

# “...We Were Very Happy”

## CHAPTER 6. SCHOOLDAYS AND FIRST JOBS

**T**HE REMINISCENCES IN THIS CHAPTER ARE NOT ONLY OF SCHOOL ITSELF but also of events in general which occurred during childhood. ¶ Almost everyone I spoke to looked back on their earliest years as happy ones. ¶ Toys were few and simple, but – as Mary Holden put it – “children made their own play”. ¶ With little traffic on the roads they ran free and safe. ¶ Legs and bicycles were put to good use.

*Late 19th Century  
Kersey. Note villagers in  
the gardens of the, then,  
only three Victorian  
cottages on Church Hill*



**L**et us hope that today's children with their wider opportunities in education and travel, their computers, videos and sophisticated playthings will have equally fond memories of childhood.

The National School at Kersey was built in 1873. It stands next to St Mary's Church and is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled establishment. Originally, the south side of the building was a School House, home



*Kersey School House and teachers, date unknown. The woman in white, holding buckets is Verena Manning's grandmother – Eliza Ann Theobald – who worked at the School House*

to one or two of the teachers, and in later years it was rented out to small families.

Now, however, the whole building is used by the school, with a newly installed library, and facilities for the serving of school lunches. Up until 1998 lunches were cooked and served to the children in the village hall. Then, it was a daily delight to see supervised lines of children in their red jumpers passing “Pax” on their way to and from lunch. Groups still use the hall for P.E. classes and as they go by an unmistakable air of happiness surrounds them.

The History Gazetteer and Directory of Suffolk, 5th Edition 1891-1892, records that the school was attended by 95 children, many of whom travelled some distance from villages who had no school of their own. Since then numbers have waned but at present there are 45 on the register. Some, by choice, travel in from Hadleigh and nearby villages but 12 live in Kersey. This shows that there is a healthy younger generation in the village.

Almost all the indigenous villagers I interviewed went to the village school. At one time children began at about five and most stayed until they were fourteen when they began to work. In 1939 Kersey school became a Primary and children left at eleven to go on to the Secondary at



*Above: Kersey School pupils in 1998 with gifts for pensioners after the Harvest Festival, supervised by Rachel Wells, left, and Natalie Blyth. Left: An after school picture of Verena Manning's mother, Una Mary Theobald, aged 16*



**Hadleigh or, in a few cases, passed the scholarship to Ipswich or Sudbury Grammar**

Schools. A minority received a private education.

Stories of first jobs are enlightening. It is difficult for modern parents to conceive of children in their early teens going straight from school into full time and often arduous work, sometimes away from home, yet in many cases it seems, young people welcomed the end of the childhood which they recall with such fondness.

The old village custom of using nicknames is mentioned in this chapter and a list of Kersey people and their nicknames is given as an appendix to the book.



**Ada Wyatt:** My mother used to come to Kersey school from Groton (four miles) and my father from Kersey Tye (one and a third miles) and they used to walk it every morning, and nice too. Now it's all buses and cars. That's why there's so much of this coronary thrombosis – they don't have a nice walk. A good walk on a crisp morning is lovely. There used to be a hundred children in the school when my mother went there. When I went to the school each child had a little strip of ground to garden and that was ever so nice. It taught you how to look after a garden.





*An early picture of Kersey School children with their teacher, Miss Vince. Date unknown*

roof in a little wooden house, and the rope came through in the hall where you came in where we used to have to wash our hands. The girls' cloakroom was the other end. The girls had a horrible wash basin. Ours used to be a round bowl in an old iron frame and the towel used to come round on a pulley. That used to be a old roller towel. It was only changed once a week. That used to get black. It used to make your hands dirtier!



**Harold Seggar:** I remember the old school bell. You know the room with the window? Well, there was a big gap, about ten foot, in between that and the bell tower and there used to be a big scraper, I should think six or eight foot long, where you used to go and clean your boots on. You had to clean your boots before you came into the school. The bell was on the

**Ivy Tricker:** Just imagine – my mother had ten children! We all went to the village school of course. We had two very good teachers. Us girls were taught how to knit and sew but they didn't teach us how to cook. Well, there was no electricity in Kersey until the 1950s so they couldn't could they? We had the vicar every Tuesday to give us a lesson from the bible. When he came in the boys

saluted and the girls curtsied. I was in the netball team – there were girls and boys in the team. We used to walk everywhere because we had nothing to ride on.



**Maisie Martin:** I was born at Lindsey and my father was a horse-man there for years at Lindsey Hall with Artheys, and then for Jo Morley at College Farm, Lindsey. I was at Lindsey when I started school but then they closed it down and we used to have a bus bring us from Lindsey to Kersey. We used to take sandwiches and they'd give us some cocoa. Then it got we'd have a little bottle of milk. They'd put it round the fire to keep warm but I don't like warm milk, I either like it

hot or really cold! I didn't mind school really and we left at fourteen then.

**“NOBODY HAD THE CANE MORE THAN ME. I JUST WANTED TO STAY WITH MY FATHER. I USED TO CRY AS A KID WALKING TO SCHOOL.”**

*Claude Munson*



**Ted Martin:** I didn't really like school. I like to get out, you know. I'm the same to the present day – if I was shut in this house all day I'd go mad. And that was the same at school, if I'd gotta sit there for a couple of hours reading or writing – oh dear! We used to get up to some

games! She (**Maisie**) was the teacher's favourite – she used to tell the old schoolteacher about us others and we used to get the cane for it. When we went there there was three classes – Miss Greenhedges, infants, Fairchild had the middle class and then the head teacher had the head class. You could say there was an average of thirty and forty in a class, so you'd got a hundred children. They came from Kersey, Kersey Tye, Lindsey and Semer.



**Claude Munson:** I hated school, I was the biggest dunce in Kersey school. I used to hate it all – especially dictation – I was a copy cat! Nobody had the cane more than me. I just wanted to stay with my father. I used to cry as a kid walking to school. There was a girl lived opposite me, Mildred Richardson, and she was a lot older. Eleven or twelve of us used to come down that road from the Tye and she was the tallest, a big girl, and she used to pull me along! The Richardsons left their house and then came back but, in between, a one legged man lived there, Bill Farr. But he rode a bicycle and looked after the chickens up at Kersey Priory. And I was very keen on his daughter, May. I was very sweet on her.



**Ruth Gleed:** At school we used slates and lead pencils to



*To mention just a few...from left to right: back row – Mr Nicholson (Headmaster) with Miss Ringer and Miss Fairchild end right; second row – Maisie Martin nee Partridge second left, Ruth Gleed nee Towns third left, with Mary Holden nee Seggar fourth right; middle row – Cherry Chalmers nee Towns third left with Verena Manning nee Fletcher second right; fourth row – Ted Martin third right, with Ray Goymour end right; front row – Claude Munson third left, with Harold Seggar end right*

learn the three R's, and wooden knitting pins to learn how to knit. The boys had to raise their caps to all the so-called gentry like doctors or farmers. We weren't allowed to call our elders by their christian names – always Mr or Mrs and their surnames.



**Mary Holden:** I was born in Kersey and went to school up there from four and a half until I was fourteen. We didn't go on to Hadleigh in those days. The school was very good and there was about ninety of us there. We girls used to have country dancing on the top of the hill there. My best friend was Ruth Towns, she's Gleed now. We lived next door to each other and we were friends from about the age of seven and we are still friends.

They taught us to knit in school. There was nowhere to teach us cooking. There was just three classrooms and the boys' cloakroom and the girls' cloakroom. The School House was for the headmaster or the headmistress, whoever was there. We used to take Miss Vince's dog for a walk around The Green for sixpence!



**Cherry Chalmers:** Years ago, we were very happy. I knew everybody, as everybody else did and you'd walk up the street and they'd probably be shaking a mat out the door or something. Like, we used to toboggan from the top of the hill when it was snowy – all of us – kids and grown ups. We used to have toboggans made for six or seven people and that was lovely.



**Ted Martin:** We didn't have no television in the old days of course. That's the biggest curse in my opinion, biggest curse ever come in. I like to watch what I'm interested in, but that's made everybody lazy. And the children today, they're addicted to it, they can't help it, they must have it on. We used to have whips and tops didn't we? And the shoemaker who used to be opposite "Pax", he'd put a new stud on the top-bottom when it wore out.

And when I was a kid we used to make what we called

trolleys. We used to get four old pram wheels, put some bits of wood on 'em and go down these hills right through the river, and then back up and down again. We used to play hours like that. You can't today because of the traffic but there weren't no traffic. I can remember the first car coming into Kersey – Alf Lemon's, the vets. And the next one was old Jack Stiff's and then the next one was his brother, Anson Stiff's. That'd be before the war – '36 or '37.



**Victor Biebuyck:** The winter we were here, I can remember there being really thick snow and we used to toboggan from the top of the hill by the church and go right the way down onto the road and see how far we could get up the other side! Of course there was no traffic about like there is today!

Mr Simpson used to have this old car and there was something wrong with the exhaust and we used to call it the doodlebug because that's what it sounded like when you'd hear it come up the hill to the farm! I used to love to go in it with him because to go in a car was something then. And sometimes I'd go in his old pony and trap because he had a milk round and Cliff Gleed was his local milkman anyway. People used to leave their jugs outside and we'd put a pint in one and a couple of pints in another.



**Verena Manning:** My older brother Cecil used to take me up to the Priory when I was little and he'd have an enamel milk can with a lid on the top to get a pennyworth of skimmed milk from Jacksons. We'd collect it from there if mum wanted extra but of course the milk used to come round to the cottages with a horse and cart, and they used to have the pint measure and the half pint measure and measure it into our jugs for us. I don't think people have the natural build up against germs today, have they! Later on, when I was working, Mrs Vince had her milk from Mr Simpson and mother had hers from Mr Bobby Partridge, and Edgar Pitt was his milkman.

I went to Kersey school, I wasn't quite five when I started. Miss Ringer, who taught me, taught my Brian when he went to school. She used to cycle up from Hadleigh every day and she was really a very good teacher. I mean, we learnt our tables and you never forgot them! When "Countdown" comes on the television – if you know your tables you can get it, can't you?

In this photo (*above right*), that's my dad with Ruby Glead



and her sister, Popsy with the sunhat on and that's Reg at the end of the top row on the right. Reg was ever so much like our dad. That's me at the other end sitting by Jack Stiff.



**Jack Stiff:** Here, Verena's one side of me and Owen Gillingwater's the other. My brother Bill is in front of Verena

and my sister Nora is sitting on the step right in the front. She wasn't going to school then – she walked up for the photograph – so it would have been about 1936 or '37. I'm pretty certain that's Gladys Warren sitting on the end of the seat with a hat on and the girl sitting cross-legged is Don Jarvis' daughter. You see, the seat was put there for the Jubilee and Mr Caffyn took the photo and you could buy a print, so much each.



**Victor Biebuyck:** All we evacuees went up to Kersey school and I remember that was where I learned my times tables. We used to have little cards and you used to progress from times twos to times threes and so on. There were two classes and I think I was in the older class of the two. The teacher used to live in the School House next door to the school.



**Verena Manning:** The September before I was fourteen, when the war broke out, it was brought in that all eleven year olds and over had to go to Hadleigh school from here. So I went just for one term. I enjoyed it at Hadleigh school and did quite well but I wasn't sorry to leave. It was all so vast after Kersey, though there were a lot more children in Kersey school than there are today.



**Owen Gillingwater:** Miss Springet was at Kersey school for a long time and then she retired to Hadleigh. Well, the teacher who came after her and a friend of hers was interested in country dancing and they tried to teach us. A lot of the school were doing it and they had a festival of country dancing at Woodbridge. I think we did quite well at country dancing!

From about 1939 onwards, we children in Kersey used to cycle to Hadleigh on a Saturday morning to go to the cinema where we used to see war films, cowboys, George Formby. Tony, Jack, Willie and I and some of the girls used to go. And we used to take Reg Farthing to football matches because he didn't have a bicycle and he used to ride on our handlebars with his feet up. So you can imagine riding from Kersey to Boxford like that and then being expected to play football – his hands used to be frozen from holding on!



**Ruth Gleed:** I did very well at school and passed the Eleven Plus but sadly, as my parents could not afford the books, I could not further my education. There were no grants in those days. My mother was an educated lady – she'd won a scholarship for £100 when she was a girl – though she never had the chance to do anything with it – women didn't in those days, did they?



**Naomi Partridge:** I was born at Whatfield and came to live in Kersey when I married. I hadn't really been to Kersey before that, only just cycled through. We always knew Kersey was a pretty village but when you're children you take it for granted, don't you?

We used to cycle everywhere in those days. When I passed the scholarship to the High School for Girls in Sudbury I used to cycle from Whatfield to Hadleigh which was three miles and then catch a bus to Sudbury which was twelve, and back again. It used to be nearly half past five by the time I got home at night which wasn't much fun for an eleven year old! We had carbide and water lamps for our bikes then which we had to light with a match.

**“WE HAD  
CARBIDE AND  
WATER LAMPS  
FOR OUR BIKES  
THEN WHICH  
WE HAD TO  
LIGHT WITH  
A MATCH”**

*Naomi Partridge*

At that time we used to have an hour and a half for lunch, from 12.30 to 2.00. But then, when the war came and we were going home in the dark, they changed it to an hour so then we used to get home before five o'clock.



**Cherry Chalmers:** I've really been

here in Kersey all my life, except during the war. Dad paid for me to go to Sudbury High School. What did I used to do when I was young? Well, we used to cycle everywhere but you wouldn't now, would you? There was a cinema at Hadleigh, just a fleapit, so you didn't go any more because you itched when you come home and that was horrible! I used to play tennis and things like that but not much else, but I was happy.

I met Dave in the war, so what did I do? I left school at sixteen and went straight off and that didn't go down very well. He was a Staff Sergeant down at the REME in Hadleigh and, much to the disgrace of my mum and dad, I went off to Warley, the barracks where he was stationed. He was a marvellous ballroom dancer and, course, we used to go to dances every night, that was the attraction. When I was eighteen I was pregnant.



**Owen Gillingwater:** I never did well at school, though I've got a lot of time for Kersey school. I was just one of those who tried hard as I notice from my school reports which I've kept. I started to keep a diary and also an autograph book because my spelling was not very good. And the reason it wasn't very good, I would say, is that I used to stutter something terrible, to such an extent that I was "excused reading aloud" because I could no more do that than fly.

And I had difficulty in having a conversation – it was insecurity I suppose. However, over the years that’s gone, almost. I wasn’t clever enough to pass the scholarship to grammar school – I tried twice – but I couldn’t do enough reading to get through my exams. So my dad, bless him, paid for me to go until 1944 when the Education Act came in and we went free. But he still had to pay for the bus fare.



**Ray Goymour:** Kersy was a good church school, still is, a lot of people bring their children here from Hadleigh if they can. We were taught by two very young women – mid twenties – even the head mistress who lived next door to the school was one of the teachers. But now they’ve got a secretary and everything, haven’t they? I left there when I was eleven and went to Sudbury Grammar School on a scholarship. I was the second one to go – Stanley Mann was the first – his mother was the postmistress. We used to cycle to Hadleigh and then catch the bus. Later on, we and a girl (Ruby Ling, as she is now) used to cycle up to the corner before The Brewers’ Arms because it cut about two miles off the bus journey.



**Jack Stiff:** About seven of us from Kersey school went on to Sudbury – we’d cycle to Hadleigh Heath and then catch a

bus. The Grammar school was all boys but there was the Girls’ High School. Sheila Gage who used to live in “Row House” went, and Cherry went. You could either pay or take the entrance exam. The schoolteacher up here put me in for it when I was ten in the October and they discovered the week before the exam that I was too young. So I went in for it the next year in the March.



**Jill Stiff:** You wanted to go on and do accountancy, didn’t you? But father said no, you come into the business. And at that time of day you did what father said!



**Jack:** But I had to stop at school ‘til I was sixteen. Your parents had to sign a contract that you would, and you had to unless there was a very very good reason not to. I had to go for the last six weeks and do nothing, virtually. I was the headmaster’s boy running around getting the numbers for dinner, and going to the bank and down the town hall. The day I was sixteen I left and was on official leave for six weeks and then went back at the end of term for Christmas just to sign off.



**Paul Ryde:** I went to Ipswich Boys’ School but they didn’t do

biology which I needed to be a vet, so I and a boy who wanted to be a doctor went to the Girls' School for biology lessons. Being with a lot of girls is anathema when you're eleven or twelve but when you're sixteen or seventeen it's absolutely Utopia!



**Norah Orriss:** After Kersey school Reg and I and Grace all went then to Hadleigh in Station Road, the bottom school where our grandchildren go now, because the High School wasn't built until 1966.



**Frances Whymark:** After my parents evacuated to Kersey, Ronald went to grammar school. Leslie went to Kersey school but my sister and I didn't. Daphne went to a private school in Sudbury, "Salters Hall" as it was called later before it closed, and then she went on to Colchester school and had to bike into Nayland every day to catch the bus and home again, all by herself. And I was sent to a little private school in Hadleigh. I was very annoyed about it, most put out! I longed to go to the village school. I failed my eleven plus so was sent to Hadleigh Secondary Modern from there. I was pleased to be back with my chums.



**Ada Wyatt:** I left school at fourteen and went to work at the horse doctor's house, Mr and Mrs Lemon's. I started at ten shillings a month and then I got twelve because I was a "good girl". I never bought a pair of shoes. I used to wear those ward shoes like nurses wore. I used to stand in that bay window and weep because I was thirteen houses away from home and my mother. On my half day I used to go home and see her.

They never paid me more than sixteen shillings a month so, after three years, I went to work as cook at "Ayres End" which used to be called The Barn and then Tudor House. Two sisters lived there then, Mrs Samson and Miss Cook. They came from High Head Castle, Carlisle. Mrs Samson was crippled up with rheumatism and Miss Cook was just a thin lady. I used to make her a sandwich of raw minced beef in Bath Oliver biscuits and she used to love it.

I used to do a lot of made up dishes – it wasn't plain cooking. I always said I'd never go into service where they had late dinner but it was late there. They used to have theirs at seven o'clock. But that was good because, after I'd done all the cooking, I used to have a parlour maid wash up and then I'd have the later part of the evening to myself. I was there twenty years! I only had those two situations.



**Ruth Glead:** After I left school I went to work at "River

House” for Mrs Simpson as a nursemaid to Tony. Oh, he was a lovely child – a beautiful child he was to look after. Mary worked there as well – she looked after Tony sometimes but she did a lot of housework as well, which I didn’t do. I used to make Tony little toys out of paper and everything – poor Tony, he’d laugh if he could hear me now! He used to have a bath in a tin bath filled up with cans of hot water and he might sit there two hours while I played with him. He used to love it. It was a lovely place to work really.



**Mary Holden:** Even before I quite left school I used to look after Tony Simpson when he was a baby and, after school, I went as Nursemaid to him in “River House”. (*Mary Holden and Tony are on the front cover*). When I went to his funeral the other day it sort of cut me that he was so much younger than me but he’s dead and I’m still here.

I’ve never seen Kersey church as full as it was for that funeral – people standing in both porches and in the belfry. He had a lot of friends and farming friends and he wouldn’t be nasty to anybody.

After the Simpsons, my next job was when I went out to service in Hadleigh. I used to enjoy laying the table all out properly but when I had to carry a great big chicken from the kitchen to the dining room on a plate, Cook said, “Mind you don’t drop it” and of course I did! Another time I was

gnawing away at a chicken bone in the kitchen and Cook said, “Why don’t you get down on the floor with that, you’re like a little dog!” so I did get down and was sat cross-legged on the rug gnawing away, when the young master came in. He asked me what I was doing and I said, “Cook said I should get on the floor with this bone, so I did.” And he said, “Well, get up!”



**Jim Glead:** I always used to say I went to a High School – well, Kersey school is on top of a hill isn’t it! When I was fourteen I left school at four o’clock and started work with my Uncle Goymour at five. I remember the day the school was hit by a shell because I’d just come back from a butcher’s round in Hadleigh.



**Grace Farthing:** When I left school I went to Hadleigh where I was a nanny to three children and I hadn’t been there about a year I suppose when the husband who was a naval officer was moved from Shotley up to Northumberland and my mum wouldn’t let me go.



**Reg Farthing:** Well, that was a long way away! I had three jobs the first year I left school. First I went to Partridges at

Hadleigh delivering oil, then I went after a milk round down Hadleigh and then I went to work for Artheys at the Priory. I'd left school in March and I was back up at the Priory in October! They had cows up there then but the year I went in the Army they got rid of them. I was called up for National Service when I was 18. I went to Malaya first, then to Trieste and then to Germany and then I came back home and worked for Artheys again and kept there 'til I retired – fifty years.



**Grace:** They gave him a nice clock when he retired and put on it, “For a lifetime of service to Kersey Priory.”



**Owen Gillingwater:** I was fortunate to be able to stay on for two years in the sixth form because my dad was in a position to support me, where many others had to leave to help with the family finances. I got Higher School Certificate and then, because I didn't have a farm or a shop or anything which would provide me with employment, I knew that I didn't have any option but to be called up and do my two years National Service. But looking back, I think that those who were exempt lost out. It was the making of me; I saw some of the world and suppose I went to the “university of life.”



**Verena Manning:** After I left school I went to work on The Green in “The Old Drift House”. I used to work for Frances' aunt, Mrs Vince – well they called her Birdie. She kept her cats indoors, and strays the other side in what was the old kitchen which had a horrible old floor. But, in the end, the strays were taken to the vet. I didn't sleep at Mrs Vince's, I went daily, and I was there until I was nearly sixteen. There was a Miss Develan who was a paying guest at Mrs Vince's and she left her to go and live with Mrs Samson at “Ayres End”, and then I went from Mrs Vince to Mrs Samson. Miss Develan had a stroke in my arms on my sixteenth birthday and she died a few days later. I lived-in at “Ayres End” and I was house parlourmaid.



**Maisie Martin:** Well, actually, before I left school I used to go round the School House where that was Miss David and Miss Kilpatrick there and I used to go and make them a cup of tea. Then when I left school I went down to Felixstowe to work, sort of domestic work. Well, that was a case of having to do it really. I think years ago there was more class distinction don't you think? Such as the poorer class had to go and work for the others, so that's what I did. I stayed with

a friend down there for about a year and a half. Then I went to Hadleigh to the Red Lion Hotel, then I left there and went in the forces, in the WAAFS.



**Claude Munson:** I left school at fourteen and my first job was at “Hollies Cottage” at Wickerstreet Green. I was backhouse boy there – bringing in the logs, grooming the horses – anything Mrs Letts asked me to do. George Frederick Letts had lovely nurseries all along from Kersey Mill to Semer Parish Hall – all on the right hand side going towards Bildeston. Women, men and boys used to go there from Hadleigh to work.

The Letts paid me eight shillings a week and I gave mother six shilling and kept two myself. I bought a Hercules bike out of that – sixpence a week. It was three pounds, nineteen shillings and sixpence – no speeds. It would have cost me a pound more for speeds. I got paid on Saturday afternoon and then it was home for lunch and off to the cinema in Hadleigh. First we’d go to Maggie Goss’ sweetshop next to Keith Avis – it’s still there that sweetshop. We’d get a farthing’s worth of sweets and five Woodbines for twopence. (I used to roll Old Man’s Beard up and smoke that while I was at school!) Then it’d be the threepenny matinee and afterwards to Gregory’s shop for fish and chips for threepence.



**Jack Stiff:** When I first left school we used to cycle from here to Nedging Tye to catch a bus to Ipswich because we had friends who lived up there. We’d leave the bike at the friends’ house and then four or five of us catch a bus to Ipswich, have a look round the shops, go in the cinema, go and have a fish supper. Catch the bus back and then cycle back to Kersey, and think nothing of it!



**Rachel Wells:** I did dressmaking at school and then I was apprenticed at Grimwades in Ipswich in the tailoring department. My mother’s grandmother did tailoring, and she used to make trousers and things for Stiffs’ store. My mother used to sew and knit and make things, but I won’t say she was as good as me!



**Gladys Rice:** Our children went to Kersey school didn’t they Eileen, and they all got on alright there. There was Miss Springet and Miss Ringer – she was a lovely person wasn’t she? Miss Springet and her sister lived in the School House. Miss Springet used to have arthritis badly and I expect that made her a bit irritable sometimes.



*School children having been given a job of work to do! Left to right: Gary Williams, Pamela Rice, Colin Martin, George Wyatt, Paul Rice)*

pram and the bike because Tim weren't very old and needed the pram to sit in for his sleep. So I'd leave the pram overnight and cycle home with him in the child's seat on the back, and the same to work next day.

**Eileen Gleed:** School didn't worry Kenny. I took him up there and he just went off! But when Tim started school I done wrong. I sent him to school and I went to work, apple picking, and he ran down his granny's dinner time, crying that he didn't want to stay at school, because I weren't at home you see. I should have stayed home his first week and then he'd have got used to it. Before that I used to take him to work with me.

The first morning I used to walk with the

They always called Kenny Sup! I don't know why they called him that, unless when he was at school dinners he always wanted soup for dinner. Ever so many people had nicknames. Teddy Martin they called Coogan. Their nicknames used to stick on them!

**Gladys:** I wonder how they got their nicknames? But I used to say to Paddy Wyatt, "Why are you named Paddy?" and he'd say, "Well, I used to have a paddy!" And there was Chubby Jarvis of course, because he was always chubby. I don't think the girls used to get nicknames so much, it was usually the boys.

**Jack Stiff:** You knew everybody in the village, you knew the surnames, you knew the christian names. And if they'd got a nickname, if you were going to work – even if you'd only just started work – you could call him by his nickname, but if you called him by his nickname when you were a schoolboy you'd get a clip round the ear! But it didn't matter if you'd only started work for a week you were a man then, you were one of the boys!

**Ray Goymour:** My nickname was Porky and you can see

where that came from, my father being a pork butcher. Though I was in insurance for thirty four years. I started in Ipswich at a pound a week – cycled to Hadleigh, sixpence to park your bike, shilling return on the bus – six days a week because we had to work Saturday mornings. It didn't pay me, but I'd got a job. I expect when I went into the war I was getting under two pounds a week. And they call them the Good Old Days!



**Viney Bigg:** I lived in Hitcham as a child but I suppose we were all in the same boat – there wasn't much money around. But I don't remember any enemies and I had tremendous love for my parents. It was a dreadful time for the farmers as well as the men working for them. The people who did have a bit of money bought small farms and joined them up together. That's when the hedges and ditches went. Combine harvesters came in and of course they couldn't work in small fields. I can understand the reason for it but I don't like it.



**Naomi Partridge:** Times were sometimes hard but you see, they were all the same, it was the same for everybody on the whole. Even for the farmers it wasn't easy, they still had to work hard. I expect the farmers were better off and did

different things probably – sent the children away to school at a certain age rather than keep them at the village school – but it wasn't easy. You had to give up quite a bit if you wanted to send the children away to school.

Ours went away to boarding school at Bury. They all went, bar the last one, Kate. When my eldest daughter went the girls were separate, theirs was the East Anglian School at Bury which now is joined as co-ed with Culford, the other side of Bury. They'd come home at half terms and none of them minded going. You see, schools weren't so good in the country then – they're much better now.

Kersey school is very good. They all went to Kersey school – Peter went until he took his entrance exam and I think Chris did as well, and Kate. Barbara and Mary went until they were eight or nine and then they went to private school in Hadleigh, and Robert and Timothy went 'til they were about ten. Robert used to be friendly with Kenny Gleed and Kenny doted on Timothy who was about two years younger. He thought he was a lovely little boy. And when Eileen was expecting another baby he said would mummy please call the new baby Timothy, and she did!

We used to have lads before they went to agricultural college – they were supposed to have a year on a farm and they used to live with us. My husband used to say, "Well, if we have so and so working here can they stay with us?" and I used to say, "No, they can't." But we could never find

anywhere else for them so I had to have them!

Then, holiday times, the children used to bring their friends home. They always felt sorry for children whose parents were abroad, and they'd bring them home for the weekend. We always had extras. It was nice that they liked bringing them home. They weren't always their friends but I think they just felt sorry for them.

Even those whose parents weren't abroad but some way away couldn't get home very often, whereas we were only twenty miles. They didn't always want to go to their guardians – guardians were grandparents or aunts! And I think perhaps ours liked to bring them and show them their home and the farms. Farms are always attractive to children.



**Sheila Zurbrugg:** Robert and I had lived four years in the French speaking part of Switzerland and, after we came here, there was a new scheme to teach French as they might learn it at their mother's knee. A job was advertised at Kersey



*Headmaster Ron Bourton teaching Esperanto*

school for two half days a week and Mary Harbinson said, “Sheila, you ought to do this – you’d get a bit of pin-money you know!”

I hadn't taught for years and thought my French was appalling but if you find a subject difficult yourself you can learn to teach it to children who don't know it at all. There was an accompanying TV programme which was excellent

but it meant learning everything orally. I had much help from my family, whose French was very good!

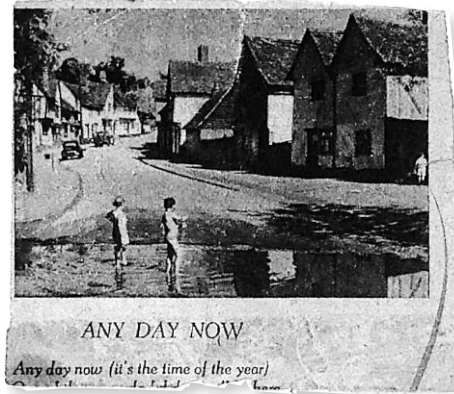
I thoroughly approved of the atmosphere in the school. The headmaster Ron Bourton was good with the children and they seemed very enthusiastic and happy. I wrote a play for them in French to act at Christmas based on the TV booklet. The parents were quite astonished – the children spoke French very well.

It was lovely to meet some in the village who would come and greet me in French – and afterwards they told me the course had helped them when they went on to Hadleigh school.

Having taught French for the first period I did creative writing with the children, as well as helping with the infants. It was great fun helping the children to write prose and poetry – quite spontaneously. I made a collection of their work – it was good. The Cockney children I'd taught only knew about London but the Kersey children wrote so feelingly about the country. As a newcomer to the village, it helped me enormously doing that short stint at the school. I got to know parents and children.



**Rev. Ian Wilson:** I love going into the school here because the children are very good – they're amusing and welcoming and willing to listen to this silly man, though they've



ANY DAY NOW

Any day now (it's the time of the year)

sometimes no idea what he's talking about! I think children have to know that being a Christian is not boring and fuddy duddy, but relevant to them. If they think it's fun then it's a positive experience. And similarly with the Family Services in church – they need to be jolly. It's a serious message and they receive it but the fun element is important.



**The poem, “Any Day Now” by Jean Anthony appeared in a womens’ magazine when Kenny Gleed was about ten years old. To his mother Eileen’s surprise he was in the accompanying picture with his cousin Cynthia Hines. They were fishing with jam jars in Kersey Splash. (Photo**

**14) The simple words seem to me to epitomise the transient magic of childhood.**

*“Any Day now (it’s the time of the year)  
One of those wonderful days will appear  
When the air is warm and the sun is bright  
And the heart is happy and things go right  
And looking back on it we shall say  
“Didn’t we have a wonderful day?”*

*And looking back on it, we shall learn  
Wonderful days aren’t meant to return  
Which is only another way to say  
“Make the most of a wonderful day.”  
And learning to make the most of a pleasure  
Is a way to unlock a hoard of treasure,  
So that any day, any hour, any minute  
Can have a smattering of magic in it.”*