

The Village of Henbury is located on the western side of Macclesfield, 3 miles from Macclesfield town centre and centred around St Thomas's church and the Blacksmiths Arms on the Chelford Road A537 from Macclesfield. It is a happy farming community.

St Thomas's (Henbury Church) stands on a hill overlooking the Chelford Road, it is a steepled church with approach entrances from Chelford Road and Church Lane. The Church and the churchyard have been lovingly maintained and updated over recent years. The ancient wooden lych gate sheltered entrance on Church Lane is a listed structure.

The Blacksmiths Arms stands at the crossroads of School Lane/Pepper Street on Chelford Road (The Turnpike as it was then known by Grandad). As a child of 6 in 1935 I recall we would stand under the sheltered entrance waiting for the bus home to Macclesfield. The licensee Mr Marshall who was also the Henbury Policeman lived there with his wife and son Arthur.

I recall the bus home arriving up the hill into Broken Cross with the light from its headlights shining onto the reflective Studs contained in the sign "Macclesfield Home of Hovis"

Whirley Rise on Anderton Lane with its elevated location holds a great view across the Cheshire Plain.

The whole of my early life was centred around Henbury. Grandad Scragg retired from the Manchester Police in 1905. He then returned to the area where he was born to live in Henbury at Parkfield Cottage in School Lane across the way from Henbury School. My Aunts Mary and Edna found work in Dunkleys Mill in Oxford Road, walking there and back each day and Aunt Cissie kept house.

My Dad Jack, along with his older brother Tom attended Henbury School along with Tom's pal Bill Lomas from Gawsorth Road Broken Cross. It was a small rural school across from Parkfield Cottage in School Lane. The cook Mrs Wardle lived in the house attached to the school along with her Caretaker husband George and son David.

Later in the mid 1940s the Head Teacher was Mrs Coleman. My friends and I went to dances at the school on Friday night along with my 3 girl cousins. The music was provided by the Jack Gill orchestra of Macclesfield. In its later years before it closed the school attained a high standard under its Head Teacher, Mrs Swindells.

Dad and Mother came to live in Alderley Road Fallibroome Prestbury where I was born. In 1932 we moved into Great King St. Macclesfield in order for me to attend Christ Church School. At that time we spent many of our Saturdays and Sundays at Grandads and attending Henbury Church on Sunday evening.

On summer Saturday afternoons our family, Mum and me, Joe and Mary would set off on the North Western bus from Oxford Road Macclesfield travelling via and stopping at Broken Cross to join Dad who was working over the weekends growing garden produce in Parkfield Cottage garden.

Our family were almost self-sufficient growing the majority of vegetables at Parkfield. Soon we would be asking Dad for pennies to visit Mrs Sigleys sweets cabin situated across the Road from the Blacksmiths Arms (later to become Brailsford's InterFlora Garden Centre), to buy bottles of pop and sweets.

I recall attending a Rose Queen Field Treat event in the field by Henbury Church Vicarage In 1937. There were coconut and pot shie, ice cream stalls etc. They also held a Bonny Baby competition and later the Rose Queen was crowned, chosen from the village girls....a wonderful outing for all the family.

Aunt Mary and Uncle Ted Vaughan lived in Pleasant View. Later on, Uncle Ted became the Verger at St Thomas's church and they moved into the Verger's House, Beech Cottage on Church Lane around 1934. Uncle Ted had a pony and trap in which he and Aunt Mary together would ride into Macclesfield on Monday's for cattle market day, and shopping on Fridays. Henbury Village Hall and Car Park now occupy the site where once stood Beech Cottage.

Following Grandad's death in February 1940 at Parkfield Cottage a path had to be cut for his funeral through 5ft of deep snow all the way from the house to St. Thomas Church. The path was narrow and not wide enough for a vehicle, so the undertaker arranged the use of a bier trolley to carry Grandad's coffin, drawn by 4 men on foot....

Then in September 1939 along came WW2 to gradually alter this way of life.

Around 1940 Uncle Ted took the tenancy of Henbury Moss Farm off Fanshawe Lane and I well remember going to visit them there on my bicycle. One of our delights pre 1938 was to ride our bikes through the forded stream at Fanshawe Brook before the culvert was built making a splash and waves.

Another delight was to picnic in Bluebell Valley, facing Henbury Hall where we gathered bunches of Bluebells growing beneath the trees laughing and playing in the wood.

I recall spending a week in August 1940 and in 1941 with Aunts Edna and Cissie at Parkfield Cottage. After living in Town it was so quiet there, the silence was deafening.

Rural life at Henbury was idyllic but void of the present day luxuries such as mains water supplies, Flush Toilets, Bathrooms and household waste collection services. The household waste was collected in bags followed weekly by a visit with a homemade wooden box on wheels to the Sugar Pit beyond Hattons Farm which was

the R.D.C.s official tip.

I must admit it was hard to adjust to staying there as I hadn't any friends in that area, no scouts or Picture palaces and everywhere was so quiet that I could only hear the birds singing. I spent all my time on my bike riding around Bluebell Valley and Birtles area just to pass the days which seemed so long.

Summer days were so different out in the country, waking in the morning with the bedroom windows open, no traffic noise the sound of birds singing in the trees, the sweet smell of grass and the flowers, then downstairs to a real breakfast of bacon eggs and fried bread. Yummy !

Later in the morning, Jack Hankinson would pull up at the house in his breadvan. Jack was a Master Baker from Coare Street Macclesfield, he was always smiling and full of cheerful chatter.. When he opened the doors of his van the aroma of his freshly baked warm bread was delicious, he would then go off into the house with his wide woven basket filled with a variety of loaves, Cobs, Hovis, Currant Bread and twists for my Aunt to choose from. He then drove off to his next call with a laugh and a smile.

Parkfield Cottage, now demolished along with the attached Parkfield House where lived the Bevins were behind the Blacksmith Arms and facing the old Henbury School in School Lane Henbury. Around 1942 Aunt Edna married and the tenancy of Parkfield Cottage was terminated.

In 1941 our family moved our home happily to live in a modern house with a bathroom and electric lighting in Belmont Avenue Whirley, within Henbury Parish. It was a good feeling to be living in the countryside again surrounded by green fields where we were able to attend St Thomas's Church.

On a summer afternoon in 1942 my pals and I would cycle through Alderley and Wilmslow over to RAF Ringway (now Manchester Airport) from Whirley to see and hear the Lancaster bombers parked just off the runway warming up their engines ready to join the 1000 bomber raids on German cities.

We arrived home one afternoon to find to our surprise that an RAF Hurricane Fighter had done a fairly good crash landing In Jodrells field on the south side of Belmont Avenue behind the Millingtons home. The Pilot clambered out then came running across the field asking for a telephone to contact his Base. It took days for the RAF technicians to dismantle the plane and carry it away on those long "Queen Mary trailers".

Across from Beech Cottage in Church Lane lay a footpath leading across Henbury fields to Whirley Road. We used this route on dry days when attending Church. It passed by Henbury Pit which was deep and mucky. We were warned to keep away

from the Pit, but my friends and I still gathered in the surrounding field and collected frog spawn in jars and watched the tadpoles arrive.

It was here in this field that 2 airmen in an RAF Airspeed Oxford plane sadly lost their lives in 1943. The Airspeed Oxford Mk.I crashed at Henbury near Macclesfield, Cheshire, on the 29th September 1943. One airman died in the crash while the other was rescued but died in Parkside British Military Hospital 2 hours later. In the following days once the crash site had been cleared, we found there were still small bits of metal and Perspex in the soil which we collected as mementos.

I well remember those dark war years with the blackouts and air raids. From our bedroom windows high up in Whirley looking North we could see the glow in the sky from the bombing on Manchester, Stockport and Liverpool and the noise of the planes with their bombs did nothing to improve people's composure. We would ride home from work in Macclesfield in the dark of evening huddled together on a packed single deck bus with seats in a line side by side down the sides known then as "Sit and Stare buses". They held 60 people as against the normal 31.

Living in Whirley we had many good friends there.... Howard Millington and family, John, David and Josie, Ken Hooper and family, next door to us lived Stan Broadhurst and family and then my friends Ken Shepley, Les Leighton who was a buddy at the Central School. Also in Broken Cross, Phil Bradley, Brian Dennerley, Derek Heath, Cyril Bettany and Alison Richards.

I never got to be close friends with Alison who was attending the High School, therefore she was in the Kings/High School group and me attending the Central School, I was a member of another group of friends in those early war years of 1942, Summer and Winter we all hung around the seat beneath Broken Cross Clock with our bikes chatting and fooling around with the odd cigarette. The girls would pass by in groups, stopping for a chit chat and the odd drag at a fag.

Alison of course could never risk being caught smoking in case her Mum, Mrs Richards, who was Head of Broken Cross School got to know about it. But Alison was great fun and a born risk taker. My youngest brother Eric attended Broken Cross School.

Sam Holland Agricultural Engineers were next to the school, John Worth Plumbers stood in the building beneath the Clock and Dick Holland Joiner. Mrs Heath kept the Chip Shop and Simcocks the Petrol Station.

We often gathered having great fun playing football and on the swings and roundabouts on the Rec....the Recreation Field at the beginning of Pexhill Road.

The ex Army WW1 wooden hut of the Henbury and Broken Cross Men's Institute erected by chaps returning from the war stood on the corner of Gawsforth Road then being used by the Home Guard (Dad's Army).

I have a vision still of Alison now in the morning, waiting at the Broken Cross bus stop dressed in her High School uniform wearing her broad brimmed school hat and her satchel slung over her shoulder with a broad smile on her face and laughing out as she chatted with her friends.

Always the lively lady, then as our bus from Whirley arrived at the Broken Cross stop they would all scramble aboard chattering and laughing with not a care in the whole world as we drove into Town.

Later over the Easter weekend in 1944 I sat with friends on the seat near to the Church on Chelford Road watching hundreds of American Army vehicles passing by making their way from Liverpool to the south east of England where they were amassing ready for the 'D' Day Landings In June. The drivers waved as they drove by and we gave them the old thumbs up.

A V-1 doodlebug exploded a few yards into Bluebell Wood on Christmas Eve, 1944. The crater it left was in a field on the east side of School Lane at Bluebell Valley Henbury. My Dad and I visited the scene on Boxing Day Morning 1944 and I saw the huge crater in the field only yards from the road. It is said that shrapnel could be seen buried in the surrounding trees years later.

With the ending of WW2 in May 1945 the celebrations in Henbury, Broken Cross and Whirley were never ending with Street parties and bonfires with fireworks.

Brother Joe and I were confirmed at St. Thomas Church on the 25 July 1945 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Doctor Fisher deputising for the Bishop of Chester who was ill at the time. The Vicar was the Rev. Mr Thomas. In later years Phil Bradley, who hand pumped the church organ and I enjoyed a beer together with the lads in the Bulls Head Pub. Alf Evans was the Landlord.

My wife Barbara and I were married at St. Thomas Church on the 11 October 1950 by the Rev. Glynn Jones. Our daughter Andrina and our son Robert were christened there a year or two later by the Rev. Glynn Jones.

In the summer of 1953 my Mother, Barbara and I attended a Saturday Garden Fete at Henbury Hall along with many of the Estate tenants, there were side stalls, sports and afternoon tea in the Hall. Philp and Jean Bradley joined us and there we met Aunt Mary and Uncle Ted along with cousin Margaret and her husband Frank who live in Leicester and were over on holiday. This could have been the updated version of a tenants' Rent Party and we had a lovely afternoon.

In 1955 my family and I came to live on Princes Way Weston...a stone's throw from Henbury and we became a part of the Broken Cross community, Barbara worked with Bill and Dot Wild in The Post Office, Andrina attended the lovely old Broken Cross School and Robert attended Parkett Heyes and then later the new Whirley Road School. Bill Wild and I were members and played Snooker at the New Broken

Cross Club and enjoyed a pint together in the Pack Horse Pub. Then in 1968 my family and I moved to live in Barton Preston.

Many of our Scragg family members are buried in Henbury Church yard including Mother Dad and brother Joe.

Henbury is my eternal home but I wish to have my ashes placed alongside my Barbara's in St Lawrence's Church Yard at Barton Preston.

PHOTO...Henbury Church Choir Circa: 1950

By kind permission of Margaret Pearson

Alison Richards..2nd row ..5th from Left....my cousin May Vaughan 4th from Left