



Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

Interview with Dr .Peter Pollitt. 9th June 2014

My Grandfather who was Mr. Harris bought Sharrow in 1917 for £300 from another Mr. Harris who owned land in Cleeve Prior. It is about 3-400yrs old, and it was a weekend and holiday home.

Before he bought the house, my Grandfather got his wife and daughter to come down by train to Salford Priors which is on the wrong side of the river. They asked the way to Cleeve Prior and they had to walk across the fields. It was raining and dark and they had to cross the river over a plank across the top of the weir.

I was born in 1921 and I came to stay regularly as a child during weekends and in the summer until I was about 12 yrs. old. I remember the old mill. It had two big wheels but it was not working. There was a weir built across the mill and this brought water up to 5-6 feet. Before the weir was collapsed the old farmer living there used to drive his shire horse across at the ford.

The land close to the mill was very busy during weekends. There were steam boats and river trips. Most of the activity was on the Cleeve Prior side and several people including my Grandfather had boat houses.

People came from Birmingham at the weekends and there could be up to 40 cars parked by the riverside. People also swam in the river. There were also landing stages for punts and a café at the mill which was always very busy.

A man from the village was always there at the weekends. He was a self - appointed car park attendant and he got tips from everyone. He had a huge beard which covered his face and he terrified me as a child.

My father had a motorbike on which he drove down to Cleeve Prior. He was a bit of a madcap and he was known as Hell Fire Jack from Sharrow. I can't remember the make of the bike but I think it was Indian.

There was an incident as he was one of the first to get an outboard motor for his boat. He used to go blasting down the river making a lot of noise. He left



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the motor in the boathouse but it was stolen, so he got a much bigger one and made even more noise.

I was the only one who swam in the river with our two Alsatian dogs. One of the dogs was called Wolf and he was my best friend and very important to me. My father trained him and he was my minder.

I remember the village and the cows being brought in for milking just by the bend by Sharrow up to the home farm. I can remember it took a long time to get the cows round the bend. I got to know the stock family very well. The girls from the Stock family were friends of my mothers. Jack and Cecil ran the farm. One of the older girls married a Bomford. Colin Bomford is one of their children. The stock family lived in the Victorian house next to Sharrow. They had a riding school. I can remember my uncle saying Mrs. Stock senior was a very stern lady sitting in her chair knitting. We used to get milk and cream from the dairy. I can remember a man with a horse drawn waggon coming to the village. He sold paraffin and sharpened knives and scissors.

After WW2 the mill had gone. There is a story that soldiers had practised putting up baily bridges and knocked it about and that local people had helped themselves to stone for houses.

When I was at medical school in Birmingham I cycled to Cleeve Prior with a friend and we came back with a sack of onions tied to the back of our bikes.

I was allowed to take interior photos of the Manor before it was sold for housing. The structure is very like the inside of Sharrow. I was also involved in the Cleeve Prior Heritage Trust from the early days. Lyn and Don Warren started it by showing people how to be self-sufficient. They got bands of volunteers together and grants were given for the restoration of Field Barn. The volunteers even cleared a part down by the mill and there were some plays put on. I have taken photos of the events and the rebuilding of Field Barn.