

Memories of Angel Hill in the 50's by Tony Fowler

On Angel Hill there have been many changes over the years - the first one which comes immediately to mind is the amount of traffic, but more of that later.

To start at the beginning, in 1949 my parents were having a house built in Green Lane and whilst this was taking place we stayed at The Lodge where my grandparents lived at that time.

One of my first and regular errands was to the bakers on Angel Hill where Mr Leslie Woollard had a small bakery/shop at Angel House - in years gone by this had been a public inn (The Angel Inn). I used to enjoy these errands because the bread was wonderfully tasty and I could not resist nibbling the crust - usually I had eaten most of this before completing my errand!

A & M Cutting was our local store and was to be found at the bottom of Angel Hill (now Ascot House), and in addition Cutting's had two other village stores at that time, one at Mendlesham and one at Stonham Aspal. The Manager of "our" shop was a Mr Stannard, with Mr Victor Miles as the assistant manager. I seem to remember that they had initially had a trade bike and Bob Warren was often to be seen on this making local deliveries.

I used to cycle to the nearest school at Stonham Aspal which I attended for a year or so whilst Hill View was being built - there was very little in the way of traffic to worry cyclists then! Also for film goers, there was a film show every Thursday night in Stonham Aspal Village Hall which was mainly aimed at us school kids, usually a cowboy or Flash Gordon film- all for the princely sum of 9d! Afterwards we would race on our bikes down to the Tap Crossroads - we would need to make sure we stopped correctly at the road junction as PC Sharman, our local bobby, had a nasty habit of waiting there to catch us out and clip our ears if we erred and rode across the junction without stopping! Whilst on the entertainment front, a village hop or dance would regularly be held at the Tap/Brewers Arms, which took place upstairs in the Clubroom to the rear of the pub.

My first memories of this area was at the Forge - now Old Forge Garage - watching Mr Jack Rush working at the Smithy. I was fascinated by the enormous leather bellows next to the forge. At this time most of his work was making and repairing farm implements and also adapting horse drawn equipment to be tractor drawn as this was a time of great change on the farms which were now rapidly becoming mechanised.

Another memory again, at Forge Cottage, was a year or two on (probably about 1951) when Mr. & Mrs. Boswall moved in. They had lived in South Africa for many years and returned to retire in the U.K., and had a television installed - this was the first time I had seen a television. It must have made a big impression on me as I can still recall seeing the Laurel and Hardy film being shown where Ollie was chasing Stan around a table with



[The Angel Tap crossroads](#)



an axe. Stan had accidentally chopped down Ollie's Christmas tree!! (It's funny how one remembers some things). Whilst remembering TV sets, I believe that the first one installed on Angel Hill was at Myrtle Cottage where the Hope family lived at that time.

All the Boswall's furniture & possessions came back from South Africa in 2 single garage size wooden containers, which my father subsequently acquired and were duly recycled into two single garages at Hill View!

Returning to the Lodge, it was about another year before my grandparents acquired a television, probably the news of the impending Coronation was a deciding factor in getting one! When it appeared it was installed in the lounge - it was a 12" Bush Television - impressive times! My favourite children's programme was on a Saturday between 5.00 and 6.00 pm, and was Whirligig with Humphrey Lestocq and Mr Turnip, etc. The television then closed down for about an hour, when it started again with adult programmes.

Living close by at Ramplings Farm was the Syrett family. I had become friends with their youngest son Peter who was a similar age to me and I used to spend a lot of my time there, often getting into scrapes together. Mrs Syrett was particularly kind - frequently having to clean me up after I had fallen in the pond or mud etc. The two sons, Peter and Ted, had acquired a very old Morgan three-wheel sports car, which had a motorbike engine. We would regularly push this up and down the A140 in an effort to get it started - fortunately there was little traffic to worry about in those days!

Again on the subject of traffic, when very young, I would sometimes be taken into Ipswich by my grandfather in his car. To pass the time on the journey I would count the number of cars seen, if it was 10 or so, it would be considered a busy road on that day!!!

The Post Office at that time was halfway up Angel Hill at Meerut House and run by Mrs Elsie & Eddy Hubbard. I especially remember her son Charles who was a keen motorcyclist and every year without fail would take his motorcycles to race in the Isle of Man road races. He would maintain and keep his machines in the garage alongside the Post Office and they were always kept in immaculate condition.



Later in the 50's the Post Office moved to Thornbush Lane and was then run by Joan Braybrooke .

The White Horse Public House at the top of Angel Hill was then still open and run by Fred & Dolly Stannard. In addition to being the Licensee, Fred also ran a newspaper delivery service from there covering the Stonhams and Creeting St Mary.



Here I was given the opportunity of earning some pocket money, by helping him deliver newspapers on a Saturday morning, Whilst he drove his dark green Austin 7, I would run up and down taking the papers and magazines to the houses, and for that morning's work I received five shillings - great happiness!

When the time came to have need of a haircut I would only have to go to the Cottage on Angel Hill where Spencer Race lived. You would be sat on a chair outside his back door where he would give you a short back and sides, using his hand clippers and comb - those were the days!

Another well known character was 'Trott' Race, who lived in Ascot Cottage at the bottom of Angel Hill. He was employed by the local authority (East Suffolk County Council) to keep the roads and verges clean & tidy in this area, and was regularly seen in the area with his pushbike, complete with necessary tools, broom etc. on the crossbar. He, like so many of his time, took immense pride in his work and it showed. All the banks and verges he tended were always tidy and well kept - I wonder what he would think of today's very mechanised approach to this work -I suspect he would be less than impressed!

One of the largest employers local to Angel Hill was the Maltings, Leslie Wicks being the Foreman with Ron Smith as Floor Man. During the winter months when at it's busiest, many local people worked here and in the summer months when quieter, those workers would then help bring in the harvest on the farms. When looking through through the roadside windows at The Maltings, I was fascinated to see workers turning the grain with wooden shovels (called scoops). Also I remember in the 1953 storms that The Maltings suffered serious flooding with many workers having to come in to save the grain etc.

In the school holidays, especially in summer, I would head for Hill Farm to help Jack Johnson bring in the Harvest. Help was always welcome at this time of the year and Joe Porter also came along to help. He lived at that time in one of the cottages opposite Thornbush Lane and this row of then four was known locally as "Rhubarb Alley". Living next to the Porter family, were Mr.& Mrs. Ron Smith, then Walter Keen, who was a gardener at The Lodge, and was nicknamed "Strawberry" - he had a rather red nose! On a less happy note I recall him showing me his belt - an army one that his brother had given him before he left to fight in France, as he did not expect to return. [Unfortunately this fear was proved right because he was killed in France and his name can be found on the war memorial in Earl Stonham churchyard.]

Back to Hill Farm, I thoroughly enjoyed the time I spent there - some of the work was quite hard but it was always fun being with Jack and Vic his brother, who also farmed nearby and they always helped each other at busy times. These were particularly happy times for me.

When Fred Stannard retired he sold his Austin 7 to Bernard Braybrooke, whose family lived at that time in Thornbush lane. Bernard then sold the body off the car and the running chassis was bought by the Talbot Family, who at that time owned the Forge Garage. They then adapted the car - their two sons fitted a driver's seat on it, and we all used to drive it at breakneck speeds (possibly 35 miles per hour!) around the fields of Hill Farm - we had hours of fun on it (there were no health and safety issues then to worry about!)

Winter time brought snow and more fun. We, that is all the kids around, would head for Angel Hill - and the hill behind Meerut House on Brewery Farm was ideal for toboggans etc. Fortunately Mr Victor Denny, the farmer, was very understanding and turned a blind eye! Whilst mentioning Brewery farm, Victor Denny was one of the first in the area to have a combine harvester - an American M & M combine.

In the mid fifties motor scooters were all the rage and although I was not yet old enough to hold a licence I was very envious of my cousin Ann who had a Lambretta, as did Jill Banham. In addition, seeing Rachel Wickes from Maltings House on her Vespa on her way to work each morning fired me up to save all my pocket money with the aim of also having a scooter when I reached the required age.

The next summer I was indeed the proud owner of a Lambretta WBJ 602 (thanks to a loan from grandma!) which came from Revett's, a motorcycle shop in Stowmarket. I thoroughly

enjoyed the new-found freedom the scooter gave me - doing about 100 m.p.g., with petrol at about 4/9d (24p in new money) a gallon. It was an inexpensive way to travel, and Dad was great, converting an old chicken shed into a garage for it.

In 1958 the Mendlesham Transmitter was being built on the old WW2 airfield and I used to go frequently to watch progress as steeplejacks worked on the TV aerial. I do recall how eerie it was hearing the sound of the clanking of spanners etc. when they worked, sometimes above cloud . It is worth mentioning that these gentleman were being paid in the region of £150 per week, which was serious money in those days, but, admittedly, their work was considered to be jolly dangerous. They stayed at the Magpie Inn until completion of this work where they acquired almost celebratory status in the village during this time!

Finally, my thanks go to Roy Smith who helped correct some of my memories, and reminded me of some I had forgotten.

Tony Fowler