OXHEY VILLAGE ENVIRONMENT GROUP

September 1993 History Sheet No.3

Memories of a childhood in the 1920s

As recalled by Don and Letty Bennell (née Simmonds)

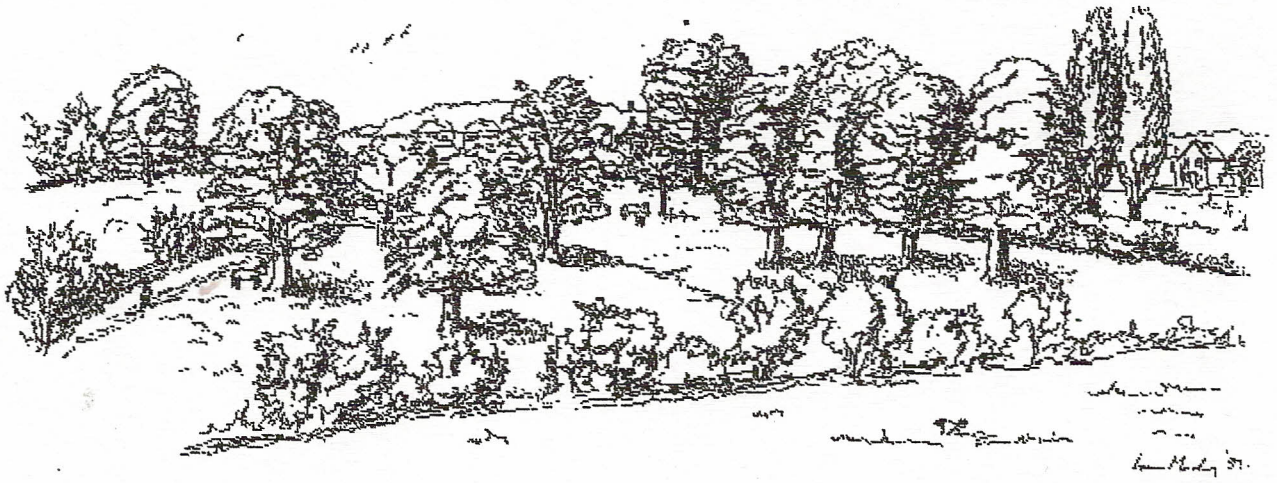
Saturday mornings were a great time!

We would wait outside Mr. Watkins' sweet shop in Villiers Road for Dr.Doyle to come and pay his paper bill- he would always add to the bill another penny for each child present to buy sweets. This was quite a bonus since the going weekly rate for pocket money was 1d - known as the Saturday Penny.

Most of our games also took place in Villiers Road - often in the middle of the road, most of the traffic being horse drawn dodging it was a lot safer than it is today. There was a set season for a lot of these games, but they included ball games, whipping top, skipping, marbles, conkers.

For leisure activities we relied on chapel and church clubs, such as Band of Hope, the Guides and the Scouts.

Summer holidays were spent in the village where, amongst other things, we fished with a 1d fishing net in the overflow of Attenborough's lake - now just a pond since the destruction of the weir. We caught newts, sticklebacks and tadpoles, which we took home and kept in a small bath in the back garden.



We were surrounded by beautiful countryside - Carpenders Park, South Oxhey and the Hamper Mill areas not then built. A great day out would be blackberrying, which entailed getting a train from Bushey & Oxhey Station and asking the guard to stop at Carpenders Park, as this was only a halt for golfers. There was a rough patch of scrub land, near the station, which contained bushes producing the best berries in the area - a mecca for many housewives and children.

The Paddock Road allotments were a vital part of the family economy and there was always a waiting list for a vacant plot. In later years, we found out that the Haydon Arms was known as the potting shed and used rather like the 19th hole of a golf course!

We would often be woken at 6-00 in the morning by Mr. Glenister's horses being brought from the fields to the yard, where they would be harnessed to the tumbrels, which they took to the goods yard at Bushey & Oxhey Station for loading with coal for the gas works in lower High Street, Watford. The transfer of coal that went on day in day out, winter and summer, resulted in the road (now Pinner Road) from the station to The Arches Coal Wharf becoming very very dirty - a bane on our white socks in the summer, and, of course, much worse in the rain, as it was like walking through thick black sludge.

At 5 years old, boys and girls began their education at Oxhey Primary School, on the corner of Aldenham and London Road, on the site of what is now Faithfield, the old people's home.

At 7, boys were transferred to London Road School, now the Bushey Health Clinic, the girls joined them when they reached 1 1. The boys, on the first floor, had 50 to a class, but the girls, on the ground floor, averaged only 30 to a class.

Education finished at the age of 14 - unless you were one of the few who passed the 11+ examination for Watford Grammar or the Central School. Although, at 13 children were able to sit the exam for Watford Technical School giving them a choice of studying Art, Commerce or Engineering. After studying for two years, students were then able to obtain apprenticeships in one of the many print firms or factories which then abounded in the Watford area or to find work in a local office.

Don and Letty Bennell currently live in the Bushey area, and are members of the Oxhey Village Environment Group. We thank them for allowing us to print their memories.