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[050 Recollections of Albury Estate by Charles Ward](#)

There is a set of 39 slides for this talk.

Albury Village Hall, 17 March 1993.

Talk 24 minutes. With discussion 54 minutes.

① INTRO

- ② My life with the Albury Estate started back in 1934 when my Father applied
- ③ for the Farm Labourers job on the Home Farm. This meant looking after Stock, also to be relief Cowman to milk and Plough, Thatching and all jobs on the Farm.
- Having got the job the Agent, at the time being Major Meacher, said there would be work for me also at the Farm. I quickly found out I would have to learn all the jobs my Father did and so my work on the Albury Estate Farm started. At that time there was a Farm Bailiff, two Carters, three Farm Labourers, two Cowmen and
- ④ also a Shepherd, leaving myself as Farm Boy. We had five horses, the Head Carter having one pair, the under Carter also having a pair, which left the odd horse for me to work which of course became my responsibility, which left a lot of work for me. I had to groom the horse and work with it every day which was five and a half days, week-ends I had to feed the horse Saturdays and Sundays, not having much free time. We started work at seven in the morning (through) until five in the evenings, with one hour for lunch mid-day and fifteen minutes in the mornings from nine until quarter past.
- Of course there were many jobs on the farm for me, some of the jobs being Horse-shoeing, Ploughing and general Carting. At that time there was a Dairy Herd,
- ⑤ being about 30 milking Cows, of which milk had to be taken to Albury Park House Dairy, which meant pushing a hand-cart across Farm Hill meadow to the dairy for making butter and cream. Then there were also about 200 laying chickens to provide eggs, and chickens for the table. There was also 30 bullocks, half being at
- ⑥ Home Farm and half at what was known as the Lambing Yard, just inside Albury Park gates. They of course, had to be fed seven days a week. I remember we had half day off on Saturdays, but that meant working until one-o'clock (because) we had to get enough food for two days, which meant about a ton between Home Farm and Lambing Yard. We used to cut our Chaff, grind Mangels and crush Oats for all the cattle. We had our own Threshing machine, also a Grinding machine to prepare the food for the cattle. The power for (the) Grinding machine came from the turbine which was
- ⑦ operated by water from the Silent Pool and Sherborne Pond. This water came from under the main A25 road by pipe which is still there today and was one more job
- ⑧ for me to go down about 18 steps to an iron wheel which let water onto the Turbine.

- I remember those days the wages being 29 shillings a week for men and seven shillings for me, in the Summer months you could earn a bit of extra money over-
- ⑨ time, Hay-making and Harvest, the over-time money only being nine pence an hour for men and sixpence for me. The farm workers got a Cottage for three shillings a week.
- ⑩ One other job I remember having to do was to go and open gates at New Road, known as Ten Acres, for the Duchess when she went riding across to the Warren and Blackheath, and then again for her coming back. I also remember the years before the second World War when the Duke and Duchess offered the Estate workers a week's
- ⑪ holiday at Alnwick Castle, which came around every five or six years. Another thing I remember those days, at Christmas time all the Estate workers had a joint of meat, which went on for a good many years until the Estate ~~started~~ ^{stopped} having Sheep, we then had two shillings and sixpence to make up for that. One other job I almost forgot I had to do Market-days was to take the odd horse and help pull the vehicle
- ⑫ up to Newlands Corner, this was known as the Trace-Horse. Of course the cattle transporter was nothing like today's motor transporters, it only held one Bullock or eight Sheep or Pigs. When this was used on Market-days my job was to take the Trace-horse which was hooked on to the shafts of the vehicle by two chains, which were attached to a collar worn by the Trace-horse. There was a hand brake which was operated by a handle. There was also a device which was known as a skid shoe, which was Blacksmith made, the reason for this was the wheel fitted into it to hold the waggon back going down the hill. That took a lot of weight off the horse.
- ⑬ Some people may wonder why Newlands Corner Road was not straight, the reason being if the horse could not see too far in front he would pull better. Of course, the road being windy also helped to get up the hill.

Of course there are a good many jobs which one repeated throughout the years as the seasons came around, but my life on the Farm was coming to an end as the second World War was looming ahead. So early in 1939, I told the Estate Agent I was going to join the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He wished me luck and said when ~~war came~~ ^{the war was over} I could always come back to the Estate, so two weeks before war broke out I was called-up and was away for seven years, which of course took me to many parts of the World.

(14) When war broke out on September 3rd. 1939, I had already received my call-up papers six weeks before when I had to report to Reading. I remember arriving at the Southern Railway station and having to go to St.Giles School, which took about 10 minutes walk. So having got there I went into the Recruiting Centre and waited quite some time. I then asked the Recruiting Officer if they had forgotten me, so he looked at my papers and said that I should not be there, due to a mistake at the Air Ministry as I was already listed as being in the R.A.F.. However, they gave me my rail fare and a day's pay plus money for food and I came back to Albury to wait. Two weeks after that I had to report to Uxbridge and my war service started. When I had joined some months before I was known (graded) as F.M.A. (Fitter, Mechanic, Airframes) which was for work on airframes. However, a friend I had joined up with drew my attention to a notice on D.R.O's. which for those not knowing were Daily Routine Orders, and that notice stated that volunteers were required for Air Gunners, so we went along to the Orderly Room where our names and numbers were taken. Within two days we were called to the Orderly Room and sent to West Drayton to sit before a Special Board. After the exams they told me that my education standard was ^{only} ~~not~~ good enough for a straight Air Gunner, which was our first thought. But we had some training on Machine Guns and passed as Leading Aircraftsman & from then on I went to many parts of the world. I then became an Instructor until the last 18 months before D. Day, when I was sent (posted) (15) to Nos. 190/620 Sqdns. at Dunmow in Essex where we were to fly the Stirling aircraft towing Horsa gliders. The two squadrons transported about 6000 Airborne troops to Caen in Normandy and later to Arnhem. We were the first 12 aircraft to arrive over Normandy at about 5.0am on June 6th. 1944. The foregoing being only a short part of my R.A.F. days I will now go on to my return to Albury Estate.

Having met my wife and married her, I now wanted a house. So I went and saw the Agent, who was still Major Meacher & I was told that an Estate Carpenter was wanted and being that I had worked on the Estate before they said I could have the job, so we (16) went to live in Water Lane Cottages. So I was back again to work for the Estate, my boss being Mr. Bruce, the Head Forester, at that time. He told me that I would be (17) required to make all the gates for the Estate, also to erect new fences and do repair (18) work. I used to make Field Gates, Hunting Gates, Stiles for Shows in the Seven Counties.

Of course, I had help to erect these at the Show, which sometimes lasted the whole week, but as time went on a new tractor was got for the farm. However it proved to be not suitable for that work as it had a big winch at the back and the driver could not work the machinery, so it was decided the Forestry section would have it. But at that time we did not have a tractor driver so Mr. Bruce asked me if I could drive? I said I could but I had to get a licence before going on the road. This of course did not take long as I already had a car licence. The tractor then became my responsibility.

It meant that I had to transport timber to the Saw Mill, which most people now know as the Sand Pit - towards Newlands Corner. We had a full time Sawyer and two men

helping, the power for the Saw Bench came from a Steam Engine. I remember at one time we had no Sawyer and some timber was required on the Estate for the Clerk of Works, so I

worked the Steam Engine & also the Saw Bench until the Agent came up one day, he said he didn't think I should be there on my own in case something went wrong. However I cut out about 2,000 ft. which they wanted and then stopped until we got our Sawyer back again. From time to time I would be out on the Estate cutting timber for the mills and cleaning over-^{ow}green wood lands for replanting. At one time we reckoned to plant about 25 acres a year, an acre being 48 x 40 yards. This of course had to be fenced in to protect the young trees from rabbits. We also planted Christmas trees in woodlands and sold about 6000 a year, which was more jobs for me. Mr. Bruce would tell me which plantation he wanted cleared and I would have three or four other foresters to help. The Christmas trees those days you could only get two shillings

and sixpence for. Another thing may interest people was to do the maintenance on the Silent Pool, that was to keep a flow of water at the same level all the time.

I remember three times the Silent Pool drying-up, one time about 1947-8 while the pool was dried out, we decided to re-line the pool from one end to the other. We were lucky to have clay at the Brick Yard which was the same place as the Saw Mill. The clay was left over from the days when bricks were made there. We carted the clay down to the Silent Pool and then had to barrow it into the Pool. The clay was light blue which of course makes it very clear when the pool is full. As it is now it measures about 19 feet^{deep,} we had a flat bottomed boat for reaching the water weeds from time to time.

The boat house which is on the South side of the Pool, I had to thatch with Heather from Albury Heath.

A number of local people have thought that the reason why the Silent Pool dries^d up was that the Canadian troops that were stationed over on the North Downs sank bore holes a long way down into the ground, which diverted the springs. Looking the other day it would seem that the springs had found their way through down to Silent Pool again.

(24) Another job I remember having to do was the Tunnel which runs from Albury Park Gardens to Silver Wood, near to Shere. The Tunnel of course is very old, it is between (25) 200 & 300 yards long, being man made. It was scraped out from the Sand Stone which surrounds that part of the Wood. It was reported to Mr. Bruce that the water was coming in from the roof of the tunnel about half way in. So we thought the best way to do this would be to take a ball of string with us and a pair of torches. After going about half way along we found water on the floor of the tunnel. So we knotted the string, then went outside, taking the string from the entrance over the top of the wood.

(26) with survey marker poles, this took us to the foot path known as the Pilgrims Way. What had happened was the water had run down the path into a Mole-hole thus finding its way to the tunnel roof. We decided to dig it out and replace it with more of the brickyard clay, which of course did the job. I also made two or three doors (27) for the tunnel at the Silver Wood end, these being burnt down by the local lads until the Agent thought it would be better to seal the entrance up at the Shere end. There is however an opening of about two feet for light and air into the tunnel.

(28) While talking about Albury Park Gardens, I used to make the bridges over the (29) streams and keep them in good order. Only last year I built a new bridge over the Tillingbourne Stream so that the fishermen could get from the Garden side to the meadow leading into the fish lake area which was made a year or so ago^{at the Shere end of the Park}. In my early

(30) days with the Estate this pool was known as the Bog Garden, which had many wild fowl (31) and domestic ducks and within the Bog Garden there were two Summer Houses which required maintainance from time to time, they were also thatched with heather from Albury Heath.

(32) My work with the Estate took me to Syon House Park also, which was a London House for the Duke and Duchess in the late 40's. When the Duke decided to open it to the public, the Park land and Garden being about 65 acres at the time of opening, we (33) had to fence off about a third of the Gardens, so we encircled it with about 700 yards of Chestnut fencing. The reason for this was^{for} the family to have their own part, and over the following years I went every week for maintainence work on one ^{job} machine or

another.

(35) I suppose over the years I must have forgotten a lot of jobs I did, but now and again it all comes flashing back, little things what happened now and then. I remember Mr. Bruce saying to me he wanted some grass hooks and said I was to go down to the Estate Yard where the Clerk of Works would let me have the van to go to Guildford. We had an account with Angel Sons. & Gray and having got there the Counter Salesman said they were out of stock until the end of the week. I then went to West Surrey Farmers, we had an account there also, but when the account came into the Estate office the grass hooks from the West Surrey Farmers cost three pence more, so I was 'hailed over the coals' for this. Another thing I remember, I was repairing a fence up towards Newlands Corner and there were holes in the fence where timber had been taken out. The timber merchant sent the posts and wire and we were to make the fence good. I had two other men helping me at the time and the time got around to ten minutes to lunchtime and Saturday being our half day, one man said he was going to get his hair cut & I remarked to him he would possibly pass Mr. Bruce. So on Monday Mr. Bruce said to me "what was Bill doing going towards Shere?" So I had to tell him and he was told not to do it again. Also I remember when the Duke and Duchess were married at Westminster Abbey, there was to be a reception for the Staff and people in the London area at Syon House. It was also arranged that after the reception at Syon House the Duke and Duchess would come down to Albury Park for a reception for the Albury Staff. The whole week before this happened Mr. Gilbert, the Head Gardener at that time and also Mr. Bruce who as I said earlier was Head Forester, had arranged that just inside Albury Park Gate there was to be a Floral Arch built. This was quite a size, about 10 feet high and about three ft. deep. This of course went across the drive and we filled the Arch in with Laurel and Rhododendrons and also seasonal flowers. The reason for this was that when the Duke and Duchess arrived we would then attach a rope on each side of the Bentley and then pull it up to the Court Yard where there would be refreshments waiting. However they were over an hour late when we received a message from the House that the Bentley had broken down at Newlands Corner and the A.A. were repairing it. However all was well, the Duke and Duchess arrived and the reception took place. For some years after the Duke spoke about the old Bentley breaking down.

(36)

Another thing I remember, Mr. Bruce said to me one day that we had a bit of a tricky job in felling a big Elm tree down in Albury Village by the house known as Weston Lea, at that time Mr. Gordon-Lennox was living there - being related to the Duchess Helen. This tree was about 200 Cu.Ft. (in volume), about 80Ft. high and 7 Ft. from one side to the other. Those days we had no chain saws, only cross cut saws, our biggest being about 8Ft. long. So we had to cut quite a lot away before the saw would reach it. We had no tractor, we had to shin up the tree and fix a rope to it and the tree had to be felled into the Gordon-Lennox's garden, as Church Lane was behind and also Clive Lodge. It was quite a good day weather-wise except for an Easterly breeze that proved to be a bit of a problem. We had sawn into the Tree to within 8 inches of the "sink" (notch) and the tree was not lifting (leaning) so Mr. Bruce said I should go and tell the Gardener and his wife to leave the Cottage until the tree came down. There was of course one more problem, the Duchess Helen had said to Mr. Bruce she would like to see the tree come down, so we had to wait until the Duchess arrived for lunch with Mr. Gordon-Lennox. So the duchess arrived and word was given to go ahead, we all took hands to the rope and after a few worrying moments down it came. I remember Mr. Bruce said to me it was one of his worst moments in felling a tree.

38 Six years ago I became retiring age, but having said that the Estate still finds me work from time to time and when I look back over the years I really enjoyed my work. 39 I must say one could not have worked for better employers & over my working years I have seen six Estate Agents. So in closing, if anyone would like to ask any question I will do my best to answer them. Thank you.

23'36"

A memory of Charles Ward by Ewhurst History Society member Martyn Warrell, while visiting the Albury Heath Montgomery Memorial in May 2024:

At the memorial it jogged my memory that Charlie Ward, a late local resident, (with his wife Dot, a standard bearer for the local RBL in the 1990s), had lived not far away just across the heath in an Albury Estate cottage, and had seen service on D Day, apparently as one of the glider pilots during the opening airborne assault on Pegasus Bridge during the early hours of 6th June 1944.

Charlie had a dry sense of humour and recalled afterwards how, when the troops were just assembling prior to take off in their towed glider, they were concerned at an individual joining them 'draped in explosives' - obviously destined for a specific task.

Charlie quipped that 'everyone kept well away from him until we were all boarded, and then made sure he was last on and first off!'

No bragging or sense of heroism – just simple statements touched with amusement.