

# **Memories of Mid Cornwall Hamlets**

## **1920-1945 and Beyond**

by

Mr. J. Liddicoat

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# MEMORIES OF MID CORNWALL HAMLETS 1920 - 1945 and BEYOND



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# CHAPTER I

## HOME LIFE IN THE HAMLETS

The tiny hamlets of Gothers and Enniscaven saw many changes both in village life and industry during the period from 1920 until the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The housewife and mother of the Twenties had a harder working life than any period since, no modern aids and nearly all manual work.

The floors were just smooth finish concrete with perhaps a piece of coconut matting in front of the black stove used for cooking. The stove was manufactured within the area comprising of a fireplace and underneath this an ashes box. Adjoining the fire was the oven, about the size of a modern electric stove oven. A damper was fitted to divert the heat around the oven when needed for cooking before returning to the chimney. Some stoves had a fitted smoke-jack. This enabled the top of the fire section to be used as an open fire. Those not fitted with this appliance needed a blacksmith-made smoke-jack that fitted over the fire and connected to the flue above. The ladies took great pride in keeping the stove clean, some stoves had a smooth finish and others were rougher. The stylish ones were fitted with brass knobs and hinges on the oven door, all cleaned weekly with Brasso and the body of the stove with black-lead. The ladies were equipped with a special round brush on a stout wire handle and a scraper for cleaning the flues. Most housewives dressed especially for this cleaning process.

The rooms on the ground floor in those days were known as the back kitchen, kitchen and the front room. The two kitchens were fitted with large tables according to the size of the room. The back kitchen table was used for general work such as cooking etc. and the kitchen would seat perhaps six or eight for meals. The tables were fitted with plain white wood tops and had to be regularly scrubbed.

The stove was fitted in the kitchen and that was the section of the home that was used for meals and spending any leisure time.

The method of washing clothes was also hard work in the Twenties, no mains water in those days. The hamlets were without mains water until 1969. Water was obtained from many different sources, perhaps a pump or well, or even a chute that was water piped a short distance from a water source through the hedge so that folk could obtain water beside the road. Another method of storing water was by catching it from the dwelling rooves into a tank or barrel. When necessary, the man of the house brought the water and stored it in galvanised baths ready for an early start on washing days.

Different methods were used to boil the clothes. Some households had a copper or furnace, this being a cast iron container with a capacity of approximately 10-15 gallons built into a brick structure with a fireplace underneath and the container having a wood cover. The less fortunate lady had an open chimney with a cast iron boiler hanging over a fire and the smaller families boiled the clothes on the kitchen stove.

The clothes were washed and rinsed by hand in a wood tray approximately 3 or 4 feet long, this tray being shaped wider on top than the bottom and standing on a specially made stool or table.

A mangle was used to wring the clothes. This was a contraption consisting of two wooden rollers adjusted for tightness by a screw adjustment at the top and set in an iron frame. This machine was operated by a handle secured to a fairly large wheel with a reducing gear to turn the rollers. Surplus water was drained into a wooden trough before being guided into an awaiting bath.



It must be mentioned the clothes washed were far different from what is worn today. In place of a man's vest or nothing some of the older generation wore a garment of flannel and thick long pants. The ladies wore pinafores, generally a clean garment each day, for dirty jobs, protected by a wrapper made of sacking or some other material made fast around the waist by two strings. The little girls were often dressed in white pinafores and dresses etc.



Dress of the day 1920

As families were large, in some cases 3 or 4 sets of bed linen had to be washed together with tablecloths and towels plus many other articles. Ironing must not be forgotten. That had to be done by means of a flat iron warmed on the stove or an insert warmed in the fire for the box iron.

The sitting room and the bedroom floors, also the stairs, were covered with what was termed canvas in those days, something of the nature of vinyl today with an occasional rug or two. The sitting room had a grate and a little better furniture. The fire was lit on Sundays and after tea the family sat in this room before going for evening service at the chapel. Very often on returning from worship, the family and perhaps a few friends would gather around the old American organ and sing their favourite hymns.

All gardens were cultivated at this time. It was the duty of the gentlemen to grow as much as possible and make the household self sufficient, even to the extent of tilling a few rows of potatoes in a farmer's field. Of course, the farmer would require help at hay harvest.

The lighting in the homes was very poor, using paraffin oil lamps for the main rooms lived in and candles when proceeding to bed. For all outside duties a hurricane lantern was used. It makes one marvel at the outstanding needlework done by some of the ladies under these lighting conditions.

Nearly all homes had what was termed a safe. In most cases this was a wood box made in various sizes, fitted with a door containing a gauze panel to allow a flow of air through and fitted in an outside position for the storage of perishable goods.

It was very much later that sanitation in the hamlets improved. At the beginning of the period it seemed the scheme was to erect the toilet as far as possible from the dwelling - in some cases quite a distance. It was a joke but really a fact that one boy in the area had to take his cycle to make the journey.

The school days at St.Dennis and some at Roche of the 1920s will be well remembered by many for its discipline and the many qualities obtained there in education and sport.

Starting school at five and walking the one and a quarter miles in all weathers was no easy task, leaving home at 8.15 am and arriving home about 4.00 pm was a long time away from home. The older children cared for the younger ones along the journey, no mothers at the school gate in those days.

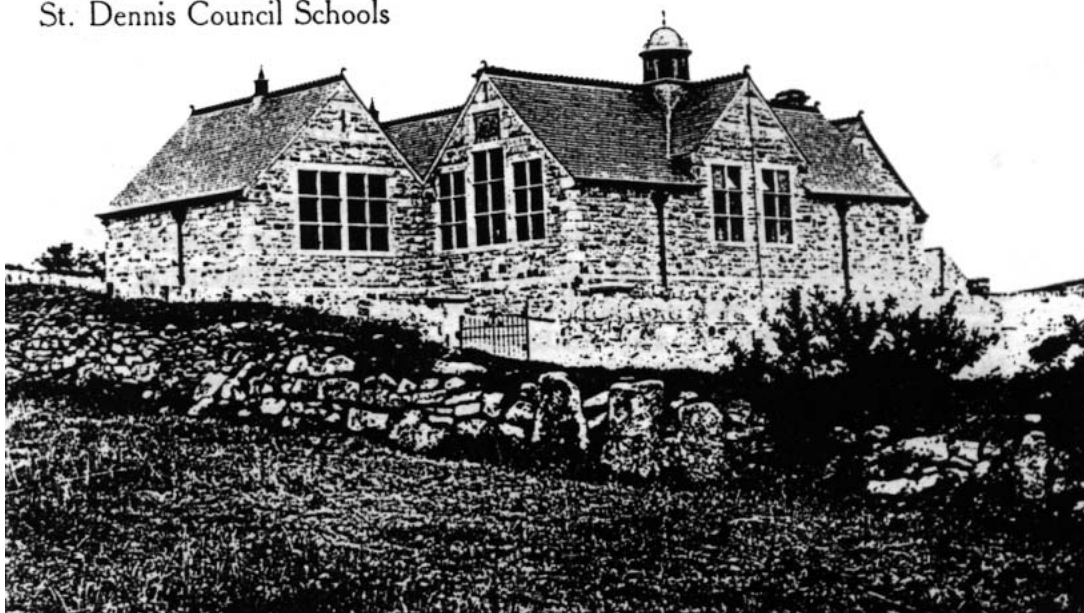
The children carried a packed lunch or were given a copper or two to buy something . No hot drinks were supplied at the school just a bottle of cold tea carried and put to warm in a vessel, something like a deep frying pan less a handle, filled with water and resting on the slow combustion stove in the classroom. On some days of the week the children walked towards home until they met a mother carrying several bags containing pasties for each prospective family.

The mothers worked on a rota system, all meeting at the chapel before the one on duty walked to meet the children.

If the children got wet going to school the clothing possible to remove was dried and if the child was still wet, was put by the stove to dry.

On rare occasions a clerk from Gothers offices would give some children a lift with his motorbike and sidecar or perhaps Boss Hooper's old T Ford, and it was surprising how many got aboard. On occasions the clerk went to St.Dennis to collect the works' mail.

St. Dennis Council Schools



On a more sombre note, if a funeral took place the cortege walked to St.Dennis or perhaps Roche. These occasions were well attended, all meeting at the home of the deceased and sometimes before leaving a favourite hymn was sung. Six close friends were chosen as bearers wearing black gloves supplied and black ties, their duty being to carry the deceased from home, in and out of the Chapel and again into the cemetery. During the early part of the period the coffin was carried by hand all the journey, this included travelling Carne Hill.

All the gentlemen would lead the procession and at short intervals the six front men would step out and relieve the carriers, this procedure lasted the length of the journey. Sometime later a bier was introduced, the men following the same format as before. No cars, it was a case of walking each way.

The Goss Moor was a big asset to the community during the period for grazing and so many other purposes. About twelve households owned cattle and used the moor for grazing to supplement the little grassland owned or rented, and in some other cases having no private grazing at all. Those owners in this category erected houses in their gardens for milking animals and housing them during the winter months. In addition to the previous owners, another sixteen farmers and smallholders managed to keep their stock on their own or rented land.

Those folk not possessing any cows could be seen travelling daily to one of the farms for milk, carrying a tin jug-like container with a cover and handle over the top.

Many other families obtained their milk from goats. This milk was very rich. At times the goats were tethered on the moor or by the roadside, but generally roamed on the moor or the conical sand-tips.

The milk products were an essential part of the diet in those days. After the cows were milked it was put through a strainer. The strainer comprised of a bowl, having a mesh in the bottom and fitted with three legs to fit on an enamel pan into which the milk ran. The strainer was made and repaired by a tinker.

After a long period of cooling, the milk and pan were put on the kitchen stove or some other heat, never brought to a boil otherwise the cream product would be spoilt, until the cream had settled on the top of the milk and was again removed and allowed to cool. When the milk and cream had completely cooled, the cream was skimmed, leaving what was termed scalded milk, this being used for the household and drink for the young calves being reared. The cream was used in the home and the remainder made into butter. A separator was used in some cases for obtaining the cream. This was a machine operated by a handle with the cream flowing at one outlet and the milk at another. The cream after this operation was cooked to an extent. Many can remember turning the separator handle, perhaps the youngster wanting to play would hear a voice "Not so fast" and if another duty was allocated, the same voice would say "Bit faster", so one can understand a regular speed was necessary.

As stated, during the spring and summer more cattle grazed on the moor over the period the grass was growing and the harvesting of the hay. Early in the Twenties some smallholders would gather what the length-men had cleaned from the waterways beside the road and put it into a heap to rot, and when it was in the correct state it would be carried on the fields as manure. One big drawback with this method was the stones and before the grass grew very high, the family went - young and old - to scan the field and remove the stones to prevent any damage to the machine when hay cutting time came. The fields also received the manure that had been generated as the cattle houses had been cleaned during the winter.

Before the time of tractors, a contractor would arrive to cut the hay with three horses and a machine, also a spare man to sharpen the machine knives. Two horses pulled the machine and the third alternated to give a rest period.

Hay making was hard work in those days. When the grass was dry enough it was turned by hand using a pike, perhaps two or three times, the weather being a large factor. A little later a horse-drawn kicker was available, easing the situation enormously.

Before the hay was carried, the smallholder would make a foundation for the rick of browse etc. in readiness for the big day.

The hay was carried on a wain, this being a flat bottomed vehicle drawn by a pony. Before carrying commenced, the hay was gathered together in readiness to be loaded by two or three men with a youngster on the load, to make the load firm and secure. Accidents happened to the load on occasions.

When fully loaded the wain proceeded to the rick, where the load was pushed off and two or three volunteers were waiting to put the hay on the foundation and continue until the task was complete. Another volunteer was on the rick to make it shapely and firm, with an assistant pulling loose hay from the sides of the rick and keeping this in shape.

As the field was cleared of hay the ground was raked by a gentleman using a large wooden rake, real hard work, and later a horse-drawn rake was used.

The highlight of carrying hay was the supper supplied - a real good meal. The men sat at the table first followed by the boys. During the afternoon the ladies carried refreshing drinks and some food to the hay-field which was always well received.

The Goss Moor became useful when the rick had settled. The smallholder then went on the moor and cut rushes to thatch the rick. The rushes were neatly tied in bundles and brought home in readiness for the thatching operation. The rushes were spread evenly over the rick and secured by a special brand of rope being laid the long way of the rick and firmly secured at each end to spikes driven into the rick, with the same procedure across the rick.

Perhaps a little before our period, but definitely at the beginning, the local inhabitants went on the moor, cut turf and dried it to be brought home and stacked for use as a supplementary fuel.

Smutties were gathered in abundance. Smutties were the remains of burnt gorse, furze as it was known, but the locals would wait until the burnt remains had disappeared to have cleaner sticks. Smutties were used for lighting the fire, boiling the clothes in the open chimney and sometimes as a general fuel.

Many furze ricks could be seen dotted around the hamlets having been brought from the moor by a pony and wain.

Not many clome ovens were in use, just one can be remembered at Great Gothers farm. Clome ovens were generally built into the side of the old open chimney. To cook by this method, it is understood fire was put into the oven to get it really hot, then removed before inserting the meal or whatever, or perhaps a baker was used to cover the cooking and the fire surrounding the baker. (The baker being similar to a large cast iron bowl)

Quite a number of ponies lived on the moor, known as gossies to the locals. They were privately owned and at times were rounded up and sold. On occasions they trespassed on the neighbouring farmer's land and found themselves impounded. The owners then made a decision, if the farmer's fee was more than the value of the pony, they left it impounded, but if the fee was below they paid the farmer and made the best of a bad bargain.

The locals also kept quite a number of geese on the moor. These being separated into little flocks of two or three geese and a gander. The owners selected the position where the geese should lay their eggs and hatch their young by feeding them near a bank or something suitable and by digging the side of the bank, then covering the space with galvanise made secure by

turf, thus providing the nests for the egg laying and hatching period. Each goose would lay perhaps a dozen or more eggs and as each egg was laid it was taken away for protection. When the goose had feathered her nest the eggs were returned and she sat on them for a month. No danger could come to her. Mr. Gander stood guard and no stranger, animal or human, could get near. After hatching the family of three, geese and gander stayed together, again guarded by Father Gander. Many found he had hard hitting wings and a severe bite.

Some folk kept poultry on the moor but were required to pay the gamekeeper employed by Lord Falmouth a rent. The amount for a house was one shilling, in terms of our currency 5p per year. Anyone having a clothes line erected had to pay 3.5p per year.

Most homes in the hamlets reared a pig to supplement their living, the pig or pigs reared in a house situated at the far end of the garden and, of course, the manure used was a big advantage in the garden.

The pig's weight was calculated in scores, a score being twenty pounds. When the pig reached the require weight, varying according to requirements, it was killed by a part time butcher. A stock, which was a platform for carrying the dead pig and also used during the cleaning process, was stored locally and used by all when required. The water was boiled in readiness for the slaughter-man who poured the water over the dead pig before scraping it with a tool termed a candle-stick to remove all the hair. When perfectly clean, the pig was hung up by the back legs using a spreader to keep them apart. The animal was then opened and the entrails removed, some of this cleaned for further use. The dead animal was left hanging until the following day then, perfectly cold, the butcher came and cut the pig to usable sizes.

The lady of the house then put the portions through a salting process before storing it with more salt in a keeve or half barrel. After a length of time the meat was removed to a rack suspended from the kitchen ceiling after being wrapped or bagged in material. In some cases three pigs were reared together then, at the time of sale, two were sold subsidising the one kept for food.

It is hard to believe that the Chapel was almost new at the beginning of the period, just twelve years old and well attended.

The war memorial was erected early in the 1920s, quite an achievement for the small community. On the third Sunday in August each year a special remembrance service was held when the St. Dennis British Legion marched from St. Dennis headed by St. Dennis Band. On arrival they were dismissed in front of the memorial to attend the service. After the service they again formed ranks in front of the memorial, where a short service was held, the band playing for the singing, wreaths were laid, and then the procession headed by the band returned to St. Dennis.

The special Sundays celebrated each year at the Chapel are well remembered especially Sunday School anniversary days and Harvest Festivals, the old Sunday School building and the happy times spent there when about seventy children attended, the Band of Hope meetings and concerts and taking part in sketches etc.

The anniversary evening open air service in the field adjoining the old building was another red letter event, the preacher, choir and organ were on a specially erected stage with the congregation sitting on seats supplied below. The stage and seats were erected on the previous evening and the organ brought prior to the evening service.

The tea treat held during the following week will again be well remembered, marching behind St. Dennis Band with banner and flags held high, what an honour to help to carry the banner, travelling around the village, to the bottom of Greenland Hill and a little distance on the St. Dennis road before returning to the field for saffron buns and sugary tea supplied from a pitcher.



The stalls outside of the Sunday School will be well remembered selling all sorts of things – sweets, nougat rock, balloons, ice cream, chips just to mention a few.



Even the elderly enjoy their saffron bun

The band played selections in the field during the evening having a break to visit the Sunday School for a laid tea. Sports were held for the children and later the younger folk enjoyed the traditional games of two's and three's, followed by kissing rings.

The stalls were illuminated by oil lamps.

The Chapel and Sunday School were both using paraffin lamps as lighting until the late Thirties or perhaps a little later, and valor lamps for heat.

Electricity came to hamlets about 1936, each home being supplied with two lights and an electric iron. This was on a rental system in most cases.

After the building of the new Sunday School in about 1936, the old building was used as a reading room or institute where old and young gathered to play cards, darts or anything that suited them, and it is expected many tall stories were told. Darts tournaments and whist drives were held to enhance the funds and were well attended.

The reading room was also the base for the County Library, this was controlled by one volunteer, books being changed at a specified time each week.

During the early Thirties there was a very big slump in the clay industry and other trades, causing a lot of unemployment and very hard living standards. The building was then used by a government official who came under the heading of the means test. After an unlucky person had spent six months on the dole he was brought before this fellow who inquired into every aspect of his life such as any savings, any other income, if any other member of the family was working, and many more personal questions, almost asking what he had had for breakfast, and in many cases the dole was stopped or reduced.

The hamlets were also proud to have their own band, not exactly of championship ability but worthy of giving a programme of music at tea treats and other such occasions.

In 1936 on the occasion of one of the Royal celebrations, owing to St.Dennis Band taking an engagement at Fowey, Enniscaven Band augmented by some of St.Dennis retired members, played at the Parish celebrations held at St.Dennis.



Enniscaven Band

The band practiced in the old Sunday School and later the new building.

Enniscaven Band Fete and Garden Show was one of the leading events each year, it was termed to be the best or one of the best held within the area.

A large marquee was erected to take the overflow of exhibits from those on show in the old Sunday School and later the venue being the new Sunday School, complete with marquee. The show consisted of five different sections, flowers, fruit, vegetables, knitting and cookery, and attracted seven or eight hundred entries. The first show was held in 1935 and continued until the end of the period. Neutral judges were engaged and were really needed to settle the local friendly rivalry created. It was almost a sin to visit a neighbour's garden or greenhouse for a month previous to the show day. Special prizes were awarded for most points in each section, most points in the show and a prize for the competitor with most points residing in the parish. Some classes also claimed a prize for the best exhibit. The show was supported by many competitions including bowling for a live pig.

All announcements were made on a public address system which also supplied background music.

After the show was over, the Sunday School was cleaned and made ready for the scholars on Sunday morning.

During the war all profits made were donated to a wartime charity such as the Prisoners of War Parcel Fund.



Enniscaven Flower Show

# ENNIS-CAVEN BAND FETE AND GARDEN SHOW.

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All Profits to Cornwall Prisoners of War Parcel Fund.

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## THE 9TH ANNUAL SHOW

Of Flowers, Vegetables, Fruit, Cookery and Knitting

(Open to all Cottage Gardeners) will be held on

### Saturday, Aug. 12th, 1944,

To be opened at 2-30 p.m., by F. James, Esq.,  
of Escot, St. Stephens.

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## SCHEDULE.

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### JUDGES :

Fruit, Flowers & Vegetables, C. Ryder, Esq., St. Stephens.

Cookery, W. S. Trewin, Esq., Nanpean.

Knitting, Mrs. A. Halls, Fraddon.

### PRIZES :

Prizes of 1 Silver Challenge Cup open.

1 Silver Challenge Cup confined to the Parish.

Special for best Onions in the show, classes 35 & 36.

Entrance Fee 2d. each exhibit, or 2/6 to cover all exhibits.

 **ENTRIES CLOSE AUGUST 10th, 1944.** 

All Entries to :- E. J. & R. J. DOCKING, Secretaries.

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Julians', Printers, &c., St. Columb.

Before the war cars were very scarce, just a couple of old Fords or something of that nature, which were used for hire and perhaps the privately owned Austin Seven, not forgetting a Morgan or two, a Morgan being a vehicle with two wheels at the front and one at the rear.

A few motorcycles were used, varying in age and condition.

The earliest bus service remembered was operated by Mr. Arnold Kestle of St. Dennis, with a charabanc named Excelsior. The vehicle had doors on each side with a seat extending the width. This was repeated from front to rear. It had a canvas roof which folded and rested on the rear of the vehicle. For side shelter celluloid screens were fitted. The charabanc left St. Dennis on Friday afternoons, travelling over the downs, through Gothers to Enniscaven, before returning via Carne to St. Dennis, and if seats were available, would complete the loading before going to St. Austell for market day. The fare being one shilling return (5p of today's currency).

Mr. Harry Crowle, another operator from St. Dennis, ran a bus from St. Dennis through Enniscaven, Roche and Belovely for St. Columb cattle market and later the National Bus Company operated the journey. Of course, by walking to St. Dennis bus transport to St. Austell was fairly frequent.

Another bus service operated within the vicinity was the Bodmin to Truro. This was operated by the CMT - Cornwall Motor Transport. This travelled via Bugle, Roche, Whitemoor, St. Dennis etc, making return journeys both morning and afternoon.

A bus outing in the Twenties was a real treat, generally a trip once a year. The Band of Hope outing at Enniscaven will be well remembered, perhaps three or four charabancs would make the journey to Watergate or Perranporth and later quite a journey to St. Ives. When the children first saw the sea a cry of excitement could be heard.

Refreshments were carried and consumed on the beach. Children paddled and made sand castles and were almost afraid to bathe, while the older ones were joined by the men playing football and other games.

It would be interesting to know what the children of our modern age would say if they visited the seaside once a year.

Sometimes the Chapel choir and friends took an outing venturing longer distances and arriving home much later after possibly visiting Torquay or Clovelly.

If the parents took the family to Newquay for a day's visit it was a big occasion. There was a terrace house near the harbour that supplied teapots of tea and seating accommodation but a mother carried the refreshments.



## CHAPTER II

### LOCAL INDUSTRY

At the commencement of this period the clay industry was the main occupation of most of the residents, many of them working in the local pits of Gothers and Wheal Frederick, and it must be emphasised it was real hard work. No pressure hoses, nothing but a shovel to load the waste produced and the same means for handling the clay during the stages until it reached the GWR branch line.

It is estimated that about one hundred men were employed on the clay production, with an output of approximately 1000 tons per week. The works owned by H. D. Pochin and Company were self-sufficient, having their own fitting and carpenter shops manned by experienced staff, also resident electricians and, of course, the office staff.

It is understood the means of obtaining the clay during the early part of the period was very slow, as stated no pressure hoses etc. in those days.

During early production, a waterway was cut around the top of the pit. It must be ascertained it obtained its water from a pool collecting surface water or perhaps a stream. Where production was to take place an outlet from the waterway, controlled by a hatch, would allow the water to flow down the side of the pit where men would be waiting with a pick or dubber, commonly known today as a pickaxe, and digging the side of the pit would allow the water to wash the clay from the waste. The clay stream then flowed to the bottom of the pit, where passing over what was known as the sand-pit, the sand content in the stream settled in the pit, allowing the clay to pass on to be pumped out of the pit.

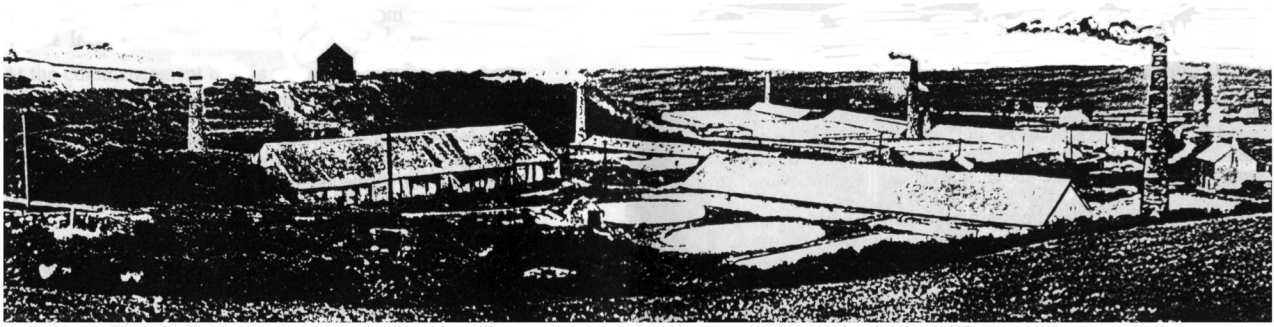
Before any of the mentioned operations could take place, the topsoil was removed to the depth of the clay seam.

This was termed removing burden. All this waste was loaded manually into wood trucks running on rails and pushed again manually to a point to be transferred into another wagon before being pulled onto a conical shape tip by a winding engine.

As stated, the waste sand that had settled in the sand-pit was removed in a similar way. The wagon travelled up and down the conical burrow, then returned to a pit known as the dog's hole, thus allowing the loaded wagons to be tipped and not shovelled into it. Of course, the wagons travelling from the sand-pit to the dog's hole were loaded by hand.

At a date early in the Twenties, pressure hoses were installed, not pressure hoses as we know them today. Water was collected in a pool near the dryers and pumped back to a pool or tank on the edge of the production pit, where another pump was installed to pump the water to the required location, thus creating some pressure and making life a little easier for the workers. The clay stream after being pumped from the pit, passed through another screening process termed the micas, thus recovering more impurities and, before leaving in the pipeline to the drying section, was treated by a drip of blue liquid for whitening purposes.

The micas were cleared of settlement at specified intervals by the use of a shyver. It is understood to be spelt in Cornish as shaiver, this being a piece of wood roughly the width of a section of the micas attached to a long handle or shaft. The residue of this operation was transferred to another set of micas near the dryers and the clay stream entered the settling tanks of a dryer known as the mica dry and the clay sold as a rougher grade of clay. It is also interesting to note that after passing through screening processes on two previous occasions, the mica was again treated in the same way by a local family who were able to keep a small dryer in production.



VIEW OF THE TANKS AND DRYING KILNS AT GOTHERS MINE, CORNWALL. OUTPUT OF CHINA CLAY AT THIS MINE 47,000 TONS ANNUALLY

H. D. POCHIN & Co. Ltd. MANCHESTER ENGLAND

There were five dryers drying the better quality clay staffed by sometimes one, two or three men according to the size of the dryer and the demand for clay.

At one end of the dryer was the stokehold containing three or four fires. The flues were extended to the other side of the dryer, passing underneath the pan to a stack to extract the smoke and fumes. The base of the pan comprised of large fire bricks or slabs.

Again it was almost slavery for the workmen. The surplus water was drained from the settling tanks and it was their duty to load the wet clay into a truck or wagon which was on rails and push it into the dryer into a bridge which was also on rails, thus enabling the workmen to fill the pan throughout the dryer.

When the pan was full it was marked in squares to make the clay easier for handling when it was dry. One can hardly imagine the conditions these men were enduring, no protective clothing only knee length leather hobnailed boots. What a contrast of working conditions in the extreme heat of the dryer and then proceeding to the settling tanks on a cold frosty day. It has been said the men wore wood-bottomed boots while working in the pan and changed to leather boots to go into the tank.

When the clay was dry it was shovelled from the pan to a lower section of the dryer ready for shipment.

The men working in the dryers were also responsible for the fires, working on a rota system. The work comprised of cleaning the fires, removing the ashes to an outside position and keeping a stock of dry coal in the stokehold.

The next operation was the removal of the clay to the Milangoose siding where it would be loaded into the GWR trucks.

It is interesting to note that H.D.Pochin took over the working of Gothers in 1879 and soon after laid the two and a quarter mile rail track for the conveyance of clay and coal to and from the above siding.

A little locomotive did the journey pulling six little trucks containing approximately three tons each. The last truck having brakes operated by the guard to assist the engine brakes.

When coal was being shipped from Milangoose to Gothers, the locomotive could only pull four trucks of three tons because of the slight incline.

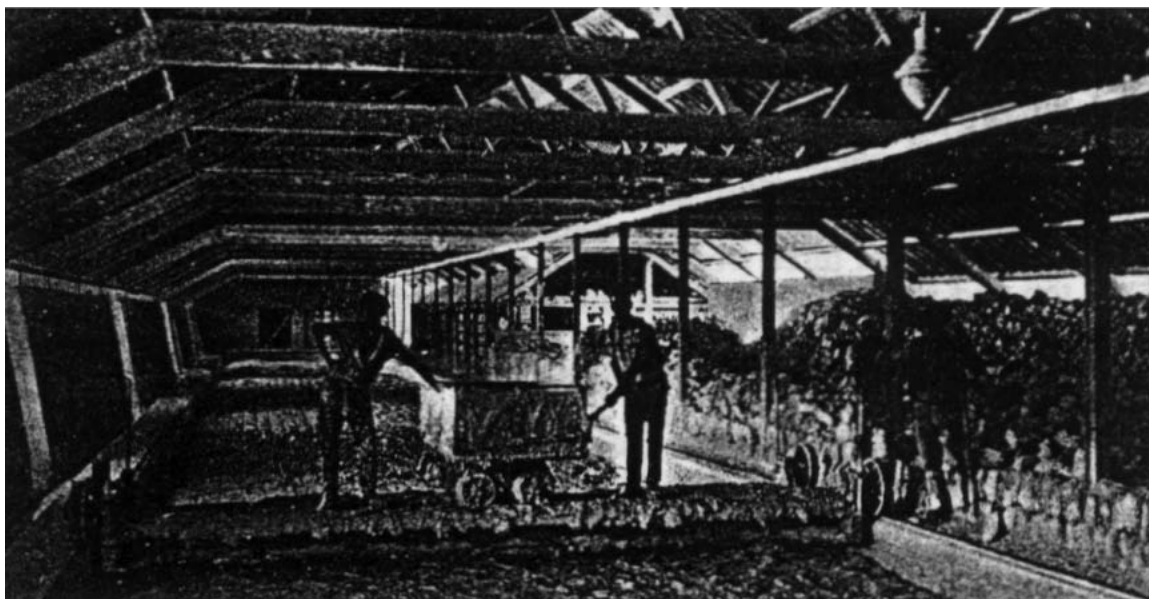
Six men were engaged in the clay loading operation and three transferring into the GWR trucks at Milangoose.

There was a mill installed in one of the dryers to finely grind the clay to be put into bags for some special consignments.

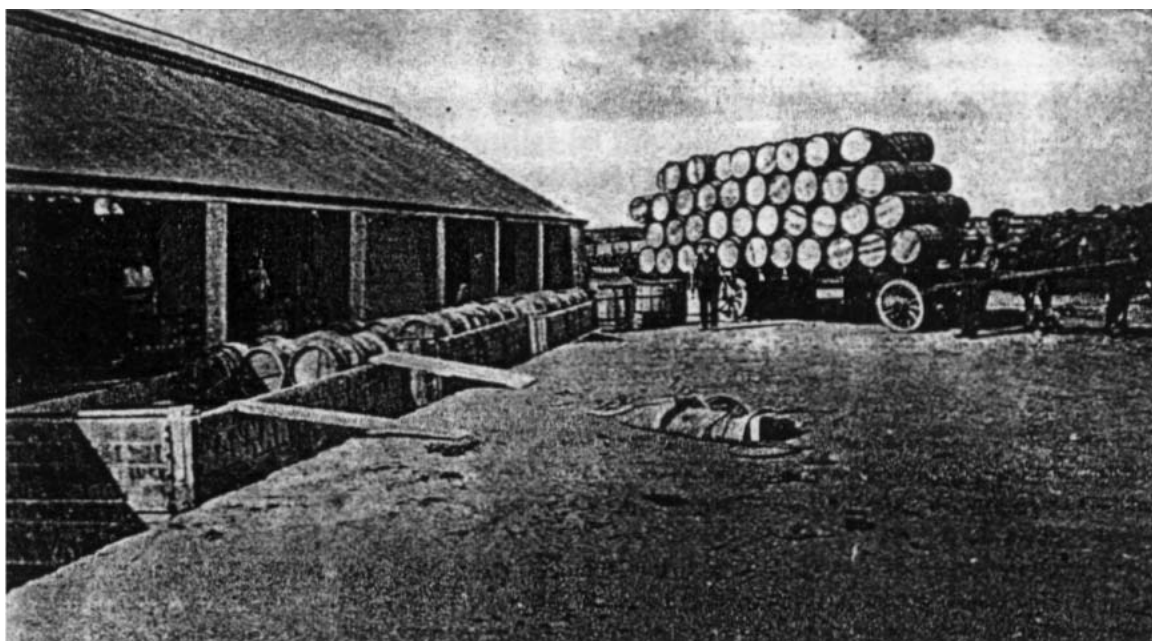
On other occasions the clay was put in casks (small barrels) for delivery.

A spare locomotive was kept in readiness, these engines having special names "Dinah" and "Crookfoot" and later a little larger one named "Brook".

When "Brook" arrived, "Dinah" had a new consignment creating a supply of steam for preserving timber.



Clay Drying Process



Trucking Casked Clay

During the early Twenties a branch line was installed from the previously mentioned railway line to a privately owned mica dry in Gothers Road. Where the branch line crossed the road stood an elderly gentleman. Of course, traffic wasn't very busy in those days, more cycles and horse drawn vehicles than anything else, perhaps just an occasional cart. It was his duty to make sure no-one obstructed the engine and trucks. During the hours of darkness he carried a home-constructed lantern, comprising of three wooden sides and bottom with a metal top and glass front and a candle burning inside, not a lot of warning given. This lantern has recently been given to a railway enthusiast for preservation.

There was also a crossing on the St.Dennis road. This was controlled by a family living close, and later by a young fellow sheltered in a little house by the crossing. When the engine was at a given distance from the crossing it would blow its whistle and the attendant would open the gates, both gates opening to the St.Dennis side of the crossing, thus blocking the road completely, and nothing on the Enniscaven side. It would be far from satisfactory with today's traffic and speed.

Mention was made previously of the waste from the fires in the dryers. This was used as filling and ballast for the track. Two and sometimes three men were engaged to keep the track in order.

Before the waste left Gothers, local people could be seen inspecting it for churks, churks being half burnt coal, and using them to supplement their coal at home. One dear old lady would make it her business to be around when the locomotive finished work and the fire was removed. The driver, a very kind-hearted gentleman, would pour water over the fire removed and cool it so the old lady could handle it. She filled her container and went home happy.

It must be mentioned that the works of Gothers and Frederick were equipped with electrical appliances in the early Twenties, the electricity being generated at Gothers pit. Lighting was installed at points around the pits, electric pumps were used, motors driven in the fitting and carpenter shops, electric blower in the blacksmith's shop. The mill in the dryer was electrically driven and lights throughout the dryers and perhaps many other places had the advantage of electrical power.

Of course, the lowly lantern still found its place in the realm of lighting.

Records show that in 1828 a John Thomas of St.Stephen produced clay from a pit known as Lower Gothers and in 1838 opened a pit named Blackheath near Lower Gothers. The output at this time was 800 tons.

It is interesting to note the wages at this time. The captain's wage was two shillings, or as we know it today 10p. The men earned one shilling and sixpence which is seven and a half new pence, and the younger folk's average was about five pence per day.

A slump in clay sales came in 1930 causing the closure of many pits and unfortunately Gothers and Frederick were among them and they have not been revived since.

The works offices were situated bordering the road near the dryers, quite a nice building, which later became a habitable dwelling. This was demolished some years ago.

The canteens or lodges as then known, varied much in standards of hygiene. Most had a sandy floor which was occasionally changed, perhaps an old table with some form of seating and the clothes hanging around the walls. A youth was employed to boil the water and make tea at specified times and of course, warm the pasties besides doing other general duties. The youth was paid a small amount from each employee to buy the tea. Some works had a separate boot house while others changed their boots in the lodge, complete with toe-rags. This was possibly hay, sacking or other material used to put in the boots for warmth and protection. The toe-rags were removed and dried ready for the next day.

## CHAPTER III

### TRADERS & SHOPKEEPERS

The hamlets were served by many travelling trades folk, mostly in the early stages by horse-drawn vehicles.

The following butchers were calling on different days and times:-

Yelland having a shop and slaughter house opposite the Church School at St.Dennis.

Kellow having a shop at St.Dennis and slaughter house at Carne.

Burnett and Trudgeon both from Tregoss. Burnett moving to St.Dennis at a later date.

Hawke of Roche - always late on Friday evening.

Yelland and later Trudgeon from Nanpean, also Allen of Whitemoor claimed a little of the trade.

The following bakers sought business:

Veale of St.Dennis

Kestle of St.Dennis

Yelland of Trezaise

Co-op of St Columb Road and the Co-op of Roche

The grocery trade was rather competitive particularly during the early stages. This was caused by the owners of a shop at St.Dennis having a controlling factor in the local clay industry. The motto being if you were employed you were expected to shop there. Several grocers shared the business namely Robbie Hore of St.Dennis; Hawke of St.Columb with a horse and covered wagon; Osborne of St.Dennis known as Jim Ann or Ham with his T Ford van; Hooper later Allen with the Trojan van and the Co-ops of Roche and St Columb Road.

One that must not be forgotten is Mr.Couch of Roche. If ever a man struggled to get a living it was him. He had a cycle with a huge basket on the front and a further basket at the rear, both loaded with groceries, not forgetting any other position on the cycle. This man had had an accident on the railway and lost an arm and had an artificial arm fitted. He cycled and pushed his load over a considerable area. What determination this gent had.

Coal was delivered to the villages by several merchants namely Messrs J.Thomas, Pollard and Kent of St.Dennis and Brewer of Roche. Also Roche Co-op had a small share.

A number of the named traders also supplied foodstuff for the cattle and poultry.

The following greengrocers helped to supply the needs of the hamlets:

Strongman of St.Dennis who, on arrival, shouted "Strongman Lady".

Sammy Hawken of Ruthvoes, struggling on two crutches with his horse and wagon.

Richards and Mitchell, before starting a wholesale business at St Austell.



Fruit sellers from Withiel were welcome during the season.

Another caller that must not be forgotten was the Sixpenny Halfpenny Bazaar. This was a long, tall van decorated for display on the outside with saucepans, frying pans and all articles follow this description, and could be heard tinkling as it approached. The driver used a bell to make known he was getting near.

It is regrettable if any names have been forgotten - please accept an apology.

Shops also served the community during the period. One of the first known shops was attached to the double fronted house at the bottom of Greenland Hill near the clay dryers. It is understood that this was a general store selling foodstuffs for human, animal and poultry consumption. It also had a hardware department.

Standing proudly on a grate in a home in Gothers Road are two china dogs purchased as a wedding present from this shop in 1911.

Granfer John Gill and family were the proud owners of this shop.

Also about this time, Mrs.Roberts, known as Mrs.Sampy, understood to be quite a character, kept a shop in the sitting room of No.5 Gothers Road selling sweets or anything to make a copper or two. Sampy was the sexton at St.Dennis Churchyard for a period about this time. Some of the old kerb stones can still be found at this address.

Sometime later, another shop sprung up at No.5. This time the owners, were Mr.and Mrs.Marsh Docking, known to everyone as Auntie Rid and Uncle Marsh. They sold sweets tobacco and cigarettes and perhaps a few groceries. Some still have vivid memories and can visualise the rows of bottles containing all kinds of sweets. In the adjoining shed, Uncle Marsh carried on a sideline trade as a barber, not the modern way of hair cutting but it did the job.

On a personal note it can be remembered my sister and myself going to the shop on a Saturday to purchase sweets for our blind grandfather. His weekly allowance was sixpenny worth of comforts, birds eggs he called them. If my sister or myself did anything to help him we were rewarded by the gift of a comfort.

We were also given two pennies each to buy sweets and how our eyes would travel over the bottles before deciding.

It is hard to realise that our two pennies would be worth less than one new penny of today's currency.

In a shed erected in the garden of No.2 Gothers Road, cycle and shoe repairs were executed by Mr.Ewart Docking. It was quite a busy place. Later Ewart was married and lived in the village where he carried on his business plus a grocery and sweet shop and sold some types of clothing.

During the Thirties Mrs.Glanville had a lockup shop in Gothers Road selling sweets etc, again quite a busy little place.

Also, Mrs.Hoskin had a shop in the garden of the end house of a row at Gothers Hill. It is not known exactly what she sold but it was convenient for folk in that part of the community.

Pack salesmen were another source of business during the period. These were men going from door to door with a suitcase or two containing towels, underwear and anything you could ask for in that line.

Mr.Odgers of St.Dennis and Mr.Liddicoat of Roche used cycles as transport.

There was another salesman of Jewish origin named Mr. Livine. He used a two-wheeled hand cart to carry his goods. This unfortunate fellow kept his cart and cases in a shed near Domellick and one night thieves burgled his shed and stole a lot of his goods. Sometime later he was doing his rounds and spotted some of his brand goods on a clothes line. Knowing he hadn't sold the household anything, he reported the matter to the Police which led to the recovery of some of his goods and solved many other disappearances within the area.

Mr. Hick, living in the village, carried on business as a part-time tinker, repairing milk strainers, separators or anything else needed within the community. Quite a useful contribution to village life.

Farmer Dally and later his son Tom did a milk round in the Cleers and Whitemoor area using a horse-drawn vehicle carrying a milk churn and measures with a long handle for issuing the milk. No doubt they sold other commodities.

Another gentleman known as the bone man made a regular journey around the hamlets selling crushed bones or something of that nature as a supplement to the diet of the poultry supposing to increase egg production.

Also a voice often heard coming to the door was a gentleman from Whitemoor selling tea shouting "Lipton's Luxury". He was known as Sammy Lawsha, his real name being Mr. Crowle.

# CHAPTER IV

## ROADS

The roads were very rough during the early part of the period, ruts, loose stone, really in very poor condition but not many motorised vehicles travelling for the drivers to complain.

Before any repairs could be carried out to the roads, the stone had to be broken down to a given size by self-employed men who were paid a sum per yard of stone. The stone was brought by a wagon drawn by two horses from a quarry near Domellick, to lay-bys as they are known today, but known then as stone depots, approximately eight or nine in the area. The stones varied in size when delivered but had to be a given sizes when broken. They were then stored in a shapely heap, wider at the bottom and narrowing at the top, quite an art to receive the best measurements when the day of reckoning came.

These stone breakers were skilful men, they knew exactly how to place the stone before using the hammer to break them. The breakers had spare hammers and they soon taught the boys the art of breaking stone. They wore fine mesh goggles to prevent any eye damage and always made sure their young helpers were protected. After filling the depot they moved to the next position.

When the roads needed repair the steamroller arrived towing a large box-like caravan complete with sleeping and cooking accommodation and a water cart, this being a tank with a gravity spray at the rear. When road repairs commenced the water cart was horse drawn and to refill, the tank was taken to a pool or stream where a hand pump was used or even a bucket.

When the road re-laying commenced, the steamroller with its adjustable depth harrow-like teeth fitted at the rear of the machine, would dig the surface to the required depth and, if necessary, the loose stones removed and new ballast of big stones laid and then rolled to make a firm foundation. If the ballast did not require replacing, the loose surface was rolled firm before a layer of small stones already broken at the stone depots, was laid and levelled. This was followed by a good coating of sand or earth and a good watering from the water cart. The steamroller then rolled the surface until the required finish was obtained.

The steamroller was fitted with a large roller made of stone fitted on the front and traction-type wheels on the rear.

The roads did not span from hedge to hedge in most places, leaving each side a space commonly known as the water tables.

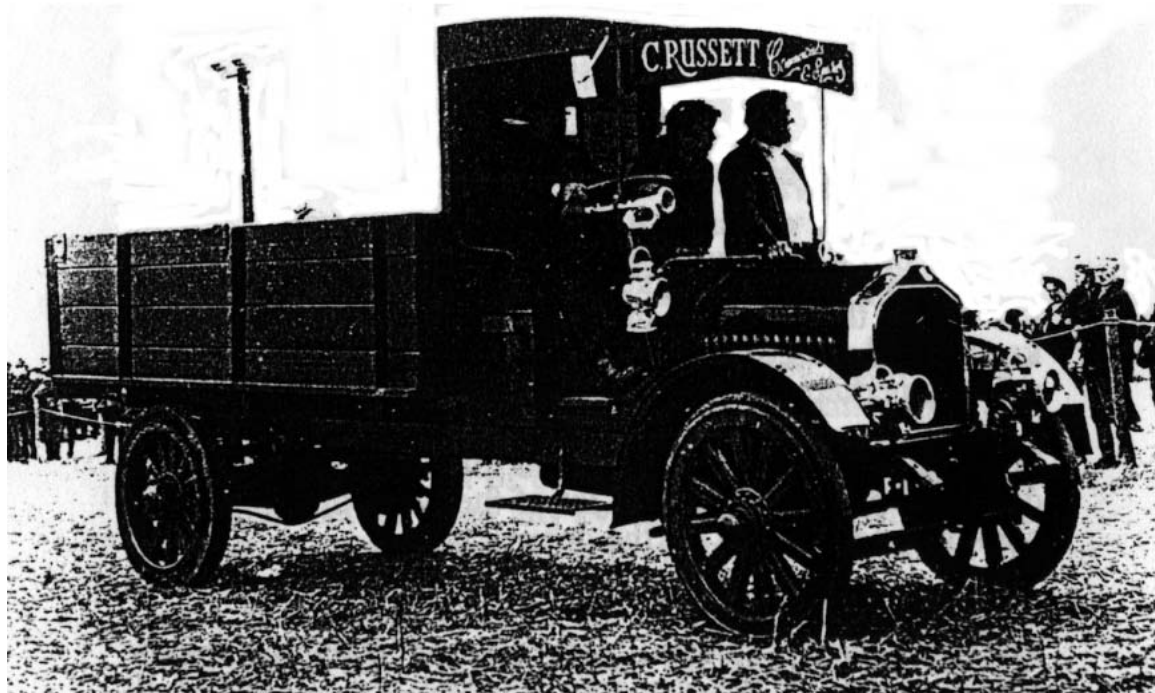
One or two men were given a section of road to maintain known as their length, this consisted of hedge pruning, keeping all waterways clear or anything to improve their section, perhaps filling a few potholes.

When the steamroller was around for a length of time, the driver's wife would spend a lot of the week in the caravan cooking and catering for the driver's needs.

Sometime near the end of the 1920s, a change took place. The roads were sprayed with tar and stone chippings spread over it. If the residents were lucky it was rolled, if not it took time for things to get comfortable. The tar sprayer being a tank on wheels, was heated by a fire, thus making the tar thin enough to be mechanically pumped through a spraying nozzle.

Tar was supplied in barrels, each barrel being lifted into the tank by means of a pulley and chain blocks.

The local people were about when the tar sprayer was in action to obtain any empty tar barrel needing removal. These were used after being cut to size, to cover a hens' or possibly a goat's house in place of galvanise. The few direction posts or sign posts, as they were known, were scarce and made of wood.



Seldon Lorry driven by Mr.F.Bailey aged 78 years

# CHAPTER V

## WAR AND LATER YEARS

At the beginning of the War the influx of evacuees into the hamlets caused a big change in the homes of the foster parents. These unfortunate children in most cases leaving deprived, non-disciplined London homes and arriving in Cornwall without any parent to give advice, must have been a terrifying experience, just carrying a small bundle in most instances and others just a gas mask.

They were allocated perhaps one or two in each home available and what a job it was to alter their way of life into a quiet Cornish village life. Many stories are told of the dawning of their first morning in the hamlets and some of the tricks they were doing, anything with wheels was on the move, ownership not being considered. Within a day or so of their arrival one local smallholder was carrying hay, this was a new attraction. To the owner's horror, they ran up one side of the rick being constructed and down the other side. The result needs no explaining. After a while they became part of village life, going to school and Sunday School, also joining other children in all activities. It must be mentioned that one of our modern entertainers namely Bernard Bresslow, who has recently died, was an evacuee living with Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Tabb of Gothers. He is remembered as being a well-built happy boy. Some of the children still reside in Cornwall.

If a home was being disbanded owing to death or perhaps emigration, its contents were sold on the premises, a local auctioneer being engaged. It was a very well attended occasion, every one expecting a bargain. Before the sale commenced, the goods were on view, prospective buyers and some inquisitive folk went inside for different reasons. Where possible, the goods were brought outside, weather permitting, if not everyone was crowded in the house. The auctioneer, a gentleman from Roche, caused many a laugh as he conducted the sale. The goods were then removed by pony-drawn vehicles or by hand. At smallholding or farm sales the same procedure took place.

Mention was made of gas masks previously, every individual was issued with one in case of a German gas attack.

Most of the young men were in the forces and scattered all over the world, while other young and older men were sent to factories and workshops throughout the country. Anyone still remaining were requested to join the ARP, namely Air Raid Precautions, or the Home Guard, not being disrespectful as portrayed by "Dad's Army".

The hamlets lost two young men, one being a rear gunner on an aircraft and the other on army service. Long may their memories live.

The first radio known in the area was during the early Twenties in a home at Gothers Road, made by a gentleman living at Nanpean. What a contraption and wonder it was. It was enormous in size and had an aerial high above the garden reaching about one hundred feet. The set obtained its power from a dry battery, that was of the same structure as our torch battery of today only being very large. This was the HT or dry battery, accompanied by accumulator or wet battery which was taken to a centre for charging.

To alter the wavelength the operator needed to change the coils. These were especially supplied and fitted with two extensions for easy changing. At first the reception was received by using headphones, just two people could listen. When something important was announced or perhaps championship boxing, the interested neighbours, would gather and a commentary would be given by the listener. A little later the loudspeaker was introduced making things more interesting.



Things steadily improved over the period, the battery set becoming self-contained in a case but still using the same means of power. The battery method gradually disappeared on the arrival of the mains electric power operated sets.

Television did not arrive in the locality until the 1950s.

Football was a pastime for the young men after they had come home from work and accomplished their allotted duties. Some of the neighbouring villages had teams, namely Carbis, St.Wenn, Belovely, Egypt and others, and matches were arranged with the local team Gothers. Enniscaven young men made Gothers their team. No fancy shirts or shorts, some had football boots and others used any other comfortable footwear. Two poles and a piece of string formed the goals but it needed a well disciplined referee to keep things under control.

The dryers at Gothers stood idle after all the clay had been removed until after the commencement of War, when they were renovated to house a section of the armed forces namely the Royal Ordnance Corps with all supplies for the forces. Some of the local residents were also engaged to do any duties required. They used the local Chapel for Church parades and helped the community in a number of ways.

Their sports field was situated on the St.Dennis road where they played quite a number of football matches and if they were short of players because of duty commitments, they sought the help of some of the local young men who were rewarded by allowing them to attend the Ensa concerts held in the camp.

For a period just before the D Day landings a permit was needed to travel along or cross the road leading from Roche to Whitemoor. The American forces were gathering for the invasion of France.

For a period after the War the Gothers dryer site, then vacated by the forces, was used for making prefabricated concrete dwelling houses which can be seen in most parts of England and Wales. A large number of men were employed in the industry which was very hard and busy work.

Now the complex is known as Gothers Experimental Works.

Returning to the early Twenties it was the intention of some company, thought to be H.D. Pochin, to build another mica dryer in the field opposite the Chapel, to the dismay of the inhabitants, but this project did not mature. The foundations were removed for the dryer section, also the stack. It has been said that such a quantity of clay was polluting the Goss Moor that this was thought to be the solution. The tube, as it was called, lay near to the entrance of the road leading to the cottages and Salt-box, possibly this arrived to be installed somewhere in the new building, being approximately thirty feet long and having a diameter of three or four feet, almost long enough erected on a brick base to form the stack. It was of cast iron and having flanges at each end projecting about a foot or eighteen inches. The tube was a favourite playing place for many children and later became a shelter for the goats. One thoughtful gentleman had the idea of building up the centre diameter with turf, thus creating shelter from any direction of wind, which was much appreciated.

The tube for the want of a better description, was removed at the time scrap was collected for the War effort.

Not many lost their front garden gates and railings in this area but at Roche many were taken for the same purpose.

The population has greatly diminished in both hamlets over the period. In the Twenties families were larger and many of the family lived together. Sixteen properties have been demolished or become uninhabitable and only seven replaced within the period. The four houses known as

Gothers Row were built by the clay company to be homes for key workmen and the three bungalows in Long Lane for the family. All these were built around 1920 and, of course, two bungalows now near completion.

Since having mains water in 1969 almost all the houses have modern amenities - bathroom, toilet and all modern conveniences.

When smaller population was mentioned, it must not be forgotten the influx of gypsies. They used the area quite frequently and could be seen camping in several places. The shelter of the hedges near the road junction leading to Tregoss was a favourite and at positions nearer Pittsmingle, also on the moor near the tube mentioned earlier. They could be seen sitting around the fire making clothes pegs or perhaps cooking a hedgehog or a rabbit for tea. The gypsies did not create much trouble when in residence. It could be that a farmer missed a turnip or two or even a fowl if it was slow enough to be caught. The female gypsies travelled from door to door selling their clothes pegs and perhaps a few other oddments.

Some of them were real characters. Selina Crocker was one and will never be forgotten by those who met her. Many stories could be told about her. Selina used a never-failing technique when selling her goods to those a little nervous of her by telling them if they didn't buy a little or have their fortune told, a curse would be put upon them.

Their homes were tents in those days, not many with caravans, some had a wagon covered with a canvas sheet, and their transport was a pony and trap.

Trout could be found in the rivers. No doubt they supplemented the gypsies' food supply, and all the little streams in the moor were teeming with minnows (very small fish) which were often caught by the boys and kept in bottles at home.

During the slump of the Thirties and so many unemployed, different sources of entertainment were sought. No Institute in those days, they gathered in a cows' house when not occupied by the cattle, or any other building where they could play skittles, darts or cards, no money to gamble - match sticks were often the stakes.

On Fridays they cycled or walked to St.Columb to collect their little dole money. It wasn't posted in those days. When they were at St.Columb collecting their small allowance they were given a form, named along distance form, which needed be signed by two worthy folk, certifying they had not worked during the week. It was a task to find someone to sign who was not on the dole themselves. The form, after being signed, was posted to the Labour Exchange.

There was also a seat erected at Little Hill by the hedge where the letter box stands. This was generally full but only a good chat here often continuing until late into the night.

Through the period there were folk who will be remembered by their unusual remarks and activities.

It will be interesting to reminisce some of them.

Mention was made previously of collecting milk from the farm with a can. One little girl returned home after completing this mission to find her mother was housing, that was the term for visiting someone's house for a gossip. The girl found her mother and issued the following statement, "The milk is home and the cover is off, the cat is in so you must please yourself."

Another elderly gent had some unusual sayings. If anyone said to him "Some weather today", his reply would be "Always some sort o weather this time of the year", or possibly he would enquire about a persons health. If the reply was a complaint, he would say, "You are never so well when you are bad". Another of his tricks was to catch a child in fun and say, "Let me see if

you have got a bone in our knee". He would squeeze the knee until the youngster had to shout and surrender.

There was a keen gardener and if he saw something in a neighbour's garden he fancied, he would appear with a lot more plants than he hoped to take away and say, "I want to change a dog for a brass monkey".

A lady was often heard to say, "Who would have who if who didn't have witchy", referring to a couple with a little less intelligence than most.

Another very elderly lady was asked the same question by old and young, knowing what the answer would be, "Just like I was yesterday, thank you. "

A general reply when anyone required about another's health, was "Fair to middling".

One dear old gent when attending a meeting or something of that nature and in place of saying postpone he would say "We had better pos-pon the matter".

Another gentleman, not of Cornish origin, when talkin between every short sentence would be heard "Um Frum' .

Two things remain a mystery within the hamlets, the first being what happened to Duck stone, this was a large stone situated in the centre of Enniscaven village which had disappeared; also the village pump situated near the old Sunday School did the same disappearing trick.

This poem will cover any forgotten items.

## PAST DAYS

We met, we married, a long time ago  
We worked for long hours when wages were low  
No telly, no wireless, no bath, times were hard.  
Just a cold water tap and a walk up the yard.  
No holidays abroad, no carpets on the floors.  
But we had coal on the fire and we never locked our doors.  
Our children arrived, no pill in those days  
And we brought them up too without any state aid.  
They were quite safe then to play in the park  
And the old folk could go for a walk in the dark.  
No vallium, no drugs, no LSD  
And we cured all our ills with a good cup of tea  
If you were sick you were treated at once  
Not asked to fill in a form and come back in six months  
No vandals, no muggings, there was nothing to rob  
And we were rich then with a couple of bob  
People were happier in those far off days  
Kinder and caring in so many ways  
Milkmen and paper boys used to whistle and sing  
And a night out at the pictures was our mad fling  
We all had our share of trouble and strife  
And we just had to face it because that was the pattern of life  
But now I'm alone and look back through the years  
I don't think of the bad times, the troubles and tears  
I remember the blessings our home and love  
And that we shared them together for which I thank my  
Heavenly Father above



### A Family Wedding

It would be advisable to mention a few dates for future reference.

As stated, electricity was brought to the hamlets in 1936.

Heavy snowfalls were experienced in 1947, 1957 and a very severe period from Christmas 1962 lasting six weeks and everything was frozen for that length of time.

The telephone kiosk was believed to have been installed in the early 1950s.

Some street lights were installed about 1954 and later additions 1986 or a bit later.

Mains water arrived in 1969.

Snails and bees invaded the old letter box and the present one was erected in the early 1970s.

The old Sunday School, later the Institute, was sold in the mid 1970s.

The Sunday School tea treats engaged a band for the last time in 1978.

The bus shelter was built by volunteers during the mid 1970s and is now the property of the Parish Council.

The houses in the village were demolished during the early 1970s.

The Chapel car park, being a waste overgrown piece of land and found to be common land, was excavated by a local contractor and after the drains were laid, refilled with ballast and sand at no charge in 1989.

The letter box at Gothers was installed at a date not known but bears the inscription VR and not the usual ER, indicating that it was made in the reign of Queen Victoria. An interested resident has since contacted Plymouth and ascertained the box was installed in August 1932.



