

# **TODDINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

These are the memories of Dick Stanghon, who was born on 27 July 1906 in Toddington and has lived there practically all his life. He spent his working days in farming and dairying, and in retirement went into local government.

My full name is Richard James Stanghon. I was born on 27 July 1906 in Station Road, Toddington, and except for a brief spell of four years I have lived in Toddington all my life.

*My parents and grandparents*

My father was born at Shillington: how his parents got there I don't know, but I understand that they originated from Lincolnshire. My grandmother certainly came from Boston and she used to say that her father was a sea captain - in fact he was really in charge of one of those coastal boats conveying cargoes of whatever they could pick up. For instance, they would perhaps bring coal down from the north, and take corn back. Grandfather used to work as a ganger in Shillington in the coprolite industry - I understand that coprolite was dug from the soil by hand and then ground up for fertiliser. He could neither read nor write - grandmother, who was a little older than him, used to do all his correspondence. However, when he was working in the coprolite industry he used to work out the men's wages in his head.

Around that time a number of the young able-bodied men moved up to London. There was a lot of building going on, particularly around Hampstead, and grandfather, being a hard-working fellow, went to London. He got a job and decided to move the family up there. I think that grandfather earned quite a bit of money. He then started up on his own with a greengrocer and fruiterer's shop in Heath Street, Hampstead. I don't know how he came by it, nor whether he bought it or rented it. I think that they had a daily round. They would go to Covent Garden in the morning and buy different commodities and then go round the houses. In the strawberry season they would go down almost in the middle of the night to get the strawberries from Covent Garden so that they could deliver them to the houses for breakfast. Everything was going very nicely. He then took land on what now is Golder's Green Crematorium, and kept pigs on it. After they had done their morning rounds (grandmother was looking after the shop) grandfather went round the hospitals and hotels collecting waste and fed it to the pigs. He made a lot of money that way. He had a theory that if you had an acre of land you made  $x$  number of pounds, and if you had a hundred then you could multiply it by  $y$ !

They then moved to Kensworth to do arable farming, and left my father in London. He got a job with a carriage hire business as a driver of a horse and carriage - like a taxi-driver today. At one time father became very ill - he had a very bad bout of pleurisy - and came down to stay with his mother and father. Father knew loads of people in London with horses and so on, and he eventually worked up a round supplying them with hay and straw. He carried hay and straw using a horse and cart from the village up to London, doing two journeys a week. He would load up on a Monday morning and come back on Wednesday afternoon. He brought the cart back loaded with soot which he sold to the local farmers; they used it as a fertiliser. He would be off again on Thursday morning, returning the following Saturday.

Grandfather didn't do very well in Kensworth; he lost almost all his money, and they were in rather a poor state. He had to get out and ended up, in the late 1890s, at Tanner's End Farm in Toddington. Land all down one side of Harlington Road went with the farm. He was there when I was born in 1906. It was later sold as part of the Toddington estate: there was no security of tenancy in those days, and he was given 12 months to get out.



He then took a farm in Hertfordshire, close to Wheathampstead. I recall one time being with my grandfather at the farm when a horse-keeper came in for his money at around 4 o'clock, and my grandfather said to him 'Well, Wilmot, you're early today. Whatever are you going to do with your spare time?'. Normally, a farm-worker would start at around 6 am and work till half-past five at night, for 6 days a week; the regular stockman had to work longer hours than that. This was the time of the start of a kind of 'early-closing' for a farm-worker!

My father didn't go with him; he took the 'charity farm' at Fancott, Feoffee Farm. The rents from that farm went to keep up the Feoffee cottages in Toddington. Then, when grandfather was getting on a bit, we all went up to grandfather's, working for grandad. This was just as the first World War started - we went there in 1914, and I went to school in Wheathampstead. We were there for four years. My mother and grandmother (her mother-in-law) didn't get on very well, and my mother came back to live in Toddington, in Luton Road, leaving dad and me with my grandparents.

Towards the end of the war grandfather was ready to give up the farm; father didn't want it - he wanted to go into dairy farming. So he sold up, and we all came back to live at 10 Dunstable Road in Toddington. Grandfather went to Leagrave, but unfortunately he only lived for about 2 years after he retired, at the age of 66, and for thirteen months of that time he was in bed. That's what decided me that, if ever the chance came along I would retire early - I wasn't going to kill myself with hard work!

#### *Childhood memories*

At the age of five I began my schooling, at the old National School. We were separated into classes; I think that Standards five and six were a class, three and four were a class, and one and two, so far as I can remember, and then there were at least two classes of infants. Conditions were pretty grim compared with what they are today. For instance, we had an old playground which in the winter was up to your neck in mud; in the summer it was just dust and dirt and loose shingle. If you fell down and grazed your knees then you were in trouble! The toilets were terrible. Heating was sparse - we had an old stove that coal was thrown onto. If you sat near it you got cooked, and if you were at the other end of the room where it was cold, you were frozen.

The teacher that readily comes to mind was Miss Walker. Then Miss Muckleston - whom we used to call Maria - took, I believe, Standards 3 and 4. She was a real old battle-axe, in our opinion. Then of course there was Mr Wootton, the Headmaster, who was really a gentleman. Everybody throughout the village had a high regard for Mr Wootton. He was very kind, and strict to a certain extent without being too strict.

We had the usual holidays - Easter, about a week at Whitsun and four or five weeks in the summer. I can't remember ever having half-terms. We had a half-day off for Ascension Day and a day off for Empire Day, which was the 24<sup>th</sup> of May.

We children more-or-less roamed the village and made up our own fun. We played football and cricket on the Green. We had no playing facilities at school and any sport we had - like playing football against another village - we had to arrange ourselves. We generally had a football match and a cricket match against the Council School. They were

played on the Green. I don't remember having a proper football - we played with a tennis ball or something like that.

We could be nuisances and upset some people, but we weren't vandals. We'd go 'tin-tacking' - that's when we'd attach a piece of cotton to a pin above a window and let a button hang off it, so that it tapped against the window. Of course, we'd sometimes knock on people's doors and run away!

One time when I was about sixteen a group of about seven of us went carol-singing - after church, around seven o'clock I think. It was a lovely moonlit night. As we came down Park Road we decided that we needed some music. One lad who lived nearby got his tin whistle (but all he could play was the three notes for Three Blind Mice!). We set off for the Park House and sang there. The house boy came out and said that they wouldn't hear us singing where we were, and we should go round the side. So we went off and started again with a verse or two of 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night', then we broke down so we moved on. We didn't see anyone, and went across the fields to another place where we got on better. The chap came to the door and asked us who we were: our 'spokesman' said that we were the church choir, and asked if he could hear us. He said yes - but he thought it was a baby crying! He gave us half a crown, which was a lot of money in those days. Off we went, again pretending that we were the church choir, and were asked if the Brewers (prominent members of the choir) were with us. We said no, they couldn't come that night, and went on. I was wearing a nearly-new blue suit that was getting into a mess - the fields were all wet and dirty - and I knew that I'd be in trouble. We came to an empty house, then to Herne Grange, where the wife told us that we sounded very nice, and would we sing another? She shut the door, and we moved on without singing any more because we didn't know anything else. Our last port of call was the Manor, where we were told that they'd had no end of callers but were still given a shilling each. We went and bought some port wine in the Sow and Pigs just before it closed, and that was that.

#### *Village life in my young days*

I went to the Church Sunday School, and what was known as a Catechism Class. We'd go to church on Sunday evenings; as I got to about fifteen or sixteen we'd sometimes go to the Methodist Church, sometimes to the Anglican. We gradually then strayed away from the places of worship because when we were farming we were working seven days a week and there was no time to go to a place of worship.

Most young people went to church in those days but, like today, they gradually drifted away as they got older. Quite a lot of social events - mostly whist drives and dances - were connected with the church. I particularly remember Canon Skelton, who ran a church club. There were two clubs for young people at that time: the Church Club in the Town Hall, and what we called the 'Wesleyan Club', held in the Wesleyan Hall. I went to the Church Club, which I seem to remember was open most nights, and Canon Skelton used to come along and play with us. We played billiards, and he taught us to play crib; when he wasn't there we played for bars of chocolate!

When I was very young the local doctor was Dr Waugh, then Dr Fawcett came after the First World War. The surgery was at Conger Cottage. Dr Waugh came to see me when I was very, very young because I had jaundice. Then he didn't call again for a long time and



my mother let me out - but he came and told me I had to stay in for a bit longer. I can't say much about Dr Waugh because I was too young, but everyone thought a lot of Dr Fawcett. He was always about the village. He used to ride a horse to visit his patients. The nearest hospital in those days was Bedford. I think you had to get there by rail from Harlington Station. There was a sort of taxi service, I believe after the First World War, run by a man called Joey Whinnet who had a couple of Fords. His garage was located where the old people's bungalows are now, in Station Road.

We had a fire station and a fire brigade. A manual fire engine was carted around by a horse. If there was a fire, a bell on the top of the Town Hall was rung to summon the brigade. Then they had to go and catch the horse, or find someone with a horse - sort of commandeer it - shunt it out from what it was doing, and put it in the fire engine. In 1921 we had a very big fire at Griffin Farm. The Toddington fire brigade mustered around the pump on the Green and pumped water into a tank, then pumped it through the engine to spray on the fire. They reckoned that the firemen that night drank more beer than they put water on the fire! It happened after a very dry summer when we didn't have a drop of rain from February until October, and the fire burned all night. The church was threatened at one time. They brought a fire engine from Luton and pumped from the pond (now in the Memorial Garden). I understand that when they arrived the Leading Officer reckoned they would pump it dry in a couple of hours. But they pumped all night and there was still water in it, so there must have been some jolly good springs feeding it.

There was a police house in the main street until about 1930, where a sergeant lived; later they built one next to Candelent's Garage, and we had a police sergeant and a constable. I think the constable was usually a single man, who lived in lodgings. We knew the police quite well, and respected them too. One night I got a clout from one when I was very young, during the First World War. We were playing about along the street one night and he came along in the dark, shone his torch on me and really clouted me. Although we used to watch out and give a signal, nobody had given a signal that time!

My first recollection of the people at the Manor is of Weston Webb; he took a very important place in the village and supported most things, but between the wars different ones came and went. Some were interested in the village, some not.

#### *Village shops in my early days*

There used to be a grocery shop at the corner of Park Road and Church Square. The Post Office was where it is now, but they didn't do anything else, only the post. We had a 'social club' - a sweet shop, where the Halifax (just renamed Country Properties) is now. Then where Zax Snacks is, there was a baker's and a butcher's. Up the steps next to that, first of all there was the police house. Then came Horley's grocery shop. The current optician's was a draper's, kept by the two Misses Pitt. Next to that was a newsagent's and a barber's shop. The barber's was one side of the passage, and at the other side was the newsagent's, Mrs Drew; they sold periodicals, I think, and some stationery. Moving along to where Child's is, we had a bakery run by a different baker. The Allens lived close by; they were builders, and had a yard at the back. Then there was another grocer's shop. The carpet shop housed the undertaker's. Then came Willison's confectionery shop, followed by Willison's tailor's shop. Travelling along further was the Co-op at one time, and a cycle shop. The next shop, just before you got to what is now Mrs Marriott's flower shop, was another grocery shop. The florist's was then a pub, the Bedford Arms (the present

Bedford Arms was originally a farm, which was almost derelict before being taken over by the brewery). On the way to the Grange - not Grange Road but what we used to call Workhouse Lane - there was a butcher's shop where I worked for a time. I think that was the extent of the shops along the High Street; I don't remember any on the other side.

There was plenty of competition between the shops. There were several grocers, and at least four bakers when I was twelve or fourteen - there were Clifford's the baker's across the Green, and Ashby's, down Station Road as well. They hadn't a shop, just a van. They all used to take the bread round. Then there were all the butchers, six at least. Besides the ones I've already mentioned there were Briden's near the Sow and Pigs, Muckleston's (next door to where the bank is now), one where the Pet Shop is these days, and Hobbs' across the Green. The butchers used to deliver as well.

Most of the shopkeepers also delivered outside the village. I know that Clifford's delivered bread to Milton Bryan, Eversholt and Tingrith at least. The butchers, Muckleston, Carr and Briden, went to Tingrith, Eversholt, Harlington, Chalton and Sundon. They were then, as now, quite small in comparison with Toddington.

There were even more pubs then than now. There used to be The Pheasant in Park Road, the New Inn, The Hare and The Queen's Head, and quite a few others.

A cinema, with a gallery, opened between the wars. I don't know how successful it was, but it seemed to keep going. It was a bit of a dead loss at times because they would bring a film; you would watch it almost to the end - and suddenly they'd say that Part Six hadn't arrived! That was in the Church Hall (now the TADS building).

*Off to work!*

Butcher's boy

Father didn't do anything during my later time at school, and I didn't know what I wanted to do. However, while I was still at school I'd worked on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings for a butcher and father wanted me to be a butcher, so when I left school at fourteen I went to work for Mr Hobbs the butcher. All shop work and meeting people. I used to go round in the morning (except Monday and Saturday) and get the orders, and then go back with the meat. We would take the orders on Friday for delivery on Saturday, but we called on a lot of our customers every day. I liked that, but I didn't like the slaughtering, and I had to learn the trade right through.

Retail Dairy work

I was a butcher's boy for two years, but then Father eventually decided to go back to farming. I had twelve months working on a farm to get my hand in again, which brought me to the age of seventeen, and in 1923 we took over Herne Grange Farm - a dairy farm. At that time farming wasn't too good, and I wanted to start up on my own so I went into the retail dairy business in 1927. We were supplying milk to a certain fellow who 'got in our ribs', so we took the derelict round from him - and it really was a derelict round! I did it from Toddington to Dunstable, with a horse and cart until the following November, when I bought a van. I was buying my father's milk. I always finished early, so I went back and worked on the farm.



We began to work up the round - at that time, Dunstable was growing; when I sold it we had three rounds going. AC-Delco, as it became later on, had come from Birmingham to Dunstable as the 'Sphinx Sparking-plug Company'. Of course, we picked up quite a bit of trade from that. For a time we worked from Toddington, but when the business grew we opened up a depot on the road between Luton and Dunstable. We put in a boiler, a cold store and other things needed for the milk trade.

The Toddington farm by this time couldn't supply my needs, and we had to buy from other sources. You may not believe this, but we bought milk from London, even before we opened the depot in Dunstable. It came on the train to Harlington. The first lot of milk I had from London was ten gallons. Milk coming to me so surprised the people at Harlington Station - because we used to send the milk to London on the train and the porters knew us - that they sent it back! This happened just before I arrived at the station; they managed to contact Legrave in time for them to take it off the train and send it back. We used to call milk bought in like that 'accommodation milk'.

We always needed more milk at weekends, particularly on Sundays. One lady used to have half a pint a day (when we still did half-pints); I remember her saying to me 'I am a good customer for you, because I do have three pints on a Sunday!'. When we acquired the depot at Dunstable, a wholesaler had established a daily round of accommodation milk. I would order from them the day before, and they used to bring it to me in churns. In the early days I used to go round with a can for measuring out the milk.

Then, as time went on, father was getting too old to carry on so I was running both the dairy business and the farm. I put a fellow in to manage the dairy business and I kept my hand in by going in every Saturday. This fellow was good at getting the milk out for the roundsmen, but he got in a heck of a mess with the books. When he went we had one who was good at the books, but he wasn't much good with the rounds. However, then the war came and we had girls doing the rounds. We also had to cut the rounds from three to two, since milk was rationed. In Dunstable, as in other fair-sized towns, we were controlled insofar as we had our own areas in which to supply milk. Then we had to turn over to bottles and bought a bottling machine.

I liked the dairy business at first, but I got fed-up with it in the end because it became very difficult to get round in the war. Although I had two jolly good girls that I remember well, there were others who didn't care, who had been directed to do the work. Milk supply could become very short; we had to supply nursing mothers and children with theirs, and if there was any left then you could distribute it. One girl rang me and said 'Unless I have more milk to take out tomorrow morning, I'm not going!'. I went over the next morning to try to sort it out; she probably had been moaned at by the customers.

I enjoyed the fact that I worked up the dairy business from something that was failing into a prosperous concern. As I worked it up, I had visions of getting hold of the whole milk supply for Dunstable. In fact, I had talks with another dairyman for Dunstable: we discussed putting the two businesses together and amalgamating to form a limited company called 'Dunstable Dairies'. However, as we got closer and closer to such a day, we encountered opposition from other dairies in the area - there were a lot of them at that time. On one occasion when I was doing a round, there were seven of us in Edward Street!

So, as I say, there was a certain amount of opposition from them. It was clear that our idea wouldn't work and so I backed out.

### Farming

Just before the war ended, I sold the milk business and went back to farming full-time until I sold out in September 1961 and moved to Manor Road. I didn't produce any milk at all. I eventually sold all the cows - I had always said that, if ever I farmed on my own, I wouldn't keep cows - and went over to sheep and pigs. I already liked sheep, and though at one time I thought that I hated pigs, I now like them.

I've seen many changes, of course. When we first went to Herne Grange Farm, in 1923, there was no arable land at all - it was all pasture. My father reckoned that it was best to go into milk production because you had a milk cheque every month - very handy! But in my early days I liked to go out late on a Saturday night - and didn't like to get up at five o'clock on a Sunday morning to do the milking, when all my pals were still in bed. When I had one cow left, I went out for the day one Saturday to Eastbourne, and got home around ten o'clock: I had to fetch that cow in, and milk her, because that was for the house. I decided that when that cow went, that was the lot - we'd buy it in a bottle in future. When we finished farming, we didn't start until about half past seven or eight o'clock in the morning; there was none of this really early rising.

After I sold the dairy business and was farming full-time, we had a contract to supply pigs to a fair-sized butcher in Luton - Durrant's - between 12 and 20 pigs every fortnight. We had a standing order for the transporter to come round before the pigs were fed on alternate Monday mornings to take them for slaughter. We had thirty sows to produce the young pigs, which were sold at about four or five months old. On alternate Fridays we used to weigh them, because they had to reach a certain weight before they went, and then marked the selected ones ready for Monday morning.

We also had a hundred breeding ewes for lambing every year. Recently some friends asked if we had visited the local lambing open days. I told them that I'd seen even enough lambing in my life!

We were very friendly with the people in the other Herne farms, especially the Saunders, who moved into Herne Willow Farm around 1946.

Piped water didn't come to Toddington until after the war. In the farms, we had all sorts of supplies. There were springs in the fields that provided drinking-holes for the animals. When we lived in Leighton Road, we had to go to the next yard to a pump that supplied water for about eight houses. People either had a well or a pump, and the pumps were sometimes inside the houses. We had no electricity or mains water for ages at Herne Grange. There was a pump for water over the kitchen sink, and oil lamps and so on.

An old building in an isolated position down at the bottom of the farm had been lived in by a cowman with a large family. When they moved out, it stood empty for a long time. Then, during the war, some bombs were dropped in Luton and a family looking for somewhere to live was told that we had this derelict building. It was a real mess; we'd even had the floor up. They said that they'd take it and my father was amazed - but they reckoned they didn't mind where they lived as long as they got away from the bombs.



Father said that they could live there for six months then he would see how things were. The wife had to register for war service, and I'm hanged if they didn't drop some more when she was registering in Luton (they followed her around). Then my mother died, and when father was left alone in the farmhouse they moved in with him. Father kept a room there. In 1950 we decided to go back to the farm to live; just before that, the powers-that-be came to us to say that the next farm wanted electricity, to run their milking machines and whatever. Would we be prepared to take electricity as well? Of course, we jumped at this. It wasn't long before we had to improve the water supply because we were running short in the summer-time, and that's when we went on to mains water. That was around the end of the war. The water went down Park Road and on to the farms on the right, before it went to the farms on the left. We had to obtain permission from another farmer to go over his land to bring the water across.

Until the last year, we did a lot of contract work letting out machinery. We had too much money invested in the machinery for the size of the farm just for our own use - a combine harvester, baler and so on - so with the contract work we could make money and also help out other people. At that time, I had two workers for the 240 acres. That would be no good today. You can't farm less than 500 acres.

#### *The Second World War*

I had to break up the pasture during the years of the Second World War to go arable and grow corn. The land had been pasture since time immemorial - we hardly knew the type of soil we had. It was lovely, workable soil at first because of the manure from the animals, but as we worked it, it gradually went back to the heavy state that it had been in originally. We grew fair crops. The Ministry of Agriculture would come round and say what we should do with the land that we had - they would put an order in to break up, say, this field and that field.

You soon picked up the different skills needed to change what you were doing. There were also demonstrations that we could attend to get tips about growing crops and other things; it was pretty well-organised. During the war, subsidies were good: we were paid something like £12 an acre to grow potatoes, and then we would be given a subsidy for the fertiliser we bought. There was a committee that allocated machinery, and they allocated us a self-binder - which came from Australia - for corn-cutting. Again, you had to do so much to get one.

The war started us on buying tractors. The first one that we bought was £175; the cheapest now are £10-12,000. Before, when we harvested we needed nine people to cart the corn off and stack it and so on, to work efficiently. Now, two men can harvest 500 acres: one works the combine, another the buttons on the drier ... It's all so complicated now. There's a lot of capital tied up if a combine is bought, and it's only in use for about three weeks of the year. When we had one we'd work it hard because we'd go out and combine for other people. Also, we'd do the corn, and then grow clover for seed, and that's ready for harvesting around October. You'd do that sort of thing. No-one today could farm less than 500 acres profitably.

During the war, I was a Special Constable. Once a whole gang of specials (except for one) gave themselves the sack because one had been summonsed and fined for showing a light. They then had to find a new body of specials, and that's when I joined. We were fetched

out early one summer morning because a German plane was supposed to have landed somewhere, and we were told to search for the crew members. We used to go out from ten at night till about two in the morning. We had to keep the black-out by looking out for lights and things like that, and there were specific points where we had to be at certain times. The regular police would check to make sure that we were there. The Air Raid Wardens were responsible to the Ministry of Defence, and we were responsible to the Police. We occasionally took over from the regular police at weekends.

One Saturday night (before mother died) when we were living in Toddington I went on my bike to get some fish and chips. While I was in the fish and chip shop, there was a 'whoomph' as some bombs went off. A poor old lady in there was a bit upset, saying 'Dear oh dear, what shall we do?', and Ted Sales who ran the shop said it was miles away. Anyway, I came out and heard another bomb coming. I thought it was going to land in the middle of the Green, and I went straight down beside the wall, but it landed over by Conger Hill. That particular night - around seven o'clock - incendiaries came down all around us. Two were delayed-action, and I understand that one killed a cow. Several were dropped on Bound Way. A gypsy chap used to sleep there, and probably showed a light. He moved the next night lower down, and they dropped a couple down there! The road by what is now Poplars Nursery was closed for around a week because an unexploded bomb was dropped close to the road. We think they were either aiming for the railway line, or just getting rid of the bombs.

Also, a crippled Wellington bomber once made a forced landing in Harlington Road by the house known as 'Hillside' - it was only diverted from going into the house by an adjacent ash tree. The crew all survived; I think one of them suffered a broken leg. The night Coventry was bombed, there was a succession of planes for hours that went over on their way back. We thought that they came to Dunstable, and got their bearings from the big chalk pits at Houghton Regis.

A German prisoner-of-war from a camp at Milton Bryan - he'd be about 35 - worked on the farm; he was a good fellow. He'd been on the Russian front. After the war was over he stayed in England and worked as a regular hand for us. Later on he had a room in the farmhouse, and ate with us. He was an educated chap, and already spoke good English when he arrived. He had been in the printing business. Well after the war, when he had returned to work for a printing firm, he had to go to an exhibition in London. He decided to come to Toddington on the Sunday, found where we'd moved to and left a phone number with our neighbour. I rang him at the hotel where he was staying in London and we had a chat, and that was the last I heard from him.

The Land Girls were billeted at Toddington Park, and they used to come and help with the threshing - but we preferred the Girls from Leighton Buzzard! One Friday evening a group of them asked if they could go and finish off their work the next morning, so I signed their time-sheets up to 12 o'clock (they actually worked until eleven, so they didn't gain much). One of them, I remember, went off for the weekend, and we didn't see her any more.

#### *Life outside work and in retirement*

I joined the Toddington Old Boys Association about 1949, was Secretary/Treasurer for a number of years, and took my turn as Chairman of the Association in 1976.



While I was farming, I was involved with the National Farmers' Union (NFU). I was fairly keen: I was Branch Chairman for a year, and on the Executive Committee at Bedford. I didn't intend to sell the farm when I did, but the chance came along. Having sold the farm I needed something to do. People had been pressing me for some time to stand for the old Luton Rural District Council. I had always said that I couldn't do two jobs - have a business and also do that sort of thing. However, having sold out I thought I might as well have a go. So I stood for election in 1961 and I scraped in.

The next three years came round and I still carried on. By then I'd got well-known, and I came top of the poll. I fought four elections, and got in each time; I served thirteen years. In 1964 - the second time I put in for District Councillor - I topped the poll for that, and for the Parish Council. I had a pretty busy life in local government.

My main hobby was shooting. I went shooting every Saturday in the season and sometimes by invitation in the week. Shooting was my pride and joy. When I sold the farm I reserved the shooting for fifteen years so that I could still walk around it - it was a free place to me. After fifteen years I realised that I should have reserved it for life, but at the time fifteen years seemed a long time!

When I sold the farm we still lived in the house for several weeks because the house in Manor Road wasn't quite ready (the decorators were being a bit slow!). A chap who had bought some pigs from the farm came along one day and said 'I wanted to go to Australia, but I can't leave my farm for three months'. I told him that I had nothing much to do, and I would look after it. He replied 'Right - I'm going to Australia. That's settled. Come down to lunch one Sunday, and we'll sort things out'. So we did, and I found myself looking after his farm. When he came back he asked if I would carry on doing his books. I agreed to this, and spent a day and a half a week at his farm at Tingrith. He eventually sold this farm, and moved to a farm at Thame. He asked me to carry on with his books, so I went there one day a week, still banking at Ampthill, until he sold up completely.

After that I didn't do anything in that line - I was shooting and one thing and another, cutting one or two lawns and doing the Council work, which had increased. I was doing on an average two days a week Council work. All the meetings were in the daytime then; there were no evening meetings. Then I met Michael Shanley while shooting; he knew I wasn't doing anything in the bookkeeping line, and asked me if I would do his books at the farm. I agreed to consider it, and ended up doing his books for twenty-one years, until I gave it up altogether.

In my several careers - butcher boy, dairyman, farmer, bookkeeper, and in my time as a councillor, it is difficult to say quite which was my favourite since I had pleasure in most that I did. Toddington has changed a great deal, but I don't think that it has deteriorated at all over the years. We have had a lot of fresh people come here to live who have been an asset to the village and have formed new associations and so on. I always said, in my years in local government, that Toddington would grow because it has everything going for it - on top of a hill, healthy site, free-draining soil, easy access to the M1, good train service to London from Harlington. People who come here to live, unless their work takes them away, will (like me) want to stay, and possibly their children too.