

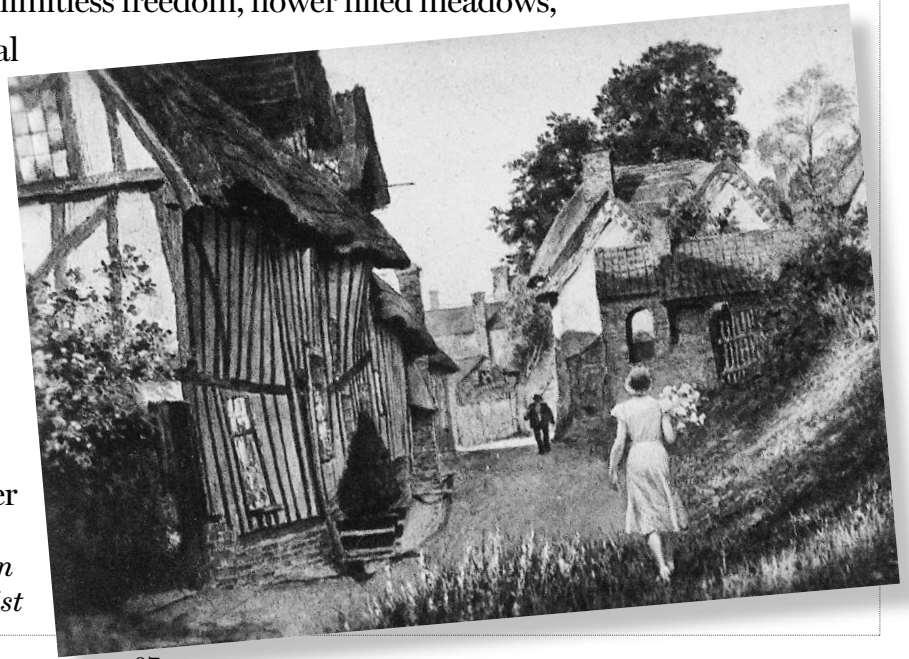
# “When Kersey Was Kersey...”

## CHAPTER 5. ENVIRONMENT, FAMILY LIFE & THE COMMUNITY

OLDER CONTRIBUTORS HAVE FOND MEMORIES OF THE ENVIRONMENT in which they grew up – limitless freedom, flower filled meadows, lamplit rooms and crystal clear water drawn from springs or wells. ¶

Perhaps the electricity, tap water and mains drainage, common elsewhere, were never missed. ¶ But, unlike their parents, children were spared much of the drudgery caused by the lack of such conveniences. ¶ Electricity finally arrived in parts of Kersey in 1949 and mains water four years later.

*Painting by an unknown artist*



**Viney Bigg:** When we were children the ditches would run when we had a good rain and we used to throw twigs in and see whose got to the end first. The ditches were lined with primroses and if dad saw a really nice clump he'd bring it home to mum and she'd put in a glass jar indoors – you know – the actual root. And it would last for ages and then she'd plant it out in the garden afterwards. Of course, we aren't allowed to do that now are we? There aren't enough of them.



**Ruth Glead:** Most houses had their own well or water pump in the garden – lovely clean pure water. The river was kept clean by men using hand tools, so we had lovely fresh water cress. There was no pollution, one could drink the water straight from the stream. There were wild orchids growing in Hall Meadows and forget-me-nots, primroses and marshmallows on the river banks.

I was born in 1918 in “The Cottage”, Kersey Street, but when I was eighteen months old that cottage was condemned so we moved to one in Water Lane. Then in 1923 we had a fire and floods there. A thunderbolt came right down the chimney in an awful thunder storm and, being a thatched cottage, the fire spread quickly. We were left homeless, so the family were split up and had to stay with friends for a few weeks. We then moved to the tiny cottage round the back of “Arran Cottage”.



**Joyce Williams:** When we lived in part of “Woodbine Cottage” we had a little spring just outside the back door. That was all concreted round so it was lovely and clean but every so often the algae used to collect down the sides and that was all emptied out and put on the garden. My school friend Harold and his sister Mary lived next door and his mother used to do it one time and my mother another. That water was beautiful, as clear as anything.



**Jim Glead:** Did Joyce tell you that water in the spring at the back of “Woodbine Cottage” was holy water? Well, it was. It used to come from the church-yard didn't it!, then through ours and the shoemaker's and finish up down in the river. Of course, when the water mains came through in 1953 all the houses going up the hill towards the church after the old chapel (“Chapel House”) had to pay one pound a year to use the church steps tap. That was because we depended on it. The other houses going down the hill had mains water, so they could use that tap free. But the farmer we rented our houses off, “little Bobby” we called him, wouldn't have water put into them you see. He didn't have electricity laid on either – well, if he had it would have cost him about ten years rent and he wasn't the sort to spend a penny on anything

anyway. There were no repairs done, those houses were just left and left.



**Ted Martin:** There weren't no ducks down on the road when I was a kid. The first duck and drake to come to Kersey were given to Tony Simpson's mother for him when he was a baby not a year old, and that's sixty-five year ago. But at that time of day they used to keep them down the farm where the pottery is today, and then during the war and after they come onto the road and onto the street.



**Ray Goymour:** All your heating and cooking was done with paraffin and coal – much better than these microwaves! And before running water came to Kersey we had a pump at “Leys House”, and better water to drink than we get today. The people in the cottages next door, now “Pax”, were always allowed to go down and help themselves to water out of the pump, otherwise they'd have to go up the hill to the well at the bottom of the church steps. You'd have a big basin which held about three or four pailsful and that was your supply of water for everything.



**Jill Stiff:** We had a pipe in the wall in “Linton House” and

they used to fill the tanks in the loft from there from the well that was in our garden. And if you look at our wall that carries on from the house you'll see there's still a pipe there.



**Jack Stiff:** When we couldn't get enough water from there we used to pump it up from down below. And when we had all the chickens in the barn and couldn't pump it up hard enough we used to buy the water off the council because they'd put a bore up Vale Lane for the council houses. We used to take about fifteen hundred gallons in the morning to fill our tanks up!



**Gladys Rice:** We were alright in the council houses in Vale Lane but when we first came down Mrs Mann and Mrs Mowles hadn't got no water in “Vale Corner”. They'd only got the well half way down the lane, and the pond which used to be on the corner of Water Lane. Mr Mann relied on that pond to feed his chickens and goats. In fact they used it for everything except drinking because otherwise they had to go half way down the lane to the well.



**Cherry Chalmers:** There used to be what they called bumbies in our gardens where we used to throw all the slops

and things. Well, when I was a tot I went up to Mr and Mrs Mann's and fell in their bumbie because I'd seen a spoon in there and tried to reach it. If Mr Mann hadn't pulled me out I'd have probably drowned in this disgusting mess. He used to remind me of it when he saw me. I used to have a mass of curly hair and he'd say, "You don't remember when I pulled you out the bumbie, do you? Your little curls!"

All the loos were out the back. Well, from mum's back door the loo was nearly to the end of "Ayres End" – Mr Innes' house – and we used to go up there and there was always honeysuckle around the door. There used to be a candle in a jam jar and so many matches on the floor. In them days we used to have to cut newspaper up in squares and put them on a string and, if we were lucky, we'd get orange paper!

We used to go and sit there and it was cold and really spooky if you needed to go at night. At that time we had a wooden hole and a little one for the children. And of course, tin baths to bath in in front of the fire, and if there was a big family they used to get in one after the other. I was fortunate, I'd only got one sister, so we was alright.



**David Griffiths:** Before mains water, of course, the only loo here used to be in that little brick building in the garden – just a bucket job! And next door to it, where the chimney is, was the wash house.



**Sue Griffiths:** As tenants, we didn't put in central heating here because it seemed such a big investment. So, it's cold enough inside this house without having to go out for the loo! There's no heating upstairs and you scrape the ice off the inside of the windows in winter! Not having instant water and not having baths must have been very hard. Of course, we're going to have central heating now the place is our own – that's one of the things we can't wait to have done.



**Paul Ryde:** When I came to live in Kersey in 1947 I was in lodgings in "Denbeigh House" (now Kedges End"). We had a pump in the back yard to get water and it was easier to pump the water in the morning in wintertime because it was much warmer out of the pump, which went deep down into the ground, than it was indoors! We used to have jugs indoors and it was always frozen.

One of the biggest problems was that we used to have oil lamps and I used to read when I went to bed and still do to this day. And how we survived I do not know, because I used to invariably go to sleep and forget about the oil running down in the lamp, and be woken up in the middle of the night to a smoke-filled room – the ceiling was absolutely charcoal black. This used to incur the landlady's wrath

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*Jill Stiff*

There’s nothing like an oil lamp to create moisture, that’s why old woodwork is so preserved. When you put central heating in it dries it out and everything goes bent! When we just had oil lamps that light was a sort of yellowy colour and almost like candlelight. It wasn’t until you had a tilley lamp that there was a brighter, whiter light.



**Leslie Williams:** We had a tilley lamp and that was a lovely soft light and warm as well. And we had a fire by the side of the oven with bars in front but we were just as warm as we are now. There was a well up towards the Bildeston road and when we lived at that end of Kersey we used to get our water

because she had to clean the ceiling next day and it used to be limewashed because that was the cheapest way people had of dealing with their ceilings. And if you look at some of the ceilings in the old houses in the village even today, you’ll see it all literally caked on in large lumps.



**Jill Stiff:** Of course oil lamps threw out a lot of heat, and moisture.

there with a bucket on the end of a rope and a handle to wind it up and down.



**Ruth Gleed:** When I was ten or eleven years old we left the tiny cottage and went to live at “Noakes Farm”. We paid no rent as dad looked after the pigs. We kept goats so we had fresh milk each day, and when the baby kids were no more than a day or two old they were sold for meat. I used to go gleaning in the fields after the binders had cut the corn, which helped to feed our chickens.

Noakes Farm was a lovely place to live – plenty of space in the house and garden and an apple orchard with real Cox’s Orange Pippins and Russets. We got our water from a well – real spring water – and used oil lamps for lighting, and burned wood and coal fires in the black leaded grates. There was a huge open chimney where you could see the sky if you looked up, and mother could smoke a ham each side of it.

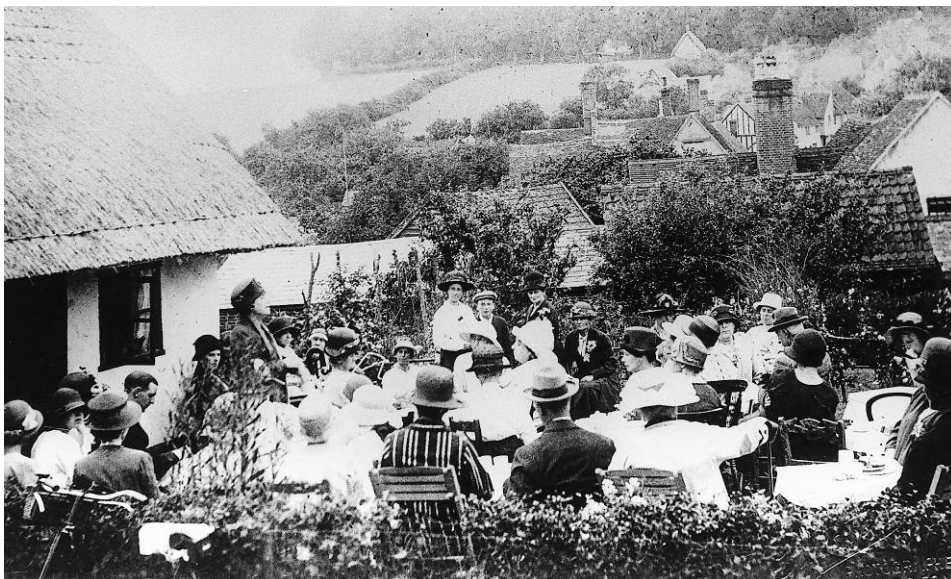
Father would set light to the chimney with straw – no chimney sweep was needed. If you were lucky enough to have a feather bed and pillows they had to be turned over every week and shaken properly, otherwise you had hard lumps. That was lovely and warm though, especially if it was heated by a brick warmed in the oven and placed in an old sock!

Most of the men in Kersey worked on a farm as there was not much else in those days. My brother worked with Suffolk horses. He could plough a straight furrow, and used to enter all the ploughing matches which were real events then. The wages were thirty shillings a week at that time but my brother caught moles, which he killed and sold the skins for threepence each. He also caught rabbits which he sold for one shilling and sixpence each on Hadleigh market – a little extra money for him.



**Owen Gillingwater:** Tony Simpson and I used to go ratting. Tony had a dog and an airgun and I had my godparents' dog, and at night we used to go round the stacks with a torch and an airgun and either we or the dogs would catch the rats. Then we got a penny a tail from his uncle, Lance Arthey.

Lance Arthey was the farmer at the Priory and he would allow us boys – Tony and me, Bill Seggar and Bill Stiff to cut some willow trees. We'd have a tumbrel and a horse, cut the



*One of many Kersey fetes held in the garden of "The Cottage"*

wood up, bind it and then if we were lucky we'd get some money when people would buy loads of wood. It was a way for us to earn pocket money and a means of Mr Arthey's controlling his hedges and trees because, being war time, he didn't have the men to do this sort of thing. He barely had the men to get the corn in. So that's how I spent a lot of time and earned some money in my holidays.



**Mary Holden:** The Kersey fetes used to be held in the garden of “The Cottage”. My mother used to love those fetes you know, and she was busy making things for days before. The man in the flat straw hat with his back to the camera is Reverend Ambrose. He always wore that hat! And the man standing up is Colonel Burton. Just look at the size of the hat that little girl with the doll is wearing!



**Naomi Partridge:** Oh, here’s Colonel Burton at the village fete in 1928 (*see right*). I know we used to skip with our ropes when I was little and sing, “Vote, vote, vote for Colonel Burton. Loversed in the kettle, Burton in the spout; Loversed got the wind up and blew old Burton out!” We had no idea what we were doing of course, but he was a Conservative MP or prospective MP, and the other man would have been Liberal.



**Frances Whymark:** When I was a girl the harvest was wonderful. We used to take our dogs, and glean. I used to love it – riding the carthorses back to Artheys’ farm. Norah Orriss’ father was in charge of the horses. I used to love to see them all being fed with nose-bags – and that wonderful steamy smell that comes up. I’ve always loved animals. Mr Partridge – Pete’s grandfather – told Gerald when we were courting that he didn’t stand a chance against animals! Mr Partridge always had a stabled horse and used to ride. It was

a beautiful chestnut and that reared up one day and went right over backwards and had to be put down.



**Jill Stiff:** Of course, there have been a lot of changes in the street and not all for the good. The road’s been heightened where the river runs across and that’s why the cobbles get slippery. It only has to be an inch less deep and algae forms.



**Jack Stiff:** When the kerbs were put in the village late fifties, early sixties, I got told off by Lady Munnings. She was the wife of Sir Alfred Munnings, the horse painter at Dedham, and she came through the village one day when the men were working. I was standing there with my shop coat on and she tore me off a right strip – she thought I was the foreman – and said they shouldn’t have put these kerbs here. They were “desecrating the village” putting these white kerbs in. Which they did – everyone said they spoiled it, but that’s “progress” isn’t it? Water used to run down the gutters before but now it runs all over the road and you can’t call that progress! So, after she’d finished, I said. “Well I totally agree with you. I’m nothing to do with the job, I live here!”



**Irene Hasler:** When we went onto mains water Ivy Tricker was all for getting rid of the pump outside her cottage. (“Row View”), though most people wanted to keep it as a historical feature. But eventually she saw the sense of keeping it, if only to stop cars from parking on that little grass triangle. I was talking to her about it once, and she had a privy in the garden. “Well anyway, that’d better go,” she said. There was a hole in the side of the privy wall and I asked her what the

hole was for. “Oh,” she said, “That’s where my father used to put his gun through and shoot the pigeons!”



**Peter Vansittart:** I was brought up both in the country and the town. The best time of all was in Devonshire, between the ages of ten and twelve when my parents were abroad and I was part of the household of a country doctor.

I learned to love the countryside, and I used to go with him on his rounds which meant going into rather grand houses but often very poor houses, even hovels. So one got a very close sense of country life in a thoroughly unromantic way. Literally, gipsies camped together in squalor. I didn’t realise it at the time because I was just enjoying myself, but looking back, this has been of great use to me.

The doctor and his wife were far too busy to look after the children – so I roamed all over the place in complete freedom. I had a bicycle and one thought nothing of bicycling thirty miles there and back to places like Taunton or Tiverton just for a tennis or cricket match. Although it was, in some ways, a rather hierarchical society – there was the squire and the vicar and the doctor, the three poles of interlocking influences – at the same time it was curiously democratic. Everybody called the doctor by his christian name and, though the squire was called “squire”, that too was a sort of christian name.

As I remember it – though one tends to romanticise the past – it seems to me that there was a little bit less of Them and Us than there is sometimes today rather nearer home. I may be wrong there – other people may have different views. There's a Russian proverb, "He lies like an eye witness!"

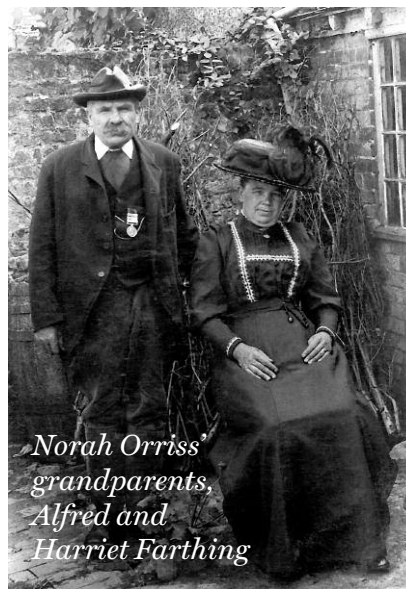


**Rev. Ian Wilson:** I've lived in Suffolk nearly all my life and used to come to Kersey on days out. I've always liked it. I was born in Wolverhampton but grew up in Felixstowe and did all my schooling there. I served in the Suffolk Police Force in a Suffolk diocese and then spent three years in Lincoln where I trained for the priesthood. It was very hard being away from Suffolk for that length of time. I think Suffolk has that effect on people – it's home and there's no place like it.

## FAMILY LIFE AND THE COMMUNITY:

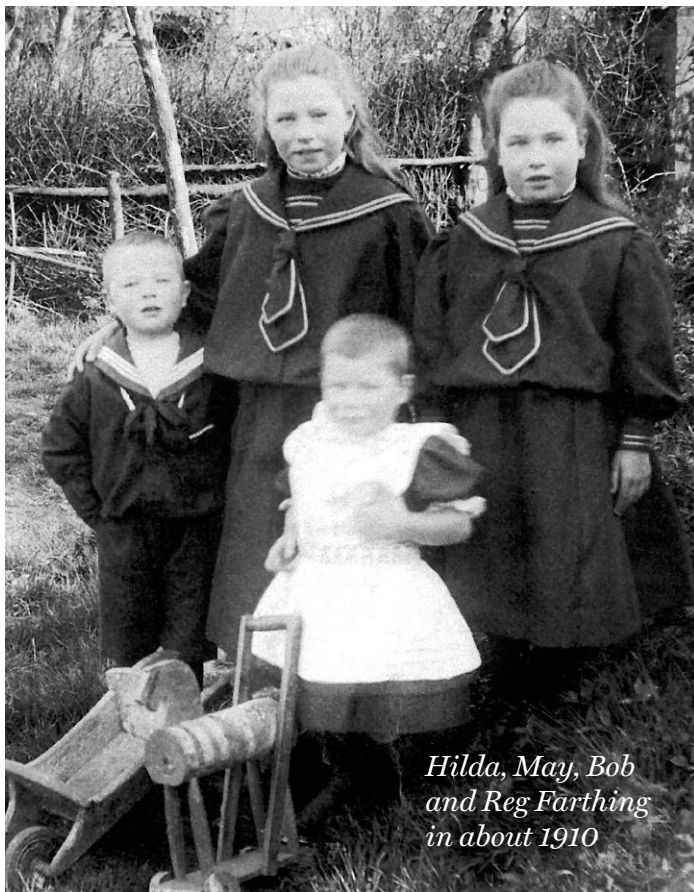
The extended family has long been one of the predominant features of life in Kersey. The immobility which resulted from little transport meant that the village was sufficient unto itself. Courting frequently took place between young people who had been at school together and quite often two sisters from one family would marry two brothers from another (or vice versa) so that blood ties were doubly strong. Generations lived

near each other, sharing the responsibilities of young children and the aged. Only a very few unfortunates were reliant on "the parish" or "the union" (workhouse) for their survival. In fact, the community as a whole was a close one. People kept an eye on each other and nobody was allowed to feel isolated. Happily, this spirit continues to a great extent to the present day, not only among the indigenous population, but also "newcomers".



*Norah Orriss' grandparents, Alfred and Harriet Farthing*

**Norah Orriss:** Our grandparents, the Farthings lived at "Waterwell House" or Bell View as it was then. Here's a picture of some of their children, including Reg our dad in a dress. We were all close to each other because they didn't have the transport that we've got now, though our dad used to go out to Stratford St Andrew



*Hilda, May, Bob  
and Reg Farthing  
in about 1910*

where our mum lived to court her. Then two brothers married two sisters. Dad's brother Bob used to live at number 3, Church Hill and he married mum's sister Mabel. Bob was a grave digger here and also a bellringer, but that was when they used to play tunes on the bells. Mabel worked up at the Priory in service, and I suppose my dad met mother one time through Bob and Mabel.

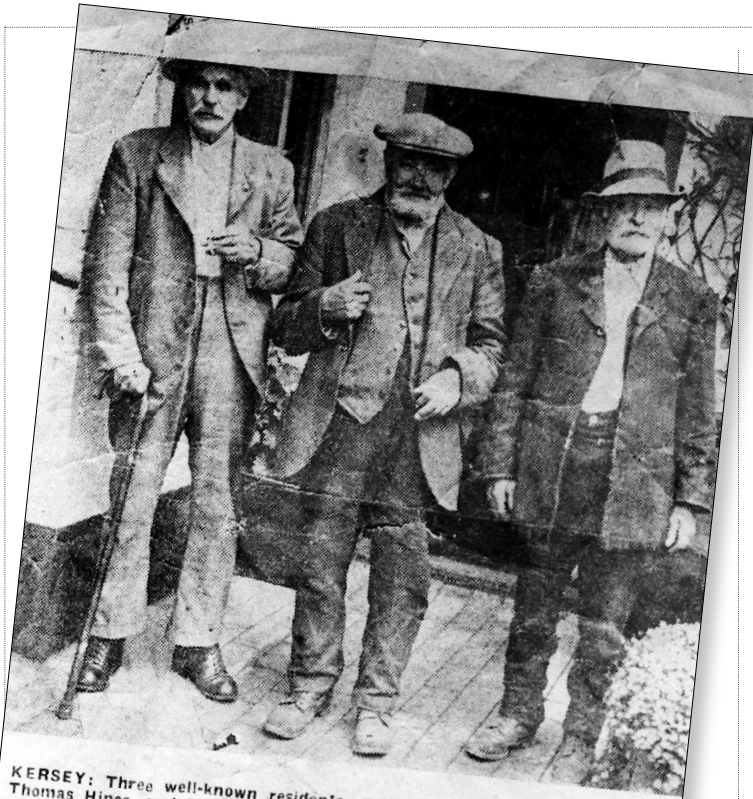


**Grace Farthing:** And here's a copy of an East Anglian Daily times photo of my great grandfather Thomas Hines, in the middle, with two other villagers, Joseph Rayner and Samuel Aggis.



**Ivy Tricker:** Mr Jackson who lived in Kersey Priory, he used to give the children a treat and we went up there and had a lovely tea. We had those cakes rolled in coconut and then he had a magic lantern and showed us pictures on that. We thought that was wonderful.

My mother was a wonderful woman. She never raised her voice and always had time for every one of us. My godmother wanted to have me to live with her a few doors down the street but my mother wouldn't have it. She promised her she'd see a lot of me as I grew up, and she did, but I always lived at home.



**KERSEY:** Three well-known residents of the village are Mr. Joseph Rayner, Thomas Hines, and Mr. Samuel Aggis. Aged 67, Mr. Rayner, who was born in the village, went to Canada in 1903. He joined the Expeditionary Force, saw service in France from 1916 to 1918, when he was wounded. He returned home from Canada in 1923. Mr. Hines, now in his 77th year, was born at Selby and Mr. AGGIS, who is now 73, is a native of the village, in which he has lived nearly all his life. He was at one time gamekeeper under the late Mr. Step Jackson, of Kersey Priory. At one period during his youth he was in the Essex Militia at Colchester. (E.A.D.T. photo.)



**Cherry Chalmers:** Mum went to Tunbridge Wells when she was a little girl – they used to send them off to go into Service, as they called it. And mum had a good home where she went. She kept in touch with Mrs Kemp and made a friend of her, and mum sent me then when I was a little girl. I got friendly with the daughter, Hilda, and I weren't very old because I took a watch of Hilda's, just childlike. I gave it back but I did so like this watch. We often used to talk about it - Hilda is still alive. Mum was horrified and, of course, I had to come home.



**Ruth Glead:** My father was born in Kersey Tye, so he was a proper Kersey man. Although he was not educated like my mother, he was quite clever and not afraid of hard work. He was one of twenty two children and fourteen of them lived to be over eighty years old! My mother came from Hastings in Sussex. She came as a parlour maid to Borley Rectory where there's supposed to be a ghost. (She never saw the ghost, but the housemaid did!)

She met my dad at Foxearth. He was head herdsman on a farm and earned quite a lot of money for those days. He'd

*Joseph Rayner, left, Thomas Hines and Samuel Aggis*

been a widower for seven years and there were four boys and three girls from his first marriage, and I think my mother must have felt sorry for him and all these poor children, though some of them were growing up. So she and he got together and married, and then they had my brother and, later, me. Mother must have been good to her stepchildren as, when she died aged sixty-one years, those who were able came to her funeral. Afterwards, they used to visit dad and me and I still keep in touch with some of them.



**Claude Munson:** I was born in Kersey Uplands at the crossroads near Trickers Farm. I didn't have any brothers or sisters by birth but was brought up with my cousin because his mother died in childbirth. My mother brought him up but didn't have his name changed into ours so he was Harold Frost and I'm Claude Munson. His father, Fred Frost, was captured in the first world war and went through so much. And then he came home and blew his own arm off in a shooting accident after always being on to me and Harold to be careful with ammunition. Harold went off to London in the end.



**Maisie Martin:** I was a Partridge before I was married, not the farming Partridges though, another family. Mother had

twelve. My elder brothers were grown up before I was born so we didn't have the same interests but I had my sisters Chrissie and Daisy. My mother had only got a little pantry where she used to probably wash up because they used to wash up on the table years ago, didn't they? And two bedrooms. But we were happy – I've often said that. I can remember – we had a lovely warm fire and we used to sit up the table at night with the oil lamps and play cards. We weren't always allowed to have the gramophone on – that was a treat really. We used to do drawings in the road didn't we – hopscotch.

Ted and I met at school really – we've sort of known each other all our lives. There were more people here when we were younger – bigger families too. Well, we had seven! I've got five married and two live at home – Judy, she's a social services home carer, and then David. You know David with the long hair. After I got married I never went out to work – I tell you I didn't have much time to because there weren't the modern conveniences you see, years ago.



**Ruth Glead:** Mary Holden's family lived in "Arran Cottage" and it was while we were living in the tiny cottage behind there that I met her. Poor Mary used to be sitting on the step of that house hour after hour. I used to beg for her to come in and play with me but she wasn't allowed to for a long time.

Anyway, eventually my mother persuaded Mrs Seggar to let her come in and we used to always be together after that.



**Mary Holden:** We had a very happy home we did. Lovely. My mother was a very home-liking woman, very nice. there was only two of us, me and my brother Harold. We were very happy. Today, I think there's so much got ready for children where we made our own play. If we wanted to play with our dolls we did it on our own and we'd do a little bit of knitting for the doll to wear.



**Claude Munson:** We used to have lovely Christmases, happy Christmases. We never had much – a sock with something in it – but we enjoyed ourselves. Not only my mother but all the Kersey women, they were all good cooks – even my wife was a decent cook, but she couldn't come up to mother. At that time of day you see, my mother's time, they all used to go into Service, and they'd learn how to cook. They had to.



**Ruth Glead:** At Christmas my mother made every child in the school a currant bun, iced and covered with hundreds and thousands. She was also very clever at sewing and made

lovely dolls' beds from shoe boxes, all frilly lace around. The tiny pillows and sheets were made from rags – washed of course. She also made rag hearth rugs out of any old clothes bought from the jumble sales which were held quite often.



**Verena Manning:** We used to have a branch of a holly tree at home, shaped like an upside down “V”. But we never ever saw that 'til Christmas morning you know, that tree. That would be there on Christmas morning and there'd be pink and white sugar mice – sometimes chocolate ones, and little chocolate watches. And that was about all it had on it with a little bit of tinsel. And then the stockings – we used to have an orange and sometimes a little comb, with two hankies. And you know that was all – but that was absolutely wonderful!



**Jim Glead:** The winter of 1947 was bad and my old Uncle Jim used to live opposite us. One day when I came in from work Mother told me that Uncle Jim had been brought home after lying most of the day in the snow. He'd been found on the footpath to Kersey Tye, six inches from the bank with a fifteen foot drop into the river. He'd been collecting wood for his fire and slipped. So after I'd had my tea, I went and had a word with him. He was sat near the fire

and his old face was shining just like a tomato. I said, “You don’t look too bad now.” “Not too bad,” he said. “Have you had any food?” “Well, Mrs Spraggons next door made me an apple pudding, but I couldn’t quite work it.” They’re made in a bag aren’t they, and they lap a dinner plate, so he hadn’t done so badly!

His boss, Mr Partridge, heard about it next day, and he went down to see him. “Don’t you trouble about any more wood James,” he said, “I’ll send you a load tomorrow.” And he sent him a load already cut up.

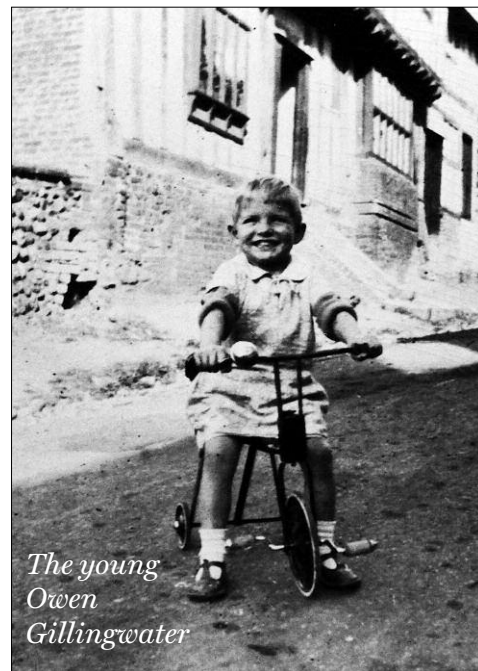
We always had good neighbours but they weren’t in and out of each other’s houses like rats, they always used to ask if they could come in. Mrs Seggar lived next door to mother and they’d been neighbours for thirty-odd years but if she wanted anything she’d come to the door and say, “Shall I come in Mrs Glead?” “Yes Mrs Seggar.” She moved up to the Vale Lane bungalows at the same time as mother so they still lived side by side.

**Owen Gillingwater:** At one time I could have told you the name of every person who lived in every house and they were mostly farm workers. I didn’t feel the odd one out though, because my dad was a clerk, although there wasn’t anybody else round here like him. After my mother died he and I moved into “River View” (now “Market House”) with my grandparents but no sooner had we done so, than my

grandad died and then my grandmother died in 1939. So there was just me and my dad and his brother, my Uncle Jack.

Then my dad married Miss Cissie Stiff, who he’d been courting. She was Jack Stiff senior’s sister, and also organist at the church from 1915 to 1956. You can’t think of Kersey without the Stiff Family, and I don’t say that because I’m related to them through my father’s second marriage. But, rather than go and live with Cissie Stiff and her mother at the shop, I decided – quite rightly I think – to live with my godparents.

They were the Lesters who lived in the end cottage of the



five just past The Bell. I was ten then and they'd known me all my life and always had a liking for me and felt sorry for me, as most people did, I suppose.

They had never had any children of their own so I knew I'd be welcome there, where I don't think I would have been at the other place. And I was just opposite my dad and he was able to see me and walk me to school and that sort of thing.

I lived with my godparents until 1947 when I got called up. I did my two years but got pleural effusion in Egypt so then I was sent to a sanatorium in Norfolk for a couple of months and then back to Kersey. Mrs Lester had died while I was abroad which just left my godfather living in the house on his own. And this is where Ivy Tricker comes in because she used to look after Mr and Mrs Lester, and many other people. Ivy was always one of those people who went in and helped out people. I've always been grateful to her and I still correspond and keep in touch.



**Ivy Tricker:** I never had a chance to go and earn anything, I was looking after different people. Live the vet's mother down the street in the hosue where the horse's tail is still hanging. She was a dear old lady and she was blind and I used to go down and get her up and wash and dress her and all things like that. She was ever so pleased to hear me go in the door, and I used to be singing or sometimes like that.



**Cherry Chalmers:** I can remember when I was a really little girl – Ivy Trickers got this sister, Olive. She's still alive in Hadleigh. She was ten years older than me and she used to have to look after me. I used to go over to Ivy Tricker's – which was her mum and dad's then – and they used to boil loads of little potatoes in the copper for the chickens. Olly and I used to sit on the doorstep and they used to give us a handful in our laps, you know, and we used to sit peeling them and eating them and they were delicious. But you see, I've never forgotten that after all this time. We were ever so happy then, you know.



**Eileen Gleed:** Lots of different people lived in "Pax" when it was two – Mrs Cookson, and the Moinboys! Do you remember them Gladys? They were a mother and daughter – gipsy sort of people. And there was an old lady lived on her own who I used to chop sticks for and do her washing, but I can't remember her name.



**Sue Griffiths:** My father moved here in about 1971, a couple of years after us, and he lived in the cottages just up from The Bell. It was super up there at that time because there was

Ronnie and Mabel Martin, the my father, then Claudie Munson, then Gladys and Ken Warren, then Ruth and Clifford Glead, and then another nice couple who died. And they all lived there for many years, whereas now they've been on six months' lets and people have come in and gone and you don't know who they are.

Ronnie and Mabel's first child, Karen, is the same age as Polly, and Mabel used to look after Polly when she was little and I was a part time teacher. It was very nice that she could just go up there and, of course, her grandfather was next door.

Now everything's changed, what with Reg Fletcher and Ralph dying and Miss Elwood, and now Mary Holden. And Ethel Beeton and Ivy Tricker's houses being sold. A whole load a people have died or moved on.



**Ted Martin:** Years ago, people were more friendly, more contented and more helpful than they are today. I mean, the allotments, if anybody was ill in hospital, all the others would do a bit of diggin' for him, plant something, hoe some – volunteer to do it. They won't do that today. Years ago, if they could just get a living and just scrape along they were contented but nobody's contented today are they?



**Ivy Tricker:** Nobody was rich about here but we didn't think

we were poor, not like the people on the parish my father used to tell me about. They used to be given one shilling and sixence a week to live on, and some nearly black flour. One poor little old lady used to sit on the steps of the butcher's crying and saying she was hungry and could she have a little more, but the man from the parish told her there was a place for her at Sudbury – that was the Union as they called it, like a workhouse. They'd keep them there two or three nights and they had to work and keep the grounds tidy.

One of my mother's brothers was the taskmaster at the big Union down Semer way. Some really poor women used to have their babies there, and there's still graves on that ground where people who died there were buried.

Every morning, my father told me, you'd see a tramp from Semer Union waiting to see who'd be the first in Kersey to have smoke coming out of their chimney. They'd send them out of the Union with a spoonful of tea and they'd each have a tin can and then they'd be round asking for boiling water to make their tea. My father used to boil his kettle on top of sticks when he had an open fire and one morning this old tramp came round and knocked on the back door and made father jump and the kettle fell off the sticks and put the fire out!

Father didn't used to swear but he got a bit angry and told the poor old chap he hadn't any hot water, and why, and he had to go off looking to see who else had lit their fire. Father

was sorry after he'd gone.

My grandma lived 'til she was ninety but she didn't die in the house where her shop was. (Corner House) My father's sister had that nice bungalow built in "The Old Gardens" which is being left to fall down now, and another sister came to live with her and then my grannie went to live with them and the house with the shop was sold. (The bungalow Ivy refers to has now been taken down and a large modern house built on the site of "The Old Gardens".)



**Frances Whymark:** I was born in "Old Drift House" in the very end bedroom nearest the village hall. It was a Sunday afternoon and mother had done all her baking and been to church. Leslie was the first one of my brothers and sister to come to see me because he climbed in the bathroom window! He was the naughtiest one in the family. And while mother was upstairs having me, my sister brought home a kitten and a puppy, so when mother came down she had to cope with me and them!

Ronald was the oldest, then Leslie, then Daphne, and then – eleven years later – me! We actually lived in about three quarters of the house and my auntie "Birdie" Vince lived in the other end. I think somebody once said she had about fourteen cats! And one of those Pomeranian dogs.



**Rachel Wells:** I've got two sisters. Margaret is the oldest, then Jenny and then me. and now we've got one girl and one boy each! I can always remember Margaret not being at our house very much because we only had two bedrooms at home. Margaret used to stay round next door at granny's. When she left school, she got a job in Ipswich and used to stay there during the week with our Aunt Ruby (Ling) and at weekends came home.

I can't remember my father's father but I can remember his mother. She lived on Hadleigh Heath. Dad was actually born in Polstead so he didn't move far! They had a big garden at Hadleigh Heath, and my dad's sister Jessie lived at



*Louise's "Nana" Mary Mowles as a young woman*

home with her mother and she used to help with the garden. Then after grandmother died Aunt Jessie stayed there until about eight years ago and then she moved to a sheltered bungalow in Hadleigh.

I think my

grandparents and parents looked after each other really, and then my parents and we did the same. We all worked



together. The garden was all one and we just shared everything. I never felt that I was sort of responsible for my parents, though we had to look after mother more when she became frail, of course.

After mother died someone was saying how our family had been in Kersey all these years and Louise thought she would try and do a family tree. I said to her, “Why ever didn’t you do it when nanna was alive and she could have told you all sorts of things?” But, there you are, she’s doing it now.



**Ruth Glead:** I’m lucky because I have a good memory and can look back to all the happy times when Kersey was Kersey and you could play in the street without fear of traffic. I haven’t travelled far but I had a very happy childhood and an interesting life, and could write a book about the past!



**It seems right to finish this chapter with a photo of one of my first interviewees who, to my great regret, died on the 10th January 2000 just a few months before this book was published. The delightful little girl is Ada Wyatt (nee Holden) born in 1911 and here aged about six, with her brother Charlie and her “Auntie Mag” (Mrs Emmerson) in the garden of “Leys House” where Mrs Emmerson lived.**