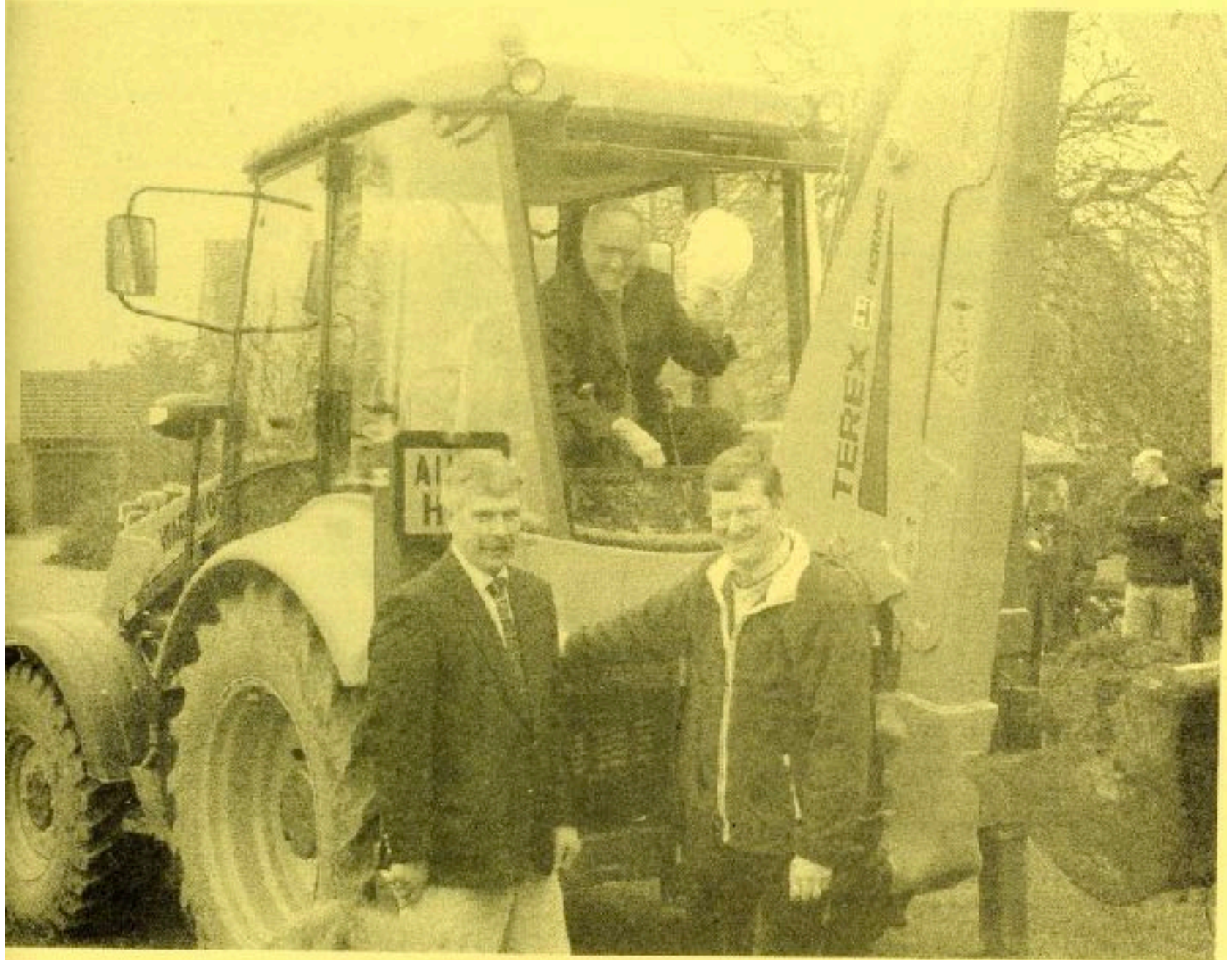


BLUNTISHAM PARISH MAGAZINE APRIL 2004



WE HAVE STARTED!!
(SEE INSIDE FOR PROGRESS DETAILS)

Daytime Fellowship meets on alternate Tuesday and Thursdays for those who prefer it If you are interested phone Ingrid 740456 or Jane 843530

Home Communion is available on request for the housebound who miss this vital link with the Church.

Churchyard Care Line Bel 841476 May 01353 740224 help is always welcome. **Treasurer** Neil Cross 841761 **Churchwardens** Sue Maxwell 841951 Judith Aguda 841045 **Rector** Colin Backhouse 740456
Email colin.backhouse@ely.anglican.org

Dorothy's Bells of St Mary's

We are on target to Restore the Bells this year. Watch out for their removal in June and return in September. they will be fitted into a new Iron frame set lower down the tower that will help stabilise the tower . The creaking and cracking tower is the reason the Bells were last rung in 1850. The Revd Henry Sayers did his best in 1910, put in two new bells, recast another and fitted the chiming mechanism we have used ever since. In his booklet "A Short Account of the bells of St Mary's Church " Henry Sayers wrote: " At some time in the future It may be possible, by the provision of a detached iron frame instead of the present wooden one, to make the tower safe for the ringing of the bells , in which case it will only be necessary to fit them with wheels." It will cost at least £52,000 most of which will come from outside the Church. any offer of support would be welcome. If you are intersted in Bellringing phone Mike Bateman 843534. We hope to set up some sort of semi-permanent Exhibition because Bells and Bellringing are part of Your Heritage especially coupled to the work of Dorothy L Sayers author, theologian, scholar advertising copy writer! Did you know she worked on the advertising campaigns for Coleman's Mustard and Guinness in the thirties? Her childhood gives a fascinating insight into the social structures from which we came.

My Childhood memories of the best place in the world – Bluntisham –
by Tony Rowell

I was born on 24th March 1932 in No 9 East Street Bluntisham where I still live.

My grandparents and parents, Jonas and Sarah Abbott and Wallace and Winifred Rowell were smallholders and fruit growers.

Some of my first memories were being taken to school in High Street, now the Scout HQ, by my friend Geoff Purchas who took me to the infants' playground and left me. Nobody took any notice of me so I ran home down Meeting Walk. My mother then took me back and introduced me to Miss Pratt, the infant teacher who was also a great friend to me and my family.

My next memory was of the Water Tower being built. My grandfather sold the corner of his field to the Water Company and a Company named Shanks had the contract. Another company had the sub-contract to lay the pipes into people's property, the offer being they would lay standpipes onto your property free of charge. Afterwards you joined up to these pipes and took water when you required it.

Previous to the water, gas had been piped into the village although I do not remember this except for the fact that there were large quantities of lead piping left lying around which Geoff and I collected into my yard and garden. After watching the water pipes being laid, we laid out the lead pipes in our yard and garden in similar fashion and had a wonderful time. Unfortunately Granddad would come and take them all up again after we had left!

After the gas and water in 1938-39 came the electricity. This was another wonderful happening for we kids. Poles were being erected with wires connecting to properties again. The deal here was that the Electricity board would connect to your property and wire your house with three lights and one power point, free of charge.

Primary school days were very enjoyable as I have said before. Miss Pratt was not only a gentlewoman but a good teacher. Although we did not realise it at the time, the grounding we received from this lady stood us in good stead for the rest of our school life and longer.

We now come to 1939 and the war. I was in chapel with my mother on Sunday morning when somebody rushed in and announced that war had been declared. Within a week we received evacuees from London. Highbury High School for girls and when I returned home I had two sisters, one black girl called Yasmin and one white called Marion. Yasmin's father was a doctor and came down on Sunday and took her back to London. Marion stayed two weeks until school was transferred to Huntingdon. My family still remained in touch with Marion.

Chapel and Sunday School took up a tremendous amount of my time from 5 to 16. My grandfather was a Deacon and my mother was a Deacon and Church Secretary for a number of years. Mother and her best friend who I knew as Auntie Ida, provided two vases of flowers for the pulpit every Sunday for 50 years and it was a privilege to go with them on a Saturday to arrange them.

More evacuees came shortly after this from Tollington Park Boys. They caused much havoc for a time filling the ponds in Hollidays Road with apples. School at this time was split into two, Bluntisham attended the mornings and Tollington Park the afternoons. Tollington Park eventually took over the Sunday School and we were then back to normal.

When war began, it was not long before food rationing when you were allowed ¼ lb bacon, ¼ lb of butter and ¼ lb of tea, ¼ lb of sweets and ¼ lb of cheese per person per week. There were no such things as bananas, oranges or tinned fruit. English fruit was available in season but was controlled by price, Vics and gages @ £60 per ton and most other varieties @ £30 - £40.

During the war we had several hair-raising experiences. A Lancaster bomber crashed near Thorpe's Hovels opposite the nursery down Needingworth Road. I was out shooting with my father down Bluntisham Fen when it came over low and on fire. I think the crew were all killed. We then had a Mosquito crash up Fanny Kimpton's Drove (now Nobles Lane), exploding on crashing and killing both occupants. My father's dog found the pilot's watch in the field next to the Blacksmith's shop. He returned it to Wyton and later received a letter of

thanks from the pilot's parents. Some bombs dropped along the Railway Bank near Mr. Pingree's and Lord Haw Haw who used to broadcast on Radio Germany Calling said they had bombed the railway from Cambridge to March, but they were incendiary bombs that did not explode.

There was a flying bomb which fell on the Parks at Somersham and a Lancaster crashed on Pidley Road Somersham with some loss of life. A Whirlwind plane fell in pieces from the sky onto Colne Fields and some explosive bombs fell on a farm at Over Fen.

One further occasion was on a Saturday when we were skating on Bury Fen. The ice was thick with some 200 or 300 people when a Sterling Bomber came low over the ice taking photographs. As he banked over Earith the plane collided with a Hurricane Fighter plane and plunged deep into the river bank between Earith and Sutton. It was a sad day as all were killed.

We were lucky really as we had Warboys with Sterlings, Upwood with Sterlings, Wyton with Lancasters, Gravelly with Lancasters and Waterbeach and Oakington with Mosquitos.

During the war, Bluntisham being a fruit growing area, many of the boys from Wyton and Warboys on their days and evenings off would cycle over to earn some money by pulling plums. From Wyton they would arrive around 6 pm, pull until dusk at Double Summer Time and earn some 10/- (50p) then go down to the Swan and spend it. This was their life because many of them were on raids over Germany and never came back.

Fruit was the largest industry in the area with over 2,000 acres at this time and Victoria plums grown here were the best in the country.

My father had a 30 acre smallholding growing $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre of rhubarb, one acre of raspberries and ten acres of plums and apples underplanted with gooseberries, blackcurrants and redcurrants. There were fourteen varieties of plum, Sterlings with Rivers through to Damsons, then twelve varieties of apples. Pulling took place over a period of twenty weeks.

At this period besides local labour and during the war we schoolchildren had an extra 2-4 weeks' holiday to help with the work. There were also travellers coming in for work, as many as 80 - 100 families with their horses and Vardos. They were very little trouble and very hard working. They travelled through Essex, Norfolk Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire planting sugar beet, hoeing, planting potatoes and some digging and chopping of sugar beet as there was very little machinery at that time.

In 1945 at the end of the war in Germany, V.E. Day, Celebration Sports and a Garden Party were held in Mr. John Searle's field in East Street where St. Mary's Road and Bramley Grove are now. We had a few fireworks left over from 1939 but the main bangers were crow scarers. After this came V.J. Day and the end of the war with Japan which meant more celebrations!

As a sequel to the new Village Hall - Bluntisham has never had one but a committee was formed in 1947-8 to build one. Mr. P. Tebbutt who owned the land at 18 High Street offered to give this and plans were drawn up, the cost at that time was £2,500. There was to be a stage one end, a dance floor big enough for badminton and with a projector room at the other end as a travelling cinema visited once a week.

Six local stall-holders and farmers offered £100 each, but after two years only £800 had been raised so the committee disbanded and that was the end of the Village Hall until now, 57 years later!

Although £2,500 does not seem much now, wages were only £1.50 per week per man which equates to about £16.25 in today's prices.

A copy of the Sports Celebration of May 6th 1935 is included on the next pages. It is very interesting to see the prizes and different types of races, some of which would definitely be forbidden under the present Health and Safety conscious regime!!