

HIGH BICKINGTON AS I KNEW IT.

Written 1997-1998.

Memories of S.L.Squire, Born 1913.

Early Days

Born just before the 1914-1918 war, I can remember the men who went to the war in Khaki, perhaps on home leave, also soldiers being billeted at Hope Cottage the place of my youth, who were around here baling hay for the horses which were used so much during the first World War. I remember soldiers putting on their "**Putties**" which were strips of cloth about four inches wide that were wound around their legs where one would normally wear leggings. I have a cutting from a magazine showing a picture of just such activity. (copyright permission to be sought if used.)

I also remember the big shire horses which were used for pulling the oak trees which were used for timber during the war, nearly all the woods around High Bickington were cut down at that time. I can see them now, coming home from Dadland, covered in mud, as were the men that were with them. I remember some sort of marquee for the Armistice.

It is funny how little things stay in your mind like the North Devon Herald being brought to the village on Thursday (or was it Friday), by a Roborough man named Kit Harris who used to announce his arrival by ringing a hand-bell and walking into the village with his papers on his back in a bag. I've taken the penny to him many times.

There were travelling merchants of every description, horse drawn, like the one with household utensils and china who always wore a bowler hat and a blue bow tie with white spots. His vehicle was a sort of canvas covered four wheeled wagon.

The Barnstaple baker who came on Monday, Wednesday and Friday also had a four wheeled van pulled by a horse which had an army number stamped on its neck. The roundsman would arrive at our house sometimes as late as 7pm, wet through, and have to go nine miles back to Barnstaple after that.

The horse would have its '**nose bag**' put on as it entered the village. The nose bag was a round canvass bag - about two feet deep with a wooden bottom - that hung over its head. In it was corn and chaff and perhaps a bit of '**mangold**' (animal food similar to swedes). and between stops it would drop it on the ground to feed. There wasn't time to stop and have a proper meal, the roundsman would have his meal between villages. He might also be fortunate enough to be given a cup of hot tea at strategic stops by the ladies in the village, very welcome during the winter.

He used one of those wallets where the notes were held in safely by tapes, you opened the wallet like a book and placed the note in and then closed it and opened it again from the other side and there was the note safely tucked in behind tapes. Sometimes I was allowed to put the note in and see, what to me was pure magic. (I made a dummy one on request for Pauline Hamblin, so she could see how it worked. She too thinks it is magic, and has used it to amuse her friends in Chessington.)