

# Eddy Hobbs of Cuckoo's Corner

**Eddy had lived in 212 London Road, Holybourne since he was born in the front bedroom 69 years ago. He remembers when Cuckoos Corner was a community quite separate from the village of Holybourne, and it kept itself to itself.**

Behind the original cottage, at the bottom of the garden there was a brick building containing a communal wash-house (which in those days drained into the stream), and each cottage had a coal shed and earth privy: not much fun in winter. In 1937, when mains water was put in, these cottages had luxurious flush toilets and they no longer needed to walk 160 yards for all their clean water from the (existing) hand pump in front of Rose Cottage. The other row of cottages did not have mains water connected until much later.

During WW2, young Eddy and his mother went to live with his grandparents in Hemel Hempstead, while his father served with the military police as a blue cap and evacuees lived in their cottage. When they returned in 1944 they found the house in such an atrocious state that his mother just wept. It was as though animals had lived there.

His mother then became head cook for the PoW camp which was on the opposite side of the road. He remembers that there were four or five Nissen huts, with British soldiers billeted in the one nearest the road. During the war the Germans made a lovely road of old bricks in and out of the camp. Later on, when the PoWs were expatriated, land workers occupied the camp with the overspill living in bell tents on what was the camp football pitch - all of which is now under Downsview!

Eddy went to Andrews, Froyle and Amery Hill Schools and in his teens, he and his friend Danny Lee used to play the accordion in the Holybourne Carnival Band with David Newman, one of the drummers. At 17 he joined the Navy

and was sent to HMS Glasgow the flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet, serving under Admiral Mountbatten. Later, he served on aircraft carriers and became a torpedo-man on a Talent Class submarine. In Cyprus, during the Makarios crisis, his expertise in explosives was very useful. After thirteen years he left the Navy and went to work at Vessas, on aircraft engine maintenance at Dan Air, and finally worked for Waverley Borough Council as Supervisor of the Cleansing Department.

His grandparents eventually left Hemel Hempstead and rented No. 214 next door. After purchasing both cottages in 1966 and by converting them into one dwelling, there were four generations of the family living together under one roof. For some time the house was numbered 212/214; but recently the number 214 has been transferred to the new houses built across the stream that are known as 'Garden Cottages'.

Eddy recalls that apparently until the 1920's, the stream running through the garden used to run right across the main road. In his time there was a weighbridge at the old T-junction to Binsted on the main London Road, and a wall around Trimmers' house on that dangerous corner - all of which disappeared with the new bypass. When on leave, he used to drive the breakdown truck from Smiths Garage in Holybourne and saw some dreadful accidents in this area.

In 1982, when his eldest son Paul, an electrician, was unable to attend an urgent call for his services, Eddy went instead thus met Joyce whom he subsequently married. She had been married before and is delighted that her daughter Anna has now married Eddie's younger son Peter. Eddie and Joyce left Holybourne in May and moved to Norfolk to be near Peter, and we hope they will be very happy there.

**C B Spragthorpe**

## Cuckoo's Corner

**This strange place name is now perpetuated by a bus stop sign and common usage. However it was important when it described an entire community, quite separate from Holybourne. Was there a cuckoo there? The old road to Farnham now goes on to Bonhams, where you can still see the white line down the centre of the old narrow road.**

Between the wars, Cuckoo's Corner consisted of 12 dwellings: 4 houses and 2 rows of 4 cottages. When she was a child in the 1920's, Mrs Doris Chandler (née Martin), whose father ran the bakery at the Holybourne shop, regarded them as being 'foreign'.

After leaving Cuckoo's Corner, you would have passed 300 yards of fields on both sides of the main road before you came to the Forge, the first house in Holybourne and where

there was the Holybourne sign (only 150 yards from the village Shop). It is difficult to imagine such a rural area now that housing development has completely joined Cuckoo's Corner and Holybourne on the south side. Driving a car, it only takes a moment to get there.

On an old plan of 212 London Road, this part of Cuckoo's Corner was described as 'Osiers Plat' which refers to 'willows whose pliant shoots are suitable for making baskets' in 'an area of land'. The spring-fed stream is now in a culvert and runs down under the road to the Wey, but to the north there is a long line of mature silver leaved willows along the edge of the cricket pitch as far as the little footbridge. Was this the site of basket making many years ago?

Jane Hurst has seen an old plan where it was called Cuckold's Corner, but the editor would welcome any other information (or wild guesses) about the origin of its name.

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