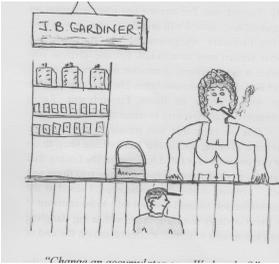


ROUND AND ABOUT IN THE PARISH.....

This article concerns shops which used to be in the villages of Chelwood Gate and Danehill and there follows a tale as told to me by the late Ron Wenham.

"We had many jobs to do and errands to run as children. Our lighting in the cottage was from an oil lamp hanging from the ceiling; no electricity in the late twenties in our village. Our living room door opened to the outside, and many times it was opened and the wind would cause the flame to flare up and, bang, another breakage. The next day someone would have to go to a little shop about half a mile away to get a new one. There was usually a snag as there were two types, round and oval, and too often the shop had the wrong one.



Sketch from Ron's book

Another of my childhood duties was to take the accumulator to the village shop to exchange for a fully charged one. For anyone not knowing what an 'accumulator' was, I will enlighten you. It was part of the necessary equipment to run your wireless (better known now as a radio). For the wireless you needed a large battery, a smaller one known as the Grid Bias, and the accumulator. Then you could tune into such stations as Radio Luxembourg, Radio Normandy 2Lo, Daventry to name a few.

One occasion that will remain in my memory forever was being sent to our local village shop to do the exchange. Dad wanted to listen to the boxing that evening, so off I went on the two mile trip there and back. Arriving at the shop exhausted, I stood at the counter (which seemed six foot tall) to be confronted by Mrs Gardiner standing there with a fag dangling from her mouth with two inches of ash on the end of it.

I asked "Please could I exchange the accumulator?" She glared at me and said in a very loud voice. "Don't you know it's Wednesday? It's more than my jobs worth to serve you today." How was I to know it was against the law to exchange accumulators on a Wednesday? I had to walk all the way home with the old one, and face the music. I don't remember the outcome but I expect mum was in trouble.

Ron lived at Holly Cottage, Box's Lane. He was youngest of four, and Ron told me they were very poor, as were many working class of that time and they lived in a rented cottage. His father worked for the Council and his wages were thirty shillings a week. The shop was in the centre of Danehill and therefore carrying an accumulator was tiring. The cycle shop/hardware shop at Chelwood Gate, run by Bill Marten sold the lamp filaments as described by Ron. The photo on the next page is of Bill's wife outside the shop.



If you lived in Horsted Keynes, the accumulators were taken to the garage by Crown for recharging. If you lived at Birch Grove then Mr Dovey at his shop charged up the accumulators. His original shop (which was also a post office) was at Birch Grove Green, and later took on the shop known as

The Keys further up the road towards Chelwood Gate.



Photo of Danchill shop as ladies march past on Remembrance Day.

When Peter Richardson lived at Fletching he recalled a Miss Trickie who brought round accumulators to the cottages in a van. Peter thought it was 'Shorts' from Newick. They charged 6d per accumulator per week. However instead of having a properly organised van, the dud accumulators would be put on one side and the live ones on the other side. Quite often they would get a dud one which had not been re-charged. His dad would switch the radio on and there would be nothing. Peter then had to get on his bike and cycle over to Newick to get a replacement.

My thanks to Mrs Peggy Barnard, Mervyn Marten, Mr Mildenhall, Peter Richardson, and the late Ron Wenham.

Jill Rolfe