

Round and About in the Parish...

For many years Danehill had its own bakery and there was no need to go outside the village for bread or cakes. This was run by William Cottenham (always known as Bill) who was born in 1918 in Horsted Keynes. The bakery was in the row of houses on the left as you leave the village going south.



During the 1939 - 45 War, Bill was a Sergeant Baker in the Army and served in the North Africa and Italy Campaigns. A few years after the War he started Cottenham's Bakery in Danehill in 1951 which continued until 1979. By now Bill was an accredited Master Baker and a member of the National Association of Master Bakers.

Everything was baked in the traditional way, with fresh yeast and fresh eggs being used together with a wide variety of different types of flour. The early oven at the bakery was coal fired with a brick base. Later on, there were three ovens which were stacked one on top of each other, and these were oil fired.

Bill got up at about 4 o'clock each morning to start off the day's baking, and on a Saturday he would start just after midnight. The house and the bakery were all joined together with the bake house being at the back, and the shop in the front. A large selection of bread was baked, French loaves, Bloomers, Sandwich and long tins, as well as granary bread and Hovis, which had its own special flour.

Bill's family all helped, with Margaret (Bill's wife) serving in the shop and Liz (their daughter) also serving in the shop.

The bakery had two vans and employed different people delivering each day. Bill's son, Murray, also did deliveries on a Saturday. Deliveries were made house to house, and to pubs, nursing homes and to grocers (such as Sayers and Carter) and to wholesale caterers. On Saturday mornings many local people helped in the busy shop.

Bill made all sorts of fancy cakes, including Wedding and Christmas cakes. At Christmas people would sometimes find they had a turkey which was too big for their oven and on Christmas Day Bill would cook their turkeys for them. It was part of the way of village life then.





When Bill retired the Sussex Express sent a photographer to record the event and Bill is shown here with his baker's paddle outside the large shop window, which is still there today.

The front room of the house was used as a surgery by Dr Pritchard who came twice a week and patients had to queue up outside and if it was wet, they stood in the shop.

If the doctor turned up and no-one was waiting, he didn't stop, but just went away - hence the queue.

My thanks to Liz Cottenham.