
PAST TIMES

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Introduction by Richard Thomas, our farthestmost GHS member

I was born and bred in Galleywood and lived there until 1966 when I left to go to University and I never returned to stay other than visiting my family for holidays and family occasions. My father died in 1981 and my mother lived in Skinners Lane until 2000 when she had to move to a nursing home in Southminster, near my sister, Sally, where she remained until we sadly lost her in 2004. I have lived in Orkney for 25 years and although it is to the far north, in some ways it reminds me of Galleywood when I was growing up. People still have time to pass the time of day with you – it can take the best part of an hour on a Saturday morning to walk up the main street in Kirkwall because of the number of people you meet. The shops are still largely locally owned and the staff will expect you to have a chat with them while you are being served. They are still very adept at mental arithmetic and don't generally need a calculator for the bill! Out in the country, the shops are still local and carry a range of goods like the shops used to in Galleywood. Orkney is a farming community – mostly sheep and cattle and the main crop is barley as it is too cold for wheat. So the pace of life is very much like it used to be in Galleywood before it grew out of recognition. **RT**

Richard Thomas was born in 1947 in his Grandparent's house 'Rushcroft' next door to the Horse and Groom. Richard's family were the 4th generation to live in Galleywood. His great grandparents were dour Scots who came to Galleywood in the 1900s and ran the White Bear for 10 years. Richard mentions that local Galleywood people always referred to the White Bear as 'The Bear'. His great grandparents had 3 children. Richard's great aunt Christina married George Barton, whose family kept The Eagle, and became the village baker. His grandmother married Robert Finch, the golf club professional, who died during the Great War in 1917. Richard's mother went to the village school and his father was in the Royal Engineers and was evacuated from Dunkirk. He supervised the building of pillboxes along the Southend Road.



Ace Fruit Packers - Courtesy of Galleywood Heritage Centre

Richard attended Galleywood School and remembers that Mr Smith, the Headmaster, had an impressive light in his office which showed the planets. Children came to Galleywood school from a wide area including the cottages by the Ship in Stock Road and from Margaretting Tye. Children were brought by van or came by bus or walked. Richard lived in Skinners Lane and before the Pymes Road houses were built in the late 1950s and early 1960s there were three fields between Skinners Lane and the school. The middle field had blackberries and Richard used to walk to school through the fields. In summer when the hay was cut the children used to make dens out of the bales. In summer, adders would come across the road from the common to bask on the school playground. A check had to be carried out before the children could go out. Miss Silverstone was an excellent teacher. She made the children do handwriting practice and taught nature studies and mental arithmetic. Every child left the school with the ability to do arithmetic, read and write. School dinners were taken at the Keene Hall.

Wreckage of two WW2 aeroplanes was found where Chelmer Park is now situated. Spots farm was developed for housing. Galleydene Hall, Galley Hall, Allen Attwoods and Moretons were all big houses. These, too, were demolished to make way for new houses.

Like most Galleywood children, Richard spent a lot of time playing on the common. The Mill Pond never ran dry and was a home to newts. The children played on the batteries of the Napoleonic defences. The common had areas of rough grass, wet areas, gorse and dry bracken which caught fire every summer. This was very exciting for the children when fire engines came to put out the fire.

Richard remembers the shops in Galleywood which sold sweets. Mrs Parsloe and Mrs Jackson in Well Lane, Galleywood Stores on Stock Road, Roses on the common and the Co-Op opposite the Eagle. Billy Smith ran the Post Office on Stock Road and Wally Barton had a barber shop.. Harry Frost was the village butcher.

An annual flower and produce show was held on the field called 'Chaplin's Field'. Games such as pillow fights on the greasy pole took place. There was a flying chair roundabout for the children. Football and cricket parties were held at the Keene Hall.



Milk round with Bomber – Courtesy of Galleywood Heritage Centre

Bearmans Farm stood where Chelmer Park is now and was a dairy farm owned by the Chaplin family who also owned Rignals farm. Tom Chaplin had a milk round with Bomber the horse. Milk was supplied in bottles or straight from the churn into householder's own jugs. Richard remembers the joy of tasting cold milk for the first time when the family got a fridge! He remembers the Queen's Coronation in 1953 as a big event. The family watched it on Pat Hazel's television in Well Lane. The boys received a book entitled 'Royalty in Essex' and girls received a Coronation spoon.

Richard remembers main drainage brought into Galleywood during the early 1960s when the new estates were being built. Before that time his family had an outside lavatory. Paraffin lamps were used inside. Mr Bell, from Danbury, sold paraffin oil along with groceries and fruit and veg. Richard's family had a bath tub in the kitchen and the water was boiled in the copper. Everyone in the family took turns to have a bath.

Galleywood was surrounded by fields and orchards. There was the Ace Fruit Packers in Rignals Lane and Waites apple orchard opposite. Clarke's fruit

orchards were in Watchouse Road and Brook Lane. The Clarke and Waite families worked together along with the Taylor brothers (Lathcoates) in Beehive Lane. Richard picked apples in the school holidays and picked potatoes in the fields towards Great Baddow.

The Revd. Roughton was the local vicar and came into the school to take services. The Revd. Lendon followed him as vicar and was a more jovial man. Mr King was the Methodist Chapel Superintendent. Joy Lodge, Jill Chaplin and Beryl Gould taught at the Sunday School. They arranged outings to Walton-on-the-Naze. Richard remembers his own family holidays to Romney Marsh, Walton and Scotland by coach from London to Glasgow. Richard's father worked for English Electric and afterwards as an electrician at Essex County Cricket ground. The Essex Cricket team played all over Essex and Richard would cycle to matches with sandwiches and squash. Richard concludes that Galleywood was a good place to grow up in. It was a friendly village and with a very effective 'bush telegraph'. (Oral History interview in 2018.)

Galleywood Heritage Centre – forthcoming events

Thursday 3rd September. "Copdocks 600 years of Village History" by Christine and Les Whybro. £3 per person.

Heritage Open Day free events, most will be bookable via the Chelmsford Civic Society website from early August www.chelmsfordhod.co.uk

Tuesday 15th September. Morning walk Galleywood Common. Afternoon tour of the Heritage Centre.

Thursday 17th September. 2pm talk by Alan Pamphilon "Working Lives - Blue Plaques"

Saturday 19th September. Village walks starting and finishing at Galleywood library. One in morning and one in afternoon.

Sunday 20th September . Heritage Centre open day. Display of photos of Galleywood and Chelmsford and old packaging. Family History help desks by the Essex Society for family history and much more

Thursday 12th November. 2pm talk "Land Girls," by Dr Viv Newman. £3 per person.

Sunday 15th November. 10 to 3.30 Remembrance Exhibition. Entry free.

**For more details contact susan.wilson@galleywoodheritagecentre.org.uk
07780763127.**

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