

Across the London Road, just into Haydon Road, was Toombs' sweet shop. In my time, this was the only place in the village that sold gob stoppers that changed colour as you sucked on them. It was always a toss up as to whether to buy a gob stopper or a pack of sherbet with a liquorice tube to suck it up with. This was infinitely more fun than a sherbet dab, even though the tube usually got clogged up.

Benton's was the sweet shop that my wife and I knew best. George Benton was in the Tank Corps during the war and Edna would help his wife Gladys look after their then only daughter Gina, Gillian being born later. When I finished my national service, the Benton's reintroduced Edna and I to each other and, in fact, George gave Edna away at our wedding at St. Matthews in October 1952, her Father, Len, being unable to do so because of his disability. Our reception was held at the Keyser Hall in Lower Paddock Road where James Webb of the Rifle Volunteer was treasurer of the Bowls Club. We were privileged to have our wedding photographs taken by the side of the green, the photographer being allowed to actually stand on the hallowed turf, albeit provided with the appropriate footwear and wooden panel to perch his tripod on.

While writing these notes, faces and names inevitably have come back to mind and one particular fact has dawned on me after all these years. I can clearly remember three or four ladies who I had never seen without their hat on! Knock on their front door at any time and there they were in pinafore or apron, sometimes with broom in hand, but always wearing a hat and, in one case, seemingly always the same hat.

It is only when we looked back at our time in Oxhey that we realised just how lucky we really were to spend our formative years in such an environment. It is so sad that the community spirit that we enjoyed is rarely seen today. It is true that some of our childhood was spent in wartime conditions which tended to make for a harder life which we all could have done without, but it did seem to generate in most of us a self discipline, an aptitude for happiness and a respect for others that some of those of later generations don't have or, in many cases, do not even want to know about. As I have said, not a bad time to grow up and certainly a great place to grow up in.

Keith Julier/ August 2001