, it had two large wheels with balloon tyres, these wheels were the same as fitted on Hienkel bombers that bombed London. Then came an Allis Chalmers baler, and then a sprayer for applying weed killer on the cereal crops.

At the end of the war when I started working with Mr Gathercole, the Italian P o Ws had all gone home and were replaced by German POW's, two of whom I worked with, very different from the Italians. They were not so happy go lucky, much more serious, but they worked hard considering they did not get paid much. We never discussed the war; they did not know much English, my German non-existent

They went back home in three stages, first the none believers in Nazism, the in-betweens second, and the hard liners in 1948, some never did go, the reasons were nothing to go home for, they did not want to live under Russians, some married British girls. Several years later I worked with one of these, and he was lovely chap, there are good and bad in all nationalities.

With a large number of modern machines he took on contract work, spraying weed killer baling hay and straw and combining around the district, I did a large amount of this, some long hours, my boss treated me very well and I was well rewarded.

Mr Gathercole bought a farm in Risby 15 miles away and I worked there too for a few years. I started working for Mr Gathercole when aged 16 and finally left when aged 32 and a husband and father of one, later two, he was best employer I had in my 49 years working life.

Undley did have dark times, in the years that I lived there one elderly gentleman cut his throat but survived, one shot himself in his bedroom, and one hung himself in his cow shed. They were all nice neighbours but sadly had health or financial worries, they left many sad friends.

I did have a part time job for 7 years in retirement.

PS. People who read this narrative may get the impression that my father was a bit of a monster, he was NOT, I could not have wished for a better one. Like many men of that time, his life had not been easy. He had survived a terrible war, he had lost his wife when both were only 39, and I think he had reason to be a little sharp at times.

These are a collection of memories from my younger years, I am afraid they are not perhaps in the correct order in which these events occurred. Also I must say that, without a great deal of help from Mary, my wife of 58 years, there would have been no collection

THE END.