

The Syderstonian - October 2015

St. Mary's Church - 9th October

Harvest festival service 6pm followed by Harvest Supper at 7pm. The supper will be free of charge but numbers are limited and places should be booked through Dizzy Goff on 01485 578527.

24th October to 28th October - Art exhibition within the church between 12 noon and 4.30pm.

1st November - Service for the departed.

7th November - Winter coffee morning at Christmas fair in the Amy Robsart hall between 10.30am and 12 noon.

8th November - Remembrance Sunday service at 10.55am.

29th November - Band concert by Fakenham town band at park centre. Wicken Green - 2pm.

18th December - Christmas carol service with flood light illumination 6pm.

The Flower Festival in August raised over £1,100 and the open garden event in June raised almost as much. Both of these successful events were extensively advertised by Dizzy Goff, well done.

At the present time repair work being carried out at the east end of the church and on the tower by builders G.F Allhowe of Norwich.

Obituary - George 'Chum' Daykin. 'Chum'; was a regular at these O.S meetings and will be much missed. I recall some of his exploits in the Syderstone cricket team of the 1950's and 1960's. How he destroyed the Grinston attack with 53 in 3 overs - a real gem of an innings. His safe hands and strong accurate throwing made him a valuable outfielder, well played 'Chum'. Our sympathy and condolences to his family and friends.

Amy Robsart Hall - It is planned to upgrade the heating system with a 'wet radiator' system. This will be costly and at present enquiries are being made to secure grant funding for this project.

Village screen cinema

17th Oct 7.30pm - 'Dark Horse'

14th Nov 7.30pm - 'The Water Diviner', Russell Crowe

5th Dec 7.30pm - 'Elsa and Fred 2', Christopher Plummer, Shirley Maclaine.

Advanced booking £3.50 (01485 578588) or £4 on the door.

A surfeit of Christmas cake

The Old Syderstonian reunions are ten years old next April. The organisers, the Amy Robsart village hall committee, deserve huge credit for it's instigation and continuing success. They have provided family tree information, many village photographs, and best of all the attendance of many old friends to share memories and tales of bygone Syderstone.

I was given quite a surprise at the last meeting in April, a few weeks before hand Avril got in touch to ask if I had a friend John Chaplin. John and I were both at Hendon training school together during the winter of 1961/1962 and were both posted to the West End Central a few weeks apart from one another. Our acquaintance led to a long term friendship during which we shared in a number of outings and visits to all manner of functions and places. Two camping trips, numerous museum visits, outings to the cinema - seeing 'Zulu' was the highlight for me. Outings outside London for cricket matches and outings in London for meals at Leon's the superb Chinese restaurant at Wardour Street and to Schmidt's the German restaurant in Charlotte Street. So we knew one another very well, what I did not know was that he frequently mentioned 'My mate Ken from Syderstone up in Norfolk'.

Sadly he died a few years ago at no great age and the times we spent together are filed away in memory. A few weeks prior to the last reunion a lady, Carolyn Wilson, attended one of the Amy Robsart coffee meetings and asked Avril if she knew of 'Ken who came from the village and joined the police in London in the 1960's.' Well of course she did. It turned out that she and my pal, John Chaplin, were cousins and she had heard a good deal, vicariously, of me from him.

I rang her and we had a long chat and I asked her if she came from March, she did. I asked if she was related to John's uncle Arthur, yes he was her dad. I said that it was possible we had met just before Christmas 1966. It happened this way. I had agreed to drop John off at March on my way up to Syderstone on my own pre-Christmas visit. At that time I owned a sit up and beg Ford Anglia that I had bought for £30. Now even in 1966 £30 did not buy much, certainly not reliable transport as we were to find out. The 1953 Ford Anglia and Popular were Ford's most basic cars and you saw them everywhere you went because they provided cheap transport. Technically they weren't very advanced on the Model 'T' Ford which ended a long run in production in 1927. It was said anybody with a piece of wire or string, a screwdriver and a hammer could carry out any repair on a Model 'T', add to that list a couple of open ended spanners and you could say the same about the 1950's.

Anglias and populars - if you knew what you were doing. The first leg of the journey was uneventful. We chatted our way through the north London suburbs to the A1, and eventually Warboys, Chatteris and March. John told me that his uncle Arthur worked as a mobile librarian having been a bus driver before this. I said that that was a job I should fancy myself when I eventually handed in my warrant card and the other impedimenta of the office of constable. He said his uncle he loved the life visiting the Fenland villages, finding and issuing Agatha Christie's, Mills and Boon, and stamping the books and dealing with borrower's requests. 'Yes, most agreeable', I acknowledged. He told me that his uncle had methodically set aside the rent for his house when for some reason the landlord had absented himself for a substantial period.

This may have been due to wartime, I can't remember. When the landlord reappeared he offered John's uncle the opportunity to buy the property. Having stashed away all the back rent this went a long way to funding the purchase. 'A very methodical man, my uncle Arthur'. Yes indeed and a happy one imagined. I met Uncle Arthur, Aunt Phyllis and cousin Carolyn when I dropped off John at March and promised to pick him up some time after six on Sunday night. I wended my way to Syderstone via Wisbech and Lynn and spent a pleasant couple of days with my family. I made the Sunday evening pick up on time and we pattered uneventfully along towards the A1 exchanging experiences of the recent visit. We had passed Biggleswade and were heading towards Hertfordshire when I became aware of a loss of power.

A glance at the instrument panel showed that the lights were dimming and the ammeter was showing a discharge. 'John', we've got a problem, 'The Dynamo isn't charging'. I switched the lights from headlamp to side lamps and the power picked up slightly, 'Is it oaky now?' We'll have to come off the A1 at the next turn and I'll ring the RAC, 'Hopefully they can sort it out'. The next turn took us into Welwyn, where I rang the RAC and explained the problem 'We'll send a local garage out to you', stay with the car'. We were cheered up by the sight of a Green Line double decker passing through town bound for Marble Arch. 'That's handy', said John, 'If they can't sort out the dynamo we can get back to town on the bus.'. We settled down to wait for the RAC. It seemed an age before the breakdown truck turned up. 'What's up mate?', I explained, 'It's not something I can fix by the roadside, we'll tow it to Marshallwick garage, St. Albans. Do you want a lift? I can drop you at St. Albans station.' 'No thanks, we'll get the Green Line back to Marble Arch'.

The garage man hooked up the car, we retrieved our cases and set out for the bus stop. John scanned the timetable, 'You know that bus we saw an hour ago?', 'yes', 'Well that was the last flaming one through here until tomorrow morning.' 'Bugger it, and we let the breakdown truck drive off too, we'll just have to hoof it back to the A1 and thumb a lift'. We walked a good way down the main road thumbing away without any passing driving taking the remotest interest in us and we were getting cheesed off and a bit sorry for ourselves. At this low ebb a pick-up truck stopped just ahead of us. 'Where are you blokes off too?', 'London, anywhere in the West end would do nicely', 'Sorry I'm not going that far. 'Hatfield then?', 'Sorry I can't do Hatfield but you're welcome to ride with me to St. Albans.' What irony, bitter irony, 'Thanks mate.' We both said. It was some time between ten thirty and eleven when we pitched up at St. Albans station and asked for tickets for St. Pancras and enquired when the next train was due, 'Nothing else tonight lads. Won't be

anything before five tomorrow morning you're welcome to settle down in the waiting room'. 'Stone me', do you think I'll be back in time for early turn,' Said John. 'I think you'd better think of a plan B' we've got plenty of time to come up with something.' We chatted, dozed, clock watched and very slowly time passed.

Monday emerged from the ruins of Sunday, John rummaged in his case 'Good old Aunty Phyllis. She's packed me up some Christmas cake. Fancy a bit?'. Flagging morale was boosted by this delicious cake. We had one piece and then another and summoned enough will power to preserve some for the festival of Christmas. The railwayman popped his head around the door, 'There's a staff train in just after one, you can hop on that and it will take you to St. Pancras.' 'Thanks mate, that's good news, cheers.' We got into St. Pancras at quarter to two. A taxi dropped us at Trenchard House at two. John applied plan B and picked up the phone to report sick probably declaring the symptoms to be a surfeit of Christmas cake.

I recovered sufficiently to report for late turn. I picked up the car on the following Saturday, the dynamo had been replaced at the cost of ten quid. Over the next few years I had two more of these sit up and beg Anglias and each one was better than the last although all had problems with the dynamo. Although that type of Anglia and Popular were very common in the 50's and 60's, they are seldom seen these days even in classic car circles and then in no great number. I can only surmise that even classic car fans will not put up with bouncy ride, the feeble six volt lighting, the contrary vacuum windscreen wipers, the lack of windscreen washers and a heater and their general lack of sophistication has contributed to their near extinction.

Carolyn, John's cousin, lives at North Creake. I asked her why she came to Syderstone for their coffee mornings. 'People here are so friendly, you're always made so welcome. 'Quite. That's one of the reasons we are looking towards the Old Syderstonian's ten year anniversary. *Ken Edge*

Our Queens Long Reign

We have just passed the date when our Queen has overtaken her great great grandmother Queen Victoria as our longest reigning monarch.

I remember the day when her reign began. I was all of five years old and was in Miss Parrot's class at Syderstone school. Mr. Goult, the headmaster came into our classroom, looking rather shocked and spoke to Miss Parrot saying, 'I have just heard that the king has passed away at Sandringham.' Miss Parrot's face went purple as she replied 'goodness me!' As this was the time before television etc. They acquired a wireless set and we listened to the announcement of the death of King George VI, the Queens' father.

Although he was only in his mid-fifties and had been ill, the king had been there all of our young lives and we were all very shocked. We had also been following Princess Elizabeth's tour in Africa at that time and remember that sad picture of her and Prince Philip coming down the steps of the plane, now as Queen. The plans for her coronation followed. It was held on June 2nd, 1953, my 10th birthday so I am never likely to forget that date! *Carole Gilham nee Havers*

Camping it up

I was leafing through an old car magazine a few weeks ago and was interested to find that the lead article was about the discovery and eventual restoration of an early 1960s Bedford Dormobile motor caravan. The discovery occurred by chance when the author whose own vehicle was temporarily off the road was walking his daughter to school when they passed a house two streets away from their own where the garage door was ajar sufficient to reveal his 1960ish Bedford Dormobile.

The chap's interest was aroused sufficiently to enquire if the van was for sale on the first occasion he was told a firm 'no' by an elderly lady. He left his phone number with her and asked to be informed if she changed her mind. In due course he received a telephone call from the lady's son who said that it might be for sale. It emerged that the vehicle had been left to the son's father by his brother and although his father never used the Bedford he felt obliged to keep it.

On the death of the father the family decided that it could be sold and so a price (not disclosed) was agreed and the Bedford changed hands. Its confinement in the garage ensured that it was structurally sound and after washing off years of accumulated dust, giving the brakes an overhaul, renewing tyres and battery servicing it was ready to take to the road. There remained some reupholstering and re-carpeting and curtain replacement and she was ready to resume her role as a recreation vehicle.

I recalled an almost identical vehicle that I owned in the early 1970's. I had seen the Bedford Dormobile on the Marks Gate estate, Chadwell Heath sometimes parked, sometimes mobile and in due course I met its owner, Harry Kendall. Harry said that apart from its use on high days and holidays it was very much a family work home.

It was what could be described as 'good used condition'. I asked if he had any intension of selling it, he said 'No, not at present,' but promised to let me know if this situation changed. Many weeks passed before Harry told me his wife Joan had inherited her mother's estate and once her cottage in Redruth was sold they were going to Godfrey Davis's showroom in Epping to buy a brand new Commet Highwayman 'M reg. Once he had taken delivery the Bedford could be mine for £100. By the time I got to be its owner the MOT was almost due. It failed the test on a worn steering idler which caused it to wander about and the steering had to be constantly corrected.

This fault was corrected and our use of it developed in earnest. Outings to South Weald country park and the seaside where beef burgers and beans were cooked on the two burner hob and grill to the delight of the children then aged six and four. There were trips to Norfolk and for our holiday in August we planned a trip to Brean Sands, Western Super Mare with my cousin May and her granddaughter Tracey. We decided to travel overnight to avoid the heavy Saturday traffic and by putting the three children to bed on the folding bed in the back of the van and hopefully avoid persistent questioning of 'Are we nearly there?' and 'How many miles?' along with other tedious questions towards out progress. This worked most successfully as by the time we reached Gants Hill four miles away all three were fast asleep.

There was a flaw to this overnight travel however, the van petrol tank did not have the capacity to take us the full distance and I knew that if we could not find a filling station en route we should have to wait at Frome or Shepton Mallet until one opened for business on Saturday morning. Progress was steady and when we reached Andover I cast around for a filling station - nothing. Warminster, a bigger town, provided more hope but the only sign of life there were a few dim street lights.

The populace were tucked up in their beds oblivious to our needs. I was resigned to waiting at the next town for daylight to provide a solution. We had got about three miles past Warminster when we came upon a small village with a filling station lit up like a mini Blackpool. We pulled in and I cast about for any staff. There were none, it turned out to be a self service set up. You placed one pound note into a slot on the pump and the pump in return would deliver three gallons of petrol. What an oasis! In all my years of motoring since 1973 I have never seen it's like again, but what a life saver!

This refuelling meant that we could now press on and complete our journey and we duly reached Brean Sands just as dawn was breaking. We were able to park on the firm sandy beach and wait until the caravan site opened and we were able to access the static caravan that we had booked. This week passed all too quickly in a flurry of sightseeing, picknicking, and beach activities. We visited Minehead, Weston, Cheddar Gorge and Wells. Wells is England's smallest city and its cathedral is a delight and at that time on a pavement in the high street. Mary Rand's record distance long jump was marked out in the brass studs. Mary Rand, the 1960's Olympic gold medallist, who later became Mary Bignall Rand presumably came from Wells. We all thought the length of the jump was most impressive and marvelled at her feat.

On the Friday we decided to repeat the feat of travelling overnight and once again the children were quickly asleep and we arrived back home in Romford a little after 2am. The children awoke with a vengeance, demanding cocoa and bedtime stories. 'I want cocoa,' 'I want Jack and the Beanstalk.' Goldilocks and the Billy Goats Gruff joined the list. We soon scotched those unreasonable demands and packed them off to bed. The big adventure had ended.

The Bedford had performed well and continued to do so over many months more. During our period of ownership it required a new voltage control box, a new battery earth strap, a new universal joint and little else - none of these parts being unduly expensive. The following March I dropped it off at the local garage for its MOT, I telephoned later that

afternoon. 'Is the van ready please?' 'You can collect it but we can't pass it. The Spring hangers are badly corroded and we can't road test it'. This was a heavy blow. With money tight and demands on our purse from many quarters we were unable to afford a heavy repair bill.

After discussion we reluctantly decided to cut our losses and advertise it in the 'Exchange and Mart' for spares or repair for £30. The advert was due out on the following Thursday. On the preceding Sunday a gentleman rang asking it was still for sale. 'Yes it, but do you realise it doesn't have an MOT.' 'Is it driveable?' 'Oh yes.' 'I'll be over in an hour.' He was and after a short inspection he paid over the £30 and drove it away. We mourned its passing and thought we had heard the last of it but not so. Over the course of the next week the phone rang and rang with enquiry about the van. If I had that twenty similar I could of sold them all.

A pal enquired if I had sold the Bedford. I confirmed that I had, he told me he had seen it on the Barking by pass one morning with a gang of workmen on board. Someone had breathed new life into it. A year or more then passed and we moved on and thought no more about it. Then one morning we were in Collier Row when we saw a similar Dormobile, green and cream parked by the roadside. More than similar, it was our old van 348 FAO and sporting a GB plate to boot! Side window stricken proclaimed it had set foot in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Well I'll be jiggered. It certainly had a new lease of life. Philosophically speaking I thought back to our big adventure of 1973 and the fun we had and mused that those challenging West country hills of Countisbury, Porlock and the Cheddar Gorge had served as a good limber up for those alpine heights it had to face later on.

Ken Edge

Humour in the court

Things were going badly for the defendant. The detective sergeant in the witness box had answered defence counsel's questions in a frank and forthright manner and the tide was running against the defence. 'I suggest sergeant that you have a prejudice against my client.' 'Indeed not, sir.' The mudslinging was about to begin. When all else fails a spot of character assassination might sway the jury although this is a sure sign that our learned friends case has the skids well and truly under it and his client is heading for a spot of detention in a suitable house of correction. 'I put it you sergeant that your evidence has been a tissue of lies.' The sergeant in an aggrieved tone - 'Certainly not, sir.' 'Do you mean to tell the court that you never tell a lie?' 'Oh no, sir.' Defence counsel sensing an opening thrusts home his rapier 'Pray tell the court under what circumstance would you resort to telling lies?' The sergeant turns to the judge and replies 'In the interests of the preservation of domestic harmony, sir.' The judge inclines his head towards the sergeant and raises his eyebrows 'Mm, quite so sergeant.' A successful prosecution in the bag. *Ken Edge*

Anybody may contribute to the newsletter by post to Ken Edge, 3 Haynes Rd. Hornchurch, RM11 2HS or please feel free to email Kenneth636@hotmail.com Thank you