

SOME MEMORIES OF LAKENHEATH IN 1968 – 1990s.

RECALLED BY ROY SILVERLOCK April 2018

HIGH ST. SHOPS – Co-op opposite Plough (now apartments), Hardware, Baker, 2 Dairies, 2 Butchers, c.3 Groceries, Flack's Cycle shop & garage (petrol pump on street), General store (shoes, paints – everything!) Shoe shop, Reg's Barbers (with striped pole outside) – destroyed by fire. 2 'Fish & Chip' shops, a wet fish shop (?), Newsagents, Chemists Post Office.

TRADES – Blacksmith's in Back St. – just closed.

BRYANT & MAYS Poplar Forest – c. 1000 acres. Manager: (Robert Crofts) - Scoutmaster. Good wildlife – hares, owls, etc.

CHIVERS – women from village picking apples from remaining orchards on Undley Rd.

LAKENHEATH LODE – both banks still standing – with footpath on each. One later bull dozed. Water still in lode at Dumpling Lane but bridge gone. Highbridge PH still standing but derelict.

STATION – still busy with regular train service. Waiting room with coal fire in winter. Stationmaster, porters, signaller. Gates manually operated. Siding with goods yard, goods shed, coal heaps.

ORGANISATIONS – Silver Band, Boy Scouts & Girl Guides, Boys Brigade, Girls Brigade, Royal British Legion, Cricket Club, Football Club, Bowls Club, Darts Team, Women's Institute, Horticultural Society, Bell Ringers, Fishing Club and others e.g. WW.2 – ARP/CD, Home Guard, WVS, etc. No histories of these recorded as far as I know (except little on Home Guard).

LAKENHEATH ALLOTMENTS - Society ?

HOUSING – 'Council Houses' – Eriswell Rd. Woodlands Estate – 1st, estate built by developer. Highfield Estate – 1968 on by Bennet's.. Only road prior was Highfields with a few bungalows at N end. Plots on Highfields cost £500. Bye-laws re Highfields Estate included no hedges, walls, etc. at front of property, no caravans, trade vans, trucks to be parked at front of property, no business to be carried on at property – all have been ignored over the years.

RUBBISH DISPOSAL – All trash put into galvanised steel Dustbin with loose lid and tipped manually into dustcart (lorry). Taken to chalk pit (landfill) at end of Maids Cross road. When this pit was filled it was covered.

DELIVERIES TO DOOR – Milk (from 2 dairies) – in 1 pint card topped bottles - later also soft drinks. Bread (not wrapped or sliced). Coal (in 1 cwt sacks). 'Corona' drinks in returnable glass screw top bottles. Newspapers (by boys or girls).

FOOD – Fish & chips still wrapped in greaseproof & newspaper. Fresh veg. & eggs for sale outside a number of houses. Food packed in paper – not plastic. Bacon, cheese, etc. sliced on shop counter'

CHICORY FACTORY – still operating in original brick building (now gone). Chicory grown on contract by some farmers could be seen in fields (beautiful blue flowers).

WARREN – unfenced, many rabbits & birds no longer seen, e.g. skylarks, snipe (in Caudle meadow), etc. – few dogs to disturb ground nesting birds. Trouble with 'Travellers' – Council excavated trench around to keep them out but they filled in a section and crossed over! They left much trash, filled their milk churns with water at the cemetery taps, the women went from door to door selling hand made clothes pegs and heather. A few people still dug sand/gravel for their own use. Still rare wild flowers there.

FARMS – cows from Bridge Farm still driven in street. Asparagus grown on sandy Brecks soil – e.g. on W slope of Maids Cross hill – pioneered by Kidner of Lakenheath who wrote one of the first books on the cultivation of Asparagus and bred his own strain. Other less usual crops seen growing over the years include Rye (for 'Ryevita'), Linseed (for oil), Sunflowers (for seed), Maize (for silage), Alfalfa (for fodder), Buckwheat (for game bird feed), Evening Primrose (for oil), Grass (for lawn turf), Field Beans (livestock feed), Hemp (under licence for fibre). More recently, as demand for sugar has dropped, Oil Seed Rape has replaced much Sugar Beet as a break crop. Some of our farms – which had been in the village for many years – have gone due to amalgamations, etc. The history of Lakenheath's farms is yet another avenue needing research.

NAVIGATION – on Little Ouse. Barges brought clay from Roswell Pits, Ely to wharf near Green Draagon and some sugar beet believed to be still shipped from there to sugar factory (still operating) at Queen Adelaide. Quite extensive remains of Staunch at Botany Bay (lowest staunch on Lit. Ouse).

PUBLIC HOUSES still open: Bell, Bull, Half Moon, Tap Inn, Fox, Plough, Swan (at station). All pubs had darts team and other games played – Shove Ha'penny, Dominoes, etc.) Beer was hand pumped from cask in cellar into tankards. (Some regulars had their own pewter tankard kept in pub.) Cider then the cheapest drink – from small cask. Drinks now less heard of are Mild, Mild & Bitter ('Half & half'), Shandy (Ginger beer or lemonade). Little lager was drunk. A 'Ploughmans' was then a half loaf Aof fresh bread, a big lump of butter, a big hunk of cheese & a couple of pickled onions – not a fancy and more expensive item as now.

DOCTOR – only one for the village – surgery in his house on N end of High St. Also one 'District Nurse'.

SCHOOL – no swimming pool! Nearly all children walked to school.

TEA SHOP – one on corner of Anchor Lane – closed after fire. Christine's restaurant in former 'Waggon & Horses' PH.

AMERICANS – many more lived in rented properties 'off base' – quite a number in Highfields Estate. The road from Eriswell old rectory to the A1065 was still open – as was a little used 'right of way' through the base. (Both road and footpath closed after '9/11'. Air Shows held on Lakenheath Base (& later mainly at Mildenhall) were very popular – as were Bazaars – open to the British – with numerous trade stalls in hangers and outside. Barbecue stall were somewhat of a novelty to the Brit.

& much patronised. There was still a private house on the corner of A1065 and another at the junction of B1112 & A1065 – which still got its water from a well. (Both since demolished).

LOST - GLADLY: 'Fen Blows' – the fine black dust covered everything outside & penetrated windows; The bluebottles – escapes from the 'Maggot Factory' ?; the smell from the pig farm – depending on wind direction.

LOST – SADLY: The meadow and arable birds, the House Martins, Swallows and Swifts which flew over our gardens and nested on village houses; the miles of hedges which sheltered livestock & reduced soil erosion & provided nest sites for many birds; the Hedgehogs – once a common site in our gardens. The farm ponds – one at the farmyard to water horses & cart wheels and ones – often at the junction of four fields – for cattle to drink. Most held Frogs, Toads and Newts and most have been filled in. (There were many more cattle kept in earlier times – hence more meadows and pastures.) the decrease in the number of times we hear church bells. The British Legion Club.

GAINS: Otters are said to be back in the Little Ouse. Lakenheath Fen Nature Reserve. PVC on our houses – eliminating the never ending drudge of painting woodwork. Double (& in places triple – against aircraft noise) glazing. Sports field, play areas and village hall much improved. New Pavilion.

NUISANCES: the number of dogs allowed to run loose in the so-called 'Nature Reserve' on the Warren. The number of cars parked all over the village – often at road junctions or blocking pavements; the increasing number size and speed of huge farm tractors & trailers driven through the village.

I could probably go on and on as things come to mind but I have to stop somewhere!

Roy Silverlock. 7.4.2018.