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WHAT HAPPENED WAS - 14

Now that these tales are rolling along steadily and a few hardy souls do read them, I had better get this off my chest. Sometimes I have a job to remember what happened yesterday but forty years ago comes fairly easily, (some of it) so bear with me if some of the things get a little bit mixed up date-wise, as mostly I am working from memory.

As I said earlier Janet was thrown in at the deep end and I didn't realise how she felt about things. Being a city girl she missed street lights and pavements and people. Then there were strange sounds at night and the once a week bus into Bridgwater to get the shopping and lots of other silly little things that I was too thick to see.

But all was not lost, for she made friends with Shirley Gunningham, whose husband Aubrey kept his car in the garage at the side of the cottage, and that was the start of a friendship which is still strong to-day. Also there was Mike and Joyce Carver who lived with Joyce's brother Dave across the road and Jim and Sylv Squires at No. 2.

Coates Fencing got in touch to say they were working flat out making frames for another batch of tip-up seats and was thinking of starting a night shift, would I be interested? Not wanting to sound too keen I said I could do four nights, ten till six. This worked out just right; I would get home by quarter past six in the morning and get into bed without even waking Janet, then up again about ten with the rest of the day for proper work. That lasted for two months.

Thinking back about some of the great characters I got to know there was Bill Geen at Bush Farm.

Years back Bill was really progressive, being among the first in Somerset to try new ideas and machines, but then he didn't see the need to upgrade, so most of his tackle became outdated or worn out. He would phone up and in that deep gruff voice of his he would say "MISTARR JOHN, we wants a little bit of WIELDING doing". "Send it down" I'd say and Ricky or Harold would turn up with a broken or bent jig-saw of a machine and say "Bill says, you know what it wants and shall we wait?" I couldn't bring myself to say it wants cutting up, so I said I'll see what I could do, and when you get back tell Bill to say a prayer, or better still two.

To give an instance of how far behind Bill was, he used to grow cauliflowers. But instead of having a machine to plant out seedlings they used a corn-drill to sow the seed. Consequently when the plants started to grow they were too close together, so the men would go into the field and hoe out most of them leaving the remaining ones spaced correctly so that they had room to develop properly.

Each year about two dozen hoes, mostly bent or broken turned up for mending and sharpening. Having said that I always thought of Bill as a real gentleman.



SLB