Talk given to Shrivenham Young Wives in 1981

I want to introduce this talk to you and I hope it will last about at least an hour. The purpose of this talk and it is very ill-prepared as most of my talks are as I've been living under field conditions with candle light in the gloaming and some of the things I'm going to mention later on will have some relevance to the way I've been living at the moment. I cannot go through the history of Shrivenham in toto as it would take far too long and the history of Beckett alone would take a couple of evenings. So, there are wide gaps in my knowledge, in fact it's nearly all gap and very little knowledge, a lot of it will be padding and anecdotes that I put in. Any reference to the people I make will be rare for the simple reason that many of them are living here today. So with those two restrictions I call it a quick look back.

Some of us are saying that Shrivenham here was a settlement way back maybe 5000 years ago. Neolithic remains on the College, that is bits of flint found give rise to the thought that it may well have been a Neolithic settlement. Certainly, it has been inhabited as a manor since pre-Norman times, if you remember 1066. I personally don't but it did happen. And,it was a manor then. Its occupation was probably earlier than the Neolithic flints found there so it's going back a long way. Some Roman coins were found there in Little Acre Wood, that is Wellington Wood. A cache of Roman coins were found in Wellington Wood, now known as Bower's Copse, and they are now in Salisbury Museum donated there by Lord Barrington. The first recorded entry of Shrivenham anywhere, documentation, is in the Doomsday Book of 1086. It was held by a Count William of Evreux, a Norman. That's the first recording. In 1214 King John was in residence and he used it as a hunting lodge. It was held by the Beckett family (they were not all called Beckett but I want to give you the background first) on service of making fires in the royal bedchamber. I don't know what they did in the summer. And when the king passed over Fowyer's Mill and I'll show you on the map where that is, Fowyer's Mill bridge, two white capons were to be presented to him with the utterance: "Behold, my Lord," touching his forelock of course, "these 2 white capons you shall have but not now." Obviously a king didn't want a couple of leghorns flapping around his carriage as he drove into the big house.

Missing great gaps, it's all recorded here in case you want to try and catch me out, but there's so much history that it would take far too long, in 1633 it was bought by Sir Henry Marten who was a Judge, a very wealthy Judge who created the Marten's Charity in 1642 and the Board is in the Church porch. In Shrivenham St Andrew's church porch you can see a very large Board painted for this Charity. The bottom of the Board has more or less been obliterated over the ages, it's very sad. It has probably been recorded somewhere else but you can see that this is the Marten's Charity. It was sold in 1666 to Sir John Wildman, who was the Postmaster General in 1689, he was dismissed in 1691, two years later. He was knighted and died in 1693 and was buried in the chancel of the church and his son is also buried there. His heir, John Shute, in 1716 changed his name to Barrington and became an Alderman of London and an MP. He was expelled for fraudulent lottery whereupon he was created a Baron in the Irish Peerage, which shows the Irish value even then. Could I have the first slide now please, Mervyn.

I don't know if you understand maps, most ladies don't. This is coming in from Swindon on the A420, here, this is Station Road, and this is a little notorious cottage just here opposite the allotments, these are more cottages along the Highworth Road and you'll notice that this isn't the Memorial Hall, it's a cottage. And here is Stallpits Farm and there isn't a single dwelling between there and Stallpits Farm. This is Manor Lane and the High Street. Here of course is the tithing of Beckett and that of course is Northford and Beckett Stables here. So you can see that the conurbation as they called it, was a little village clustered around the High Street here. There was a kink in Stainswick Lane ....just straightened it up and put it down over the railway . This is the Wilts and Berks canal and the railway is just off the map. These numbers here are tithe numbers where landowners paid a tithe or tax on their lands. I won't go into details now but we are doing some research into the tithes and occupations and owners and so forth. But here you have it, you can see now while we are here, this is the hut Garage now and the land behind it now Curtis Road and so on; here are the allotments and we have a police station here today, Martens Road comes to about here, Damson Trees, Stallpits with the council houses. This goes to Highworth, nothing here and this is the field we're in and just about here tonight, this is Youghal, the field name. this was also Youghal and is named after it . This is Damson Trees so was called Damson Trees and so on. Now, as you know, the developments have taken over. Here is the Recreation Ground area which of course has now been developed into Manor Close. This is the development of Canon Hill's Gardens; This is Catherine Close and so forth and of course the College is also in. But that is essentially, taking those strange people who live then known as West End out, the whole lot was in this very small area here. And a large number of ponds; you can see the Vicarage pond here. It was in far better condition then, fed by a spring which rose just here, in this field. It was the only spring issuing from the ground in Shrivenham and fed into this pond, out through a hatch and along here and out into Beckett Lake and all the water drains from this area. Well that's about it in that particular map, oh, note these little things here, you probably can't see them but take my word for them, they're here, they were allotments one, two , three, four, five ,six allotments. This is allotment land from here, this cottage back to there where this house is, where Mr Sutton lives, there are two allotments there. And that was allotment land round here. This was the land of the Shrivenham poor. In fact it still is. There are probably one or two places that you can't see from back there, so I will ask you to put the next slide on.

This is a more up to date map, not modern by any means. But it is a composite map made of various ordnance sheets, so here you see some development in Stallpits road,and here we see a police station has now appeared and the Memorial Hall and the ex-servicemen's houses, the ones here. This was Lady Barrington's bequest to the village. She gave this and it was opened in 1925, with the homes for the disabled ex-servicemen. Well, as you know, these are still allotments and this is the track up to the allotments. This, has all been developed and all this land by the Hut Garage and so forth, as indeed has Catherine Close which is about here, and also Canon Hill's Gardens where the pond is, and of course Stainswick Lane on either side, Sandy Ground and all this area has been developed. So you can see considerable development has taken place. The footpath has long since been extinguished and these are ponds and there were a multiplicity of ponds. There were numerous ponds. Every field had a pond and this was most unusual and today are very hard to come by.

There you have part of the Beckett estate of course and a footpath going across what we call Days Ground and Common Close; a footpath going across into Beckett and down into the estate that way. So it's a very much more up to date map than the previous one.

The next map shows the difference when all these areas are built in. I can demonstrate this better with this map taken of Shrivenham in the mid 70's. Here's the recreation Ground, the cricket square, the tennis courts and the avenue of chestnut trees. Here we come up to Stallpits and here's all the development up here, the council houses. Here we have Martens Road and Martens Close, Damson Trees, Curtis Road and the A420., Station Road which has now been developed. We are standing just about here where Mrs Cox –Eunice- lives. And here you have Downsview – all this is developed. And then you go down to Stainswick Lane and Sandy Ground and Catherine Close which had still not been built on then. But there's a picture of contemporary Shrivenham when you compare it with the two previous maps. You can see the changes that have taken place not to mention the Royal Military College of Science where you had the original Manor House and all the other and other quarters and various other buildings. It's a far cry from the other two maps that you saw. Aerial shots.

I'll briefly mention schools. There were schools here from about 1703 and possibly a little earlier, largely run by the Vicar who was paid £4 a year to teach 10 poor boys from Shrivenham, in which case we'd have qualified, just the three R's, very, very basic. And the schoolroom for the girls (there were two schools) was in what is now the Church Room in the churchyard and the headmistress lived in Mrs Adams' cottage, the thatched cottage in the churchyard, and the other one was the Forresters' Hall which I'll show you on a slide later on, in Hazells Lane where Mrs Stevens now lives. That was the Boys's school until the present school was opened in 1863 with the land donated by Lord Barrington with places for about 100 children.

The roads in Beckett were re-aligned in 1780 because prior to 1780 the main street st Horne's Corner, just by Vic Day's house, Vic is a JP, Thornbush 1 Longcot Road, where it turns round there, well it didn't. You kept going straight ahead through what is now Dean's gate and that is the entrance to the College. Wrought iron gates there. And you went straight down there and it went across a fjord where is now the Cradle Bridge where you feed the ducks, and the ladies of the day derived their pleasure from watching carriages going past, heading out to the Longcot Road coming out by Broadleaze Farm on the Longcot road and that was the original road. And the road that ran from Horne's corner to Northford, that is by Bremhill Park Golf Course, that was merely a track. The present house, Beckett House, was built in about 1831 to 1834. The previous house was stood on a site slightly further north and was there before the Norman Conquest. That house had become a ruin and in fact at one time Lord Barrington lived in Shrivenham House where the General now lives and his steward who was paid about £200 a year lived in Beckett House, the crumbling ruin. His main occupation was keeping the beams up and woodworm out so he seconded him to live in Beckett House while he lived in Shrivenham House..

My other recollections which I want to get on to and which I know you are anxious to hear, I was born here and my first recollection is of the Depression. It's a bit sad because we're in one at the moment. The Depression of about 1926 –ish. I have very

few recollections before then. That was marked by hundreds of tramps,literally hundreds and hundreds of tramps, variously called "Gentlemen of the road", "Milestones Inspectors" or whatever. These would usually come along from Stratton on a Monday morning. You see, they would spend the weekend at Stratton workhouse institution, where they would chop some wood and do a few jobs for their keep, a bowl of soup and a bit of bread and then they would have to leave on the Monday. And of course, we're on a main route here. They would perambulate between there and the next workhouse found at Wantage. They walked from workhouse to workhouse. Poor, undernourished wretches they were and there were literally thousands of them. They had a habit of calling at cottages and anyone living on the right hand side of the A420, or on the left for that matter, would have frequent calls from these people and if they found that they were received favourably for a crust or an old pair of boots or whatever, they would have to be old ones to be given them, they would leave some mark somewhere and of course successive tramps would come in and they could get very abusive. And we found them sat in the back garden as fires were going under the thatch. They would call for a can of water, a spoonful of tea, Mam, a bit of bread and cheese, anything, they were absolutely destitute and they slept in sheds, hayricks, garden sheds, farmers often found them in hayricks and so on. All along the road you could see little tiny fires where they had got some tea from one and some bread from another and they had a brew up on their open fire. There were literally thousands of them. We used to dread them. There was one pious person, (can't mention names) things haven't changed that much, people were God-fearing then, some of them, some of the ladies who had this pretence of being holier than thou and went every Sunday to church. And although all the teachings of the church they looked on their fellow man as being something of a second class citizen if he happened to be a tramp, you know with a few fleas hopping on him and an old tatty coat, his toes sticking through his boots. He would knock at this door, this lady's house. She was a very upright sort of lady and superficially very religious. He said "Don't suppose you've got a crust Mam" So she went to her chief? And disdainfully gave him a crust "Thank you, Mam", he says. "Oh, that's not for your sake, my man. It's for God's sake". He then said: "For Christ's sake put some bloody butter on it". That's the sort of thing that happened. There were some like that and the others.

You had the Barringtons and people of that ilk and by and large the rest of the people were the others, the labouring craftsman type of person and I'll deal with those more fully later on. Well, you are probably looking at something very similar now. There was very good transport. I'm talking now about the late 1920's and early 30's. The Great Western Railway flourished with its giant railworks at Swindon and a few were employed in what they call the Works inside and they enjoyed privileged tickets and free passes so they could go for a holiday once a year.. It was not so much a holiday as a lockout. The firm closed down so they were given no choice. The other peop[le were given no holiday at all – people like agricultural workers and some of the men, of course there were no buses, well there may have been one a day, I can't really remember when they started but the transport was shank's pony and pony and trap which most people couldn't afford except the gentry and we walked to most places. We had bicycles with oil lamps and carbide lamps and that sort of thing. The transport system was very poor between villages and hence you saw these little corner places where people clustered together living closely together much as they had done since the Middle Ages. They didn't really get outside their own parish and it wasn't

unknown for people to spend the whole of their life in one parish and never go outside. I can see why this happened. So there were many many, intermarriages in this village. If you take this on long enough you get imbeciles. This interbreeding, thank God transport came just in time. There are just simple honest countryfolk and if one had moved into this area, like you people have in the last 10 or 20 years, you are known as "furreigners" and you were grudgingly accepted for the first 50 years should you lived that long, and a classic example of that very recently is when in the Barrington Arms one rustic, and this is a fact, was talking about Vic Day who everybody knows and is our local JP. And someone said "well Vic's a local lad, he ought to….." And this fellow said "Well he ain't bloody Shrivenham. His bloody great grandfather come from Longcot". And that shows you how in these little pockets that still holds good. Foreigners. I think you're lovely foreigners but there you are. The unhurried pace of living as I've just told you. Well the fastest thing through here I suppose would have been a milk float. It's no exaggeration. There were a few traction engines, steam traction engines. They came from Barnes of Rushy Platt and used to haul timber. One or two Trojans, Brooke Bond with solid tyres, dead flat windscreen, nothing aerodynamic, oil lamps and things no wonders, there's never been a fatality here, not in the High Street because they gave such audible means of warning of approach. You could hear it coming down by Northford when it was cranking and hissing and you could get out of the way. You could play whips and tops in the road and do whatever you wanted to. A new steam traction was also used for agricultural purposes, for ploughing and so on. There was also the forerunner , I suppose of the carrier. And again it was a solid tyred van or lorry with a man with a flat peaked cap, who would come through, and these were country wide, I'm not just talking about Shrivenham, I'm talking about Shrivenham but these would apply to any of the rural parishes anywhere in the country at the time I'm talking about. They would come through about twice a week and one tied a piece of rag to the gatepost and seeing the rag he would stop and if you had got some thing for the carrier-man "would you take this to my sister Poll up in Victoria Road" or would you take this back to the shop". The carrier-man would say "certainly Mam". And you would pay him and he would take it and he would also bring stuff from Swindon or wherever he was going. He was known as the carrier. And later on buses did much the same thing. You could put stuff on the buses at Swindon at the bus office and it would come here. But that was the early one known as the carrier.

Unlike today, I speak for myself, everyone knew everyone else in the village. I doubt whether you do. I certainly don't and I've been here longer than you. But in those days you did. Everyone knew everyone not only in this village but in Bourton and Watchfield. Numbers were small – the population was about 630 – now it's about 2,800 –ish and has gone up four times. It was an intimate little society, don't misunderstand me, everyone knew everyone else and if someone was ill in the village all would know. If Old Sally was down with the palsy or whatever she had, people would all know and if they died, in those days they used to ring the death bell which was the tenor bell in the church. Wherever you were in the parish, you would hear this bell tolling very slowly Boing, Boing, Boing and the would know that poor old Sally Reed had gone. So communications were very much quicker than they are today because today I have to read next month's Parish Magazine to know that Sally Reed had died three months ago and I'd known her all my life. So that way we haven't progressed that much. News travelled very, very quickly within the village – outside no. When that person died the Vicar told the Sexton and the Sexton tolled the

bell and then Thomas Dike and son, wheelwrights, undertakers, everything extraordinary would set out to make a coffin and they would traipse off looking most solemn and dignified and severe with their six foot rule partly concealed in their pocket and they would go to Scottie's and measure up their corpse and back they would go. And then that would lay in the front room. Most people had a front room, not everybody, some only had a one up and one down but if you had a front room that was the place for laying out. Usually a lady from the village did this. There were no funeral parlours or hearses so everything was done in the village –the local lady laid him or her out and the local undertaker did the funeral. Then they would be laid in the front room with the curtains drawn and all the family would wear black diamonds or a black band for ages, several months or maybe a year after. It's no longer done. On the day of the funeral Tommy Dike and his son would take this hand bier with four rubber wheels, spoked wheels rather lavish......a trolley we call it. It now resides in the back of Mrs Moon's where it has been rotting, I asked the Vicar the other day. It's an antique now. Then they transported it from the cottage to the church for burial on a hand bier, long before the hearse.

Occupations. The railway platelayers worked on the line on the length of the line between here and Marston; and then you had the factory workers who cycled to Swindon every day and back, a six and a half day week. The floods at Acorn Bridge were full every year, deep floods this side of Acorn Bridge every year right through almost up to March. They would go along, pop off their bikes, up the railway embankment and carry their bikes along the railway and down by Breakspear's cottage and then on into Swindon. It was taken for granted that it would happen every year. Of course, you had things like masons, wheelwrights, smiths, farmworkers, gardeners etc, much as you have today. The horse was the maid of all work, and the tractor came in here as I say ....You probably think that's an exaggeration but some of these things move very slowly. People were probably using tractors 30 years before they used them here. I'll read you something, just to show you I'm not shooting a line. This is from Nigel Hammond's book, it's a very good book, "The Vale of the White Horse", I recommend it. A little bit of it caught my eye last night in the flickering candleglow. It says "The rural England of Sir Roger de Coverley could still be found in some parts of the country in 1800 or perhaps even 1850. Okay, that's a little before the time I'm talking about. Likewise a general character in England in 1800 could still be found in isolated areas a century later. That makes it 1900. In all probability, North and West Berkshire, that's where we were, we're now Oxfordshire, fell into this last category, as a region where the tide of progress stirs just so much to avert stagnation; where old world customs and archaic forms of speech still linger and where men go about their task in a spirit of serene leisurelyness. That gives you the scene. And, so there you are. That's the sort of scene I'm talking about. Rather pleasant. Anyway, I've said enough about the horse – maid of all work, it delivered coal amongst its many jobs. There was no gas here – so people burned solid fuel, coal, a lot. It used to be delivered from Shrivenham station which was a very active and very flourishing station. Shrivenham station was then. Many, many trains in the day. The coal was delivered there and then by Mr Enstone, Mr Kent or Adams. There were three full-time coalmen with horses and flatcarts delivering coal to villagers around about here. And coal then was about six bob a hundredweight. Of course all farmwork was done by the horse and the farmer until about the 1930's when the tractor came in. Pony and trap was the mode of transport for those rather better off and for the less so the charabanc took them on the annual outing to White

Horse Hill, which was the choir boys outing and I belonged to this at the time. The annual high spot of the year was the outing to White Horse Hill, believe it or not. And that was often by pony and trap which was also used for removals by the farm and agricultural workers. You would find that the occupant of a chair then was living in any number of cottages in the village because he would work say for Mr Lawrence of Stallpits and if he had words or if his face didn't fit or his son couldn't work for the farm or if his wife wouldn't do the housework, then he was on the move at Michaelmas or Ladyday. He was out and the bailiffs were in and he was out on the side of the road. So you could see him and his wife (it was usually a flat wagon and a horse pulling it) with all their goods and chattels with plenty of room to spare on one flat wagon, a galvanised bath, a couple of bulky old mattresses, a bolster, perhaps a tick or perhaps a few ticks, and they would go tramping past maybe to Fernham farm for a year and then they would be kicked out of there and then be back again. So they used to rotate around the parish. Some of them went out of the parish and if when they returned they became a "furreigner".

In the school, even as late as the 40's and certainly in the 30's, the children of Watchfield were educated, I say that advisedly, at Shrivenham School. They were brought from Watchfield in a covered wagon with a horse, just like you see on the westerns, like a gipsy caravan and you could see all these little tiny faces peering out from behind these curtains and you could see Percy Knapp sat at the front. He would take them to school at Shrivenham and then he would take the girls to cookery on a Monday to Bourton. There was no cookery here. They had the old school at Bourton to do cookery and the boys to do woodwork. And the boys had to walk. It was only the girls who went in the wagon. The girls had to get out at the station because the horse couldn't pull them all up and over the bridge. And when they got off with their pies or whatever they had made, Tommy Lockie who was a sort of resident tramp used to go up and ask them for their pies or a taste of them. He lived in a shed down at the coppice. I could tell you an awful lot about horses but I've missed a lot out because the time is getting on. Every so often you would see the stud stallion going by. He was a magnificent Shire horse, about 18 hands. An enormous thing with plaited mane with bells and martingales. He was magnificent with shining muscles and sinews and a great arched neck, an enormous thing and often went with a tiny groom with tiny polished gaiters and tiny polished shoes trying to hold him back on the halter as he went through. So trusting., off to serve mares wherever it was. It was nice to see it come back the other way round, with the groom……..

The farmworker, I shall have to generalise, I can't do the individual ones, but if you can imagine a man (in those days you didn't buy collar attached shirts and nobody ever wore a collar except on Sundays) wearing a blue and white striped shirt and some grey worsted or cord trousers with a great big leather belt with a damn great buckle which used to be used for inside discipline for the children. That used to come off and "Cheryl" and off would come this belt and he would mete out the punishment. His outfit was completed by an old flat hat that looked as if it had been moulded on his head. Absolutely greasy. He had probably slept in it. A great pair of thumping great boots, you've never seen the like of them, great big tips and hobnails would be on his feet. That was a typical picture. In addition he had a skin like mahogany and he wasn't particularly sweet smelling either. I remember watching one of these, Ron Carter, at Captain Collis' farm barn, I spent an awful lot of time down there, and there was an old carter there. He was sat just inside the barn with the bantams clucking

away and the farm cats and he was whittling away at an old ash stick to make a hammer for his slasher and there was this red cockerel going round the yard chasing a pullet, round and round. He was watching this. All at once the cockerel stopped and it walked over and picked up something. I'm not sure if it was a worm or an ear of grain of something. I'll always remember his words were: "My God"
" he said "I hopes I never gets as bloody hungry as that."

Of course the milking was done by hand, there were no milking machines. They had to milk by hand which meant that they had to be up and milking by 5.30am or even earlier and then the milk had to be taken by horse and cart to Shrivenham staion for the milk train which they dared not miss otherwise they would have had about 30 gallons of sour milk. There was nothing like pasteurisation, they didn't pass anything, it was simply out of the cow, through the cooler and out into the churn along and along the train. People in the village either collected their milk from the farm in an enamel can with a handle or Mr Cox, Frank Cox, the previous owner of this land ran a milk business. It was an old bullnosed Morris with a churn in the back and he had a pail with a quart and a gill and a pint measure inside and he would serve at the door. "Milko" and you had a gill or a pint or what you wanted. But most people collected it from the farms and of course for the farm workers one of their perks was a couple of cans of milk, a faggot of wood a couple of rabbits and that sort of thing. There was also a sheep dip where Mr Forty is down Station Road, you know where the jumping and fence-making business is. That was a sheep dip. You used to see the men sitting there, driving the sheep in and the men with their trousers rolled up pushing the sheep under into the Lysol they used to use in those days to dip them to get rid of the ticks. There was also a village pound, again, Eunice Cox lives right on it, just opposite the Memorial Hall. That's the village pound where stray cattle would be impounded and of course you would pay a fine for having it straight out.

I'm going to rush through this. The hay-making, harvesting and threshing was of course all horse-powered, the whole lot. In the hay-making field, good farmers and there were some. There were also good, bad and indifferent but they were hard taskmasters but they used to open their hearts at hay-making time and you would sometimes see a barrel of cider in the field for the men and then the harvest came. Long before the combine it was cut by, a horse and a binder, a reaper. And the men, two men would go down with a sickle and they would cut a track round, about 4 feet wide before the binder would come in. They didn't run over the corn, they would cut around and then they would tie the sheaves up. They would cut so much, put it into a sheaf, then tie it with corn you know in a rope. Then the binder and horse would come in and cut the whole field so with about a 4 foot cut it took them a long time to cut and it was one of the pursuits for the village lads then was the rabbitting it provided. Rabbits were so numerous, they were a pest. Any other time of year the farmer would not have you on his land, you would be poaching. But he actively encouraged people to go and kill rabbits when he was harvesting, so every boy would have to kill as many as he could, in the corn as they ran out. It was great fun, of course, although being sadistic they enjoyed it. Wooding, well that was something else that most people did. I told you there was no gas here so it was all solid fuel, so you burned coal as I told you about it being delivered, and also a lot of wood, logs and things. We hadn't got Dutch Elm then but there was still a lot of wood to be had. You'd certainly be sent out wooding and manage to bring home a branch or whatever. And these old country people, as it was hard to come by would jealously guard their

logs and most gardens would have a log pile at the bottom standing put by for the winter. In order to get some of these logs, they used to use black powder. They were to get a tree; whereas today you've got chainsaws, well they didn't, they had these big cross cut type saws, 2 men would have to saw away. But to split open more quickly they used to bore a hole in an auger deep in the trunk, pack it with black powder, a piece of fuse , light it and then retire to a safe distance. When it went bang you used to split the thing open and you could more easily saw up the logs. This was used, there was one certain person in the village down the bottom end in a row of cottages, some of you are slow on the uptake, who had a big wood pile and after a couple of weeks the pile had gone down from here to there and he hadn't had any fires so he thought "that's funny, them logs is going". So it took him a while to work it out, mind, but he did. So he thought, "Ah," So drilled a hole in a log or two and packed them with black powder and put them back on the heap. A couple o f weeks later there was an almighty bang from the end of the row and a tattered woman with her apron and her hair all disarrayed and her face as black as a gollywog came out. "Oh dear", she said, whatever's happened down here. I was in there doing my ironing. Oh , my God, the fireplace blew out. The place is full of soot and the mat's on fire" So this man says, "Now I knows who pinches my bloody logs". True. So you see there were some strange old folk around even then.

The Allotments They were more extensive then. Where the Bowls club is today there were also allotments. You have to remember that in those days it wasn't easy, in fact it wasn't possible to buy fresh vegetables and so forth. We didn't have things like the Co-op and so forth. So a cottage normally had quite a big garden because well before television, long before radio, they had bigger families. There may be other reasons for that. They got up at sunrise and went to bed at sunset and a cottager would grow all his own produce. He had to sustain his family maybe 6 or 7 children. So he had to grow his own. And, therefore you had allotments for the Poor. They would be heavily cultivated, much more so than today – they were taken very seriously. Whereas today you can walk through the them you certainly wouldn't then because if you weren't an allotment holder and you went through that gate, the whole lot would stop and "Who's he" you'd hear again and again. Times were desperately hard and they were a very suspicious people as well. There is a story of one old Ebenezer Ballinger, he had an allotment just opposite me somewhere. It was in a dreadful state when he took it over with this high docks and dandelions and couch grass. And the Vicar of the day went by and he said to him: "Oh my word, Ebenezer, isn't it a transformation. "What's that , Sir?" The Vicar responded: "What a transformation!" Ebenezer said "I don't know about that". The Vicar went on: "Isn't it amazing what one can do with the help of the Lord and the Angels" And old Ebenezer said: "I don't know about that, Sir, "I'd have thought that this bloody lot would have had it for themselves" And this was the sort of thing you would have.

We had no street lighting, no electric lighting until about 1934. No water, other than wells. If you had a well which served 4 houses and they had different length pipes, at drought times people were getting up progressively earlier to pump the water up before the next people got up, because when they got up all they got was air. This used to cause very bad neighbourliness. You used to get up earlier and earlier to get the water first thing in the morning. We had a well so we didn't have that problem. We had our own personal well. The water was quite brackish, I suppose. This time of year it would have been rather brown but it was always boiled anyway. That was

the only source of water we had, well water. There was no piped water. In fact when they put it in a lot of the old people wouldn't have it. They said that the hard water makes lions strong and makes pipes rusty. He wouldn't drink it and neither would Frank Cox who owned this land. Until he died he always took all his water from the spring down here in Springfield Close, that's why it's called Springfield Close, because of the spring there, and he always took his water from the pond up until he died. That had never been tested by a public analyst and certainly ours hadn't because our brook well used to rise after heavy rain and the water level at the top of the well used to be quite brown and when you flipped the lid back the lid was usually covered with wood lice. They like it damp and dark and they would drop into the water when your bucket went in and it would be covered with woodlice. You just used to flip them out and you got the odd newt. But don't be put off by great-grandfather he was 98. Yes, so you see, you can imagine that the on run through the High Street, you would see those lovely mellow, yellow lights from the cottage windows – none of your blaring mercury vapours and all this rubbish you've got today. Despite all this they survived. Oil lamps of course were the only means of lighting cottages and candles. I should know, I've been doing it tonight. Oil lamps and candles were the things and one would buy the glasses at Mrs Moon's or Miss Dike's store. And of course hurricane lamps we used and there's a story that one rustic meeting another. Dan Bridges is carrying a hurricane lamp –this is a Christmas do so I'll put a few of these in. Coming up the road this night was old Percival and he saw this lamp coming. Well, it wasn't usual you saw a hurricane lamp coming through the High street at night because it was completely dark. And when he saw who it was he said " Hello Ned. Where is thee agoin' with that there lamp?" "I'm going a-courting". "Goin' a-courting with that there hurricane lamp? I never took one with me when I went courtin'" he says. "No. I could tell that the first time I saw your old woman", was the reply.

Les Judd