

Salcombe in the 1920s by Alan Rodick

Transcript of a talk given by local resident Alan Rodick in the 1980s

It is really the nineteen twenties I'm recalling not, repeat not, the eighteen twenties, which no doubt you thought it must be. Second there will be no slides shown of any pictures, not even any dirty ones: So t'is me and me alone you've got to put up with. As Mr. Blunden Headmaster of the Boys school at Salcombe used to say "A Good Wine needs no Bush" - at least that is what I thought he said: Incidentally, his eldest son, Edmund, was one of the best English poets to emerge after the First World War (and note the intrusion of culture at this early stage of the evening). Perhaps the youngest Blunden son, Hubert achieved greater fame locally, as one day in school, much to our great delight and amusement, when his father was getting on to him more than usual, Hubert let one go and knocked his father down the stairs to the lower form room. A moment to savour indeed! They lived at the top end of Courtney Street.

Just to go back to the "no slides" business, I have assumed that you are all pretty well familiar with Salcombe today, as the old town itself has really changed very little physically since the 1920s. But, I was going to recommend you to visit our Museum on Steamers quay [now in the Old Council Hall, Market Street] to see the best collection of local photographs. Did I hear mutterings such as, "Did he mean Customs Quay?" Well, in a word, "Yes", but to most of us locals it is still "Steamers quay" cos t'was from there that the paddle steamers (*Ilton, Kenwith or Salcombe Castle*) normally left for their regular service to Kingsbridge, via Ditch End, and later on those of us who became day boys at the Grammar School would use the steamers when convenient, as we found we could do our written prep in the cabin, whereas we could only do reading subjects on the buses. On one famous occasion, five chaps, all in the same form were all found to have exactly the same mistakes in their French lessons and each got 4 of the best from the Old Man as result; which was certainly not regarded with way any amusement at the time.

Anyway, to me, Customs Quay is still Steamers Quay- If you see what I mean! And talking of many changes, many of us are still inclined to refer to the pub, The Fortescue, by its old name, The Union. I was always under the impression that it was called The Union because in the heyday of the Salcombe schooners in the last century, the Union, of Owners and/or Masters would meet there in an upper room to discuss their contribution to the the common fund or pool which they maintained in order to cover their vessels and cargoes against loss by sinking etc. In other words, they covered their own insurance. After all, why should they pay good money to 'foreigners' up to Lunnun to do what they could do themselves? Us may look daft but 'tisn always true that us be simple!

My object tonight is NOT to tell you about the physical look of the Salcombe in those days because for the most part most of the buildings, streets, roads and quays etc. are just the same as they used to be. One Salcombe-born man came back recently after an absence of over 60 years and said he was astounded how little it had changed. And this is true; and if our grandparents or parents could come back, I am sure they would say the same. The German Air Force did more to change things physically than any other factor, and of course

that was the only reason for some shops in Fore Street being rebuilt, to replace the bombed ones. So it is not the way the Town looked that I am trying to put over to you, but to give you some idea of what it was like to live then, when it was truly a busy, bustling, thriving, caring community with the most marvellous sense of neighbourliness and friendliness on all sides. There every house was a home, lived in completely for 12 months of the year and in fact the town then bore practically no resemblance in its everyday life to what it is today, when it resembles an almost empty mausoleum, more than anything else. The friendliness is still there of course, but honestly, with only one house in six occupied all the year round, it is perforce stretched out a bit!

Our mothers used to go shopping nearly every day because there were no such things as fridges, but just a zinc-gauze covered meat 'Safe", or a walk-in pantry with a stone floor it you were lucky, as the only places for food, other than cupboards. So shopping just had to be done daily, and in the summer, milk would be scalded (remember?) to stop it going off, and when it cooled, maybe you got the cream. When our mothers returned from shopping they would know all the latest local news, and who had died, who'd had a baby (and if it was a boy or a girl, because all babies were born at home, and none the worse for it I reckon either). And who was to be married and maybe even who should be married - mistakes did happen, of course, sometimes. And any other news too. In fact today, it's far more difficult to know what's going on in Salcombe than it was then. We hear umpteen times a day what's going on in Iran or Poland, but sometimes an old friend has died and you may not hear about it at all for a couple of days. In fact, this is the main reason why I occasionally drop into a local hostelry at lunch time; and of course why other men do likewise; and even some ladies too! And in fact that is not just a joke - there's a lot of truth in it. Can you imagine the Street being well-nigh crowded EVERY day of the week? Difficult to believe, but that is how it was: with people Saturday evenings having quite an air of excitement, as people completed their weekly shopping and got the Sunday joint; and no matter how poor some might be (and of course life wasn't too easy for some families), there were few houses here on Sundays that didn't have a joint in the oven, or if things were really bad, a rabbit in the pot on the Lidstone stove.

Before I go any further, it is only right that I should try and put in perspective the large part that religion played in our lives then: it is also right to say that almost any small community, depending on some degree on how isolated it is, and any community that lives close to Nature and whose lives depend to a great extent on its bounty, probably do have a greater feeling for religion, compared to those in Towns and Cities. All those things applied here and remember, few people travelled beyond Kingsbridge unless they really had to. There were almost certainly only about a dozen private cars here in the early twenties, and 'twas a few years before the first locally-owned lorry was to appear - Bob Martin's - naturally a tin Lizzie. And the railway stopped at Kingsbridge - and, under my breath, I'm probably saying "thank heaven"!

So, we were a small isolated community, living close to the sea, and to some extent upon it. And not only were many families still associated with the heyday of the Salcombe Schooners, but their men still went to sea, locally as fishermen and boatmen, but further afield in the Royal Navy or the Merchant Service: and above all, my generation grew up in the shadow of the Lifeboat disaster and all that meant in such a close-knit community. (I very nearly said "tribe", and that is pretty near the truth, of course.) Anyway, there was a pretty deep feeling for, and acceptance of, religion in our lives, no matter whether we were Church or Chapel. Most of the grown-ups went to one or other, once or maybe twice each Sunday, and the children (most of whom belonged to one of the Sunday schools) were supposed to go as well. Most services the congregations were large enough to half-fill the Church or Chapel at the very least, and usually much more so. At this time, the Wesleyans still had their church in Island street, opposite Edgar Cove's, and 'twas chiefly because it overflowed

on Sundays that they set about to raise their new building in Allenhayes Road. Between Church and Chapel folk there were some divisions I suppose, but certainly no enmity, merely a sort of friendly rivalry and competitiveness! But one thing that seemed strange to me at any rate: why was it that when anything political cropped up that 'twas the Chapel children who sported the Liberal colours, whereas the Church children had the red, white and blue of the Conservatives.

Sometime recently I did a rough check on the number of children then living in various streets etc. The most amazing fact was that there were over 40 children in Fore Street between Customs Quay and Orestone End, and there were 14 in Market Street alone! And so throughout the other streets - 35 in Buckley, over 40 down the Island, about 20 in Batson and so on. It is almost impossible for you to appreciate what this meant to the life and atmosphere of the Town. Just think, 50 children living in or near Fore Street, and today there isn't a half-dozen. Of course, we were not supposed to play in the streets, but of course we did: but there were no cars to worry about, and above all no parked cars cluttering the place up then! There was no mistaking when the kids were on holiday or just out of school, merely by the noise they generated. To look down on a still winter's day and to see smoke spiralling up from virtually every chimney and not 5 or 6 as you'd see today: and at night to walk along the roads and to see lights in all the houses. Many had only lace curtains and through them the flickering firelight would throw its shadows, plus the gentle light of paraffin lamps or gas-light. I certainly did much of my early home-work by lamp-light, and most of us went to bed by candlelight in our early years. 'Twasn't till about the end of that decade that the "electric" arrived here in Salcombe, and gradually the streets and houses were so lit, but that was some time away from the years I'm talking about.

Did someone say "Ee doan soun Demshur do ee?" (or was it, "He doesn't really talk like a native, does he my dear?" Nor do plenty of others born here, and for the most part "us jes puts it on fer benefit of furriners." Actually, my Grandfather had no accent at all, nor had my father- or so he thought, till one day the Thames Pilot came on Board, one he had not seen before, and after a few minutes the Pilot turned and said, "And where Cap'n do you come from in South Devon?" 'Twas almost a case of "Collapse of stout party!" Once he'd got over the shock, my father said "What on earth do you mean," or possibly he used an even more pregnant phrase: "Well I reckon you come from within 3 miles of Prawle Point."

My father could not believe his ears, but eventually asked the Pilot how on earth he knew that "By your accent, Sir". This was even more incredible. "You see, I've studied local accents and dialects, and just now when I asked if that were the Outer Shoal Buoy, you didn't say "Yes" or even "Ay" but just sucked your breathe in through your lips like this (Demonstrate) and to me that meant for certain sure that you came from South Devon, and pretty close to Prawle Point: An astounding story, and I can assure you an absolutely true one; and it would be interesting to check it with a dialect expert some day. Sometimes I still do it myself, and I have heard others doing the same.

For the most part, my remarks about Salcombe in the twenties are confined to what I call Old Salcombe, roughly from Orestone End or the Pier, up to Shadycombe and the area below, say, Bonaventure Road. That is where I suppose 99 percent of the population lived in those days. Only a few owned their own homes, but for the most part people lived in rented houses, usually on a permanent basis. Every house was basically a family house, and everyone knew where everyone lived and had a pretty good idea of what everyone else was up to. And when you come to figure it out, that is no bad thing either. Today it is called community planning. The three schools, the Infants, the Boys' School and the Girls' School were all full, and took between them something like 300 or more children, I suppose. Also, there were a couple private kindergarten schools. Nearly everyone relied on the Church clock for the right time because believe it or not, this was when there was no TV and, what's

more, no radio or even "the wireless". So if you lived where you couldn't hear the Church clock strike, and you had to catch a bus (starting from where the Galley now is in Fore Street) or the Steamer, if you did not have an accurate clock in the house you could be in trouble. (Though the Steamer did give a 15 minute warning whistle and then a 5 minute final blast). Out of doors, hardly anyone carried a watch, and wrist watches were scarcely known, but except for during the school holidays, there was always one way you got a pretty good idea of the time: at nine in the morning you could hear the Bell for the Infants School and the whistles of the other two, from the Masters or Mistress summoning the children into school. But most of all, you could hear the sudden silence. The shouts and cries (and even the screams) of the children were suddenly stilled, not to be heard again till playtime, half-way through the morning: and later the sudden eruption and the avalanche of boys pouring down Allenhayes at a rate of knots, and the girls emerging more sedately into Church Hill and Church Street, and then the shriller cries of the toddlers from the Courtney Infants. Suddenly the Town was alive again. And the same pattern was repeated in the afternoon. The cries of children followed by sudden silences, and vice versa. At one o'clock we all rushed home for dinner and there were children everywhere.

So already you may be able to see how this talk is going to go; a combination of how life was and I suppose especially from a child's point of view; coupled with personal memories, plus a few of the stories we heard as we grew up, and some of the things which happened in those days. The difficulty has been deciding what to include and what to leave out. But have no fear, most of the stories will be reasonably "decent" - but don't be too shocked if the word made famous by George Bernard Shaw in "Pygmalion" is used - i.e. the adjective "Bliddy", 'cos 'twould be well-nigh impossible to tell a local story without using it: and as the five-year old son of a near-by farmer once said when he was reprimanded by my Mother for swearing, "I'm sorry Granny, but Bliddy isn't really swearing, is it?"

In the early 'twenties and for some years later, it was still the era of ladies wearing dresses down to their ankles, blouses up to their throats- possibly with a jet broach - and generally speaking most of their clothes were dark, if not downright Black. Often they wore buttoned-up boots. Not many people wore such frivolous things as shoes: they wouldn't have "bin reckoned to be decent wear for decent folk". Of course, children too wore boots more often than shoes, and again these were often of the buttoned-up variety and, I suppose in every kitchen-cum-living room there was always a button-hook hanging up alongside the mantel-piece by the old Lidstone range. And the range was normally the only means of heating any house, as well as being used for all cooking and heating of water. No central heating then, and certainly not many houses had gas even for lighting purposes. There was not any street lighting by electricity until somewhere around 1930, I think. On Sundays the fire would be lit in the front room, and maybe on cold winter afternoons, and if someone was confined to bed in the winter, a fire was lit in the bedroom! That to a child was wonderful - just gazing at the ceiling with the firelight reflected on it; 'twas well worth being ill as well as having all your meals in bed. There were only relatively few gas street lamps, and every evening the lamplighter would go round as dusk fell to light the lamps, using his long pole to do so. And I can remember the first time he started doing his rounds on a push-bike: very daring that was thought. And presumably he went round again at dawn to switch the lamps off again. Only later did they have pilot-lights and time clocks of any description; not till the electric had been installed for some years.

The same man also used to act as Town Crier and usually went round A.M. and P.M. calling his Notices, which always started with him ringing his big hand-bell. And when this was heard, you would try and run out to hear something "Notice - Tonight the Mothers' Union will hold a whist drive and Dance at the Town Hall; entrance fee, one shilling" Short ring on bell - "Found in Cliff House grounds, Lady's purse containing some money. Will the owner please call at the Post Office or Police House" And so on: finishing with a "God Save the

King" and a long ring on the bell. And, believe you me, the Town Crier played a very important role in the life of the Town. Only once, so far as I know, was his service misused. A Special Notice was called one Saturday morning all round the Town announcing that "The World Famous Troupe of performing Sea Lions recently in London" would be giving "a Special Performance in North Sands Meadow at 3 o'clock" that very afternoon. Great excitement, and about two o'clock the whole Town, Mothers, children of all ages and any men who could do so, all trooped out to North Sands for this wonderful treat, but not a flipper was seen. 'Twas the great Salcombe hoax, "April the First". It had been perpetrated by one of our well-known characters and a close friend of my Father. But I don't think many other people knew who was responsible. otherwise I reckon he'd have had an "early bath" off Kings Arms Quay.

And of course, Kings Arms and White Strand were two separate quays. We thought of Kings Arms as the "Big Quay" where the first steamers bringing coal to the Town went alongside - and some excitement that caused me deers. This big steamer must have been all of 400 to 500 tons, I suppose, and about 100 feet from bow to stern with two holds. Later they would use Steamers Quay and would just about span the quay there. And they even ventured up to Shadycombe and sometimes to Kingsbridge as well. At least they, plus the Paddle steamer did a lot of automatic stirring up of the mud in the lakes and channels, and so there was no need for dredging in those days. If only we could bring them back today, they could still perform the same service free gratis and for nothing.

Although the very memory of three blasts on a whistle is very evocative to those who grew up at that time, even more so is the sight of "Provident" entering harbour under full canvas. Because before the steamers brought our coal etc., all bulk materials like coal, bricks, flour, timber, fertiliser and cement were brought here by the sailing barges, some were schooners, plus yawls, ketches and some technically were cutters. All of course were gaff rigged with topsails, foresails and a couple of jibs and, in one case at least, sporting a flying jib at times. They tied up at Kings Arms, Customs Quay, up round Shadycombe, up to Kingsbridge and even South Pool and Waterhead.

I suppose almost every week, there was one or other alongside, except in the worst of the winter months. At first, only one had an engine, but as the years went along, so gradually most had engines installed but they still only used them when absolutely necessary. Which gives one some food for thought - like trying to get past Blackstone and the old Castle with the wind coming straight down the harbour, plus a foul tide and in earlier times, ships were wrecked there. The names *Marie* (the last to be built in Salcombe), the *Shamrock* (now restored and on show on the Tamar) and the *Lily*, the *Isabel*, *The Sidar*, the *Yealm* and the *Two Brothers*, plus the old *PHE*. Whenever I hear any of those names, I still picture two or more barges lying gun'le to gun'le about 80 yards off the Salcombe Hotel, waiting for a berth to unload, or for the weather to ease so that they could sail for Plymouth, which is where most of the cargoes were shipped from. You know the phrase "the cut of his jib" and to recognise someone by the 'cut of his jib'. Well this was literally true when we were growing up in Salcombe. As soon as a bowsprit with outer jib appeared round 'Mason' or 'Limebury' we were usually able to give her name before the rest of her came into view. And unless she 'were a foreigner from up-channel somewhere' I doubt if we ever got it wrong.

Going back to the barges, it was quite a job unloading them with just a hand operated windlass on the barge and baskets swayed up on block and tackle from the gaff. But we could spend hours watching the men, most of whom we knew, of course, and they didn't mind providing we didn't get in their way. What a filthy job unloading coal was, when it was pouring with rain, with the men's only protection the sack pulled up corner wise over their head and shoulders. The bricks unloaded for Mr Moore at Steamer's Quay were stacked alongside what is now one of Cook's boat stores, but was then a coal store.

Going back to the weather: from Whitsun, if not Easter, when we always reckoned to have our first bathe, we wore plimsolls (we called them sand-shoes then for a very good reason) and white cricket shirts, open at the neck, and the girls wore their cotton summer frocks. I can never recall saying to my friends then "See you on Mill Bay tomorrow if it's fine". We just assumed it would be. We were still using pulling boats of course, and sometimes used the ferry (don't scream) at a Penny a trip. (When my mother was a girl it had been a ha'penny, but 'twas then a rowing-boat, of course).

It was only every two or three years that our motor-boat would be launched from Dormons, when father was given a voyage "off". We used to go to Prawle and Hope Cove with her, and with so many mackerel about that they just gave themselves up and practically jumped into the boat. Sometimes you certainly did not have the chance to get the weight in the water. And the porpoise! Reckon we used to see some most days; sometimes °Using mackerel right up the harbour like speed boats (luckily no 8 knot limit on then) and playing hide and seek round the relatively few boats on the mud-moorings. 'Twas nothing to be swimming at say, Sunny or Limebury, and have a couple of porpoises between you and the shore. Do you know, it was years before I could accept that Porpoises were fish-shaped and not round like a wheel or a life buoys; all you normally saw was a turning-round back and dorsal fin- no head and no tail: But occasionally they would jump five feet clear of the water. One day we had another family with us and coming back from Gammon (all right, Maceley if you prefer it) on every side from Prawle to Bolt Head the sea was alive with leaping porpoises - thousands. Some were coming clear out of the water just a few feet from us but luckily parallel to the boat. But even so my Father admitted he had been more than a little concerned until we were coming up the harbour, lest one of them misjudged his leap and landed on the boat! With each porpoise averaging 5 or 6 feet and weighing, I suppose, well over a hundred weight, that would have been disastrous indeed, even if I had thought they were only playing. At that time their snorts and the splashing as they hit the water drowned out the noises of the engine. Even then we were never afraid of these mammals, and sometimes they would brush against you when swimming. This we just accepted, but there are no local legends of drowning people being pushed ashore or even taken for a piggyback ride. What marvellous creatures, though: even then we realised that much, at any rate. And their presence too - including after the War as well - I think bears out also what I was saying about the summers of our younger days. Porpoises can't abide really cold water (no more can I for that matter). And I can't recall the last time I saw a single pair or even a loner: What a bloomin' shame.

When Father was on leave and the motor-boat was in the water, if we did manage to get him to take us to one of the beaches, even if it was empty when we got there, if a couple more boatloads arrived (and especially if there were visitors- he would indicate that he couldn't stand crowds and we'd be soon afloat, heading up river or around the Point, en route to Frogmore Creek, Ham Point or Geese Quarries, or Tosnos, or Castle Wood; maybe Blanks Mill or Collapit if the tide was well up. So we spent as much time up there as we did down the harbour and that was usually Limebury so that Father could an eye on the Channel shipping. We loved it there too, of course, and going up the river as well: in fact I still do. But it was not all sweetness and light, boating with a master-mariner at the helm whether sailing or motoring. You certainly learned to "jump to it" and do things properly first time. In fact, excellent training, and such early teachings as "First one on board takes the dinghy's painter". "When you trip a dinghy off the beach, make sure the end of the shoreline is secured in some way" "When unshipped, paddles or oars lie with blades in the bow and "Rowlocks to unshipped when not in use": "Fenders to be brought inboard when not in actual use" and "Painters never to be allowed to dangle from the bow". And, above all. "when in real danger of any sort, DONT panic, shout for help by all means as loud as you like, but don't get your fenders in a twist" Strange how that phase became changed!

Sorry if some of this disjointed but for the last few weeks the house has not been alive with the sound of music: but merely filled with sheets of paper with scribbled notes on them. Trouble is A) to read them (fortunately I was in cryptographic work during the war end so now can sometimes read my own writing) and B) to get them in some order. Also, my memory is getting somewhat shaky nowadays: recently in fact I realised there three things wrong with it: firstly, I find I can't remember names and secondly, am not so hot on faces, and the third thing is Oh: Blast: I've forgotten what it is.

Talking of names etc. in the Town, do you realise that in the 'twenties we still had eight bakers here: Mr. Hatch down the Island, Mr. Edwards (Vic's father) top of Church Street, Mr. Rich up Courtney Street (where you could stand on the grating in the hot air when he was opening the oven and smell that wonderful aroma of bread and fresh buns - sheer bliss on a winter's day.) Then down Town or down the Street, was Cranch's (Ernies) where the Crusty Loaf now is; Mr. Giles where Bon Appetit now operates; Cook's (i.e. Rowland) at the corner of Market St. opposite Thornings, and the other Mr. Cranch opposite Ferry Steps, now occupied by Duster's; and finally, Mr. Wood on Victoria Quay. Four butchers: Hannaford's in Fore Street in their old building that was flattened by a bomb. Another down the Island where Jim Dormer's shop is now, Mr Pepperell adjoining Thornings and butcher Jervis in a shop - now part of Janet Richards'. Two fish shops: Alf Cook next to the old G.W.R. Steamer and Parcels Office - this as many of you no doubt know is now The Galley ; then came Mr. Fairweather's shop for photography and his studio above the shop. But earlier it had been in Robinson's Row (otherwise known as Cats Alley) and 'twas there that I remember we had our first photographs taken as we neatly stood in our Sailor Suits in front of a mock marble balustrade, with, I need hardly add, a large aspidistra resting on a small marble pillar. Fortunately, I believe all copies of that photo have now been destroyed. Next to Mr Fairweather's shop was that belonging to the two Miss Pateys, who so far as I could tell, only sold tea all kept in large cylindrical tins along a shelf. I suppose they must have sold more, but can hardly believe that trade was all that brisk. Anyway, the poor souls were killed when the bomb fell there that wiped out those three shops plus Hannaford's. The other fish shop was hers.

Distin's the other side of Folly Lane from Coopers (now the Food Hall). Clearly I could carry on about all the old shops and who kept them but suppose I mustn't. Five or six grocers, Coopers. Ellis's (High Class Wines etc.) next, I need hardly add, to Ellis Steps by Lloyds Bank. (To me they will always be Ellis's Steps and I can scarcely believe they will be called the Austro-Hungarian Patisserie Steps! With all due respect. Ellis's Steps still trips off the tongue much more easily, methinks.) Other grocers were Preston's, Harmer's and Osborne's up Church Hill. Two shoe shops, both belonging to Mr. Stumbles, one where John Martin's shop is now and one where part of Mr. Beard's chemist shop is now with the Shoe Box. Plus Ladies and Gents Outfitters and Milliners etc. And of course there was the blacksmith's below the Girls School on Church Hill. On a wet, cold winter's day, Mr. Jervis would let a few of us in to watch him shoeing some great cart-horse; the sparks flying from the anvil, the thrill of being able to pump the bellows, and the heat from the forge. And then that extraordinarily exciting smell as the hot shoe was placed against the horse's hoof: and the hissing and the smoke when the red hot iron was dunked into the water tank for tempering. And something else: running out the Under-road all the way to Bolt Head in 1926 to see my first actual wreck, "The Liberta". She had come up Channel and ran slap into Mason or even Little Mewstone! Also running to Batson and down Castle Hill from the crossroads to see the flames and smoke billowing away from the old Castle farmhouse; and our funny little fire-engine, hand-cranked by 3 or 4 men each side. It was drawn by old Prince, the carthorse who normally pulled the only rubbish cart, and in the summer also pulled the water cart for spraying the roads to lay the dust. So you see the summers were

hot. The only chemist was Calkins, where Mac's Bowl of Cream now operates. Like most chemists of that era, there were two huge glass bottles in the window, one filled with red liquid (I don't think it was either Port or Chianti, but it may have been) and the other one a different colour, but blomed if I can be sure now if that was green or a sort of sherry colour. They had some mysterious meaning in the chemists' world, no doubt, and I can recall it was a subject in the "Do You Know?" cigarette card series, which we used to collect so avidly. No doubt I would then have known the right answer'.

I could go on about almost every shop and its occupants, but better press on, except to mention going to the grocers where all commodities were loose in big sacks or bins and everything was measured before your very eyes. But I think the most exciting thing to a child - other than watching ham being sliced on one of they "noo fangled slicing machines" - was watching butter being made up into half pound packs. I am sure many of you here tonight must have similar memories, with the butter being patted into shape after being weighed, and then finally a mould being pressed into the top to give the final decorations. The whole operation was fascinating, and especially the sound of the pats with the wooden implements they used. But such simple things, and such elegant craftsmanship really did play its part in the joy to be found in everyday things at that time. And personal service too. All the grocers would deliver goods, even out to South Sands end to the few houses at the top of the hill; the goods being carried in large wicker baskets made from withies as were the crabpots of course (another fascinating thing to watch being made on the quays). But fancy expecting a young boy, maybe twelve years old or so, to carry a great heavy basket full of goods out to North Sands. And bikes weren't much cop for deliveries in Salcombe. The butchers delivered sometimes by pony and trap, but often the same wicker baskets were used slung on one elbow on horseback, and the horse controlled one-handed, No mean feat in itself, am I am sure William Hannaford would confirm. (Incidentally, Bill's father held the hereditary title of Town Marshall for any such event as a Carnival, had a special uniform and tricorne hat, and always led any such procession - on horseback, of course. William took over the title on his father' death).

Talking of shops, I must just mention Christmas and especially Christmas Eve in Fore Street with the Street just about dammed full from five o'clock till about ten p.m. Most presents were bought then and much of the food. All the shops were decorated with paper streamers and the like, plus holly and other green stuff. Much as we loved sweets and toys, it was the displays in the Butchers' windows that drew everybody to them. The windows open and framed all round with row upon row of turkeys, geese, ducks and chickens, plus game birds and hares. Huge joints of beef etc. in the windows on the marble slabs, and with more dressed turkeys, geese etc. surrounding the centre-piece, a fully- grown, complete pig - scalded and hairless with his ears pricked, and orange in his mouth, and the most mischievous smile on his face and a twinkle in his eyes - though the Lord knows he hadn't really got much to smile at. Old friends meeting in the Street - some perhaps not seen since last Christmas Eve. And at ten thirty or so, the men coming out of Burners and joining the men from the Kings Arms etc to sing carols by Condit lake, and being conducted fairly efficiently too by the same man every year. It truly was Christmas.

I better say a brief word about the pubs, though I was a bit young to use them – then. The King's Arms or the K.A. was run by the two Misses Hamden who were Aunt Beatrice and Aunt Nobel to us, as they were school friends of my Mother, and also fellow suffragettes, too. It had lovely slate floors on the ground level cellars and cool air thick with the tangy sweet smell of cider. The Shipwrights was on the Street, of course. At the Commercial (today masquerading as The Ferry), Miss Cole and her Mother ran a very respectable establishment with "rooms for travellers". The Victoria was down the Street end run by the redoubtable Alf Burner. Eddie's father and Andrew's grandfather, one of the real characters of the Town and a friend of my Father, who would make Burner's probably his first call any

time he was on leave (like many men since) and, as now, it was probably the favourite pub for sailing men of all types from the deepwater men in the Merchant Service and the Andrew or Grey Funnel Line, to the local yachting men and especially the racing types. (*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*) Salcombe Hotel was owned and run by Capt. Sam Ryder, another marvellous character. And I can well remember playing on the Hotel lawns (then called York Hotel still, I think) with his two sons, Jim and Peter - and even their tortoise! I also heard my first wireless there; Cap'n. Sam had a twelve valve set, truly a monstrous affair.

The three main boat yards were Dornoms, run by the brothers Aaron, Sid and 'young Wilfred' as he was always known to the others. Joey Chant's yard was replaced when the Salcombe Hotel extended their car park, a yard full of delight and strange canoes and skimming dishes whose owners were long forgotten. What more can I say than 'dear old Joey Chance', he was a delightful man and a real gentleman is well. Edgar Cove was there of course and probably just thinking of building his big new boathouse. And there were several smaller yards down the Island, like Cossentines and Pengelly's etc. Many of the local men found work in these yards, but possibly the largest number were with the three main building firms (R.H. Partridge and Son, Camp and Murch and Distins).

Houses were still often being built on the sites of quarries where stone was dug out for the houses and for most of the walls in Salcombe.

There were no more than half a dozen, two man fishing boats after crab and lobster, together with longlining. The boats being 18 footers, I reckon and just open clinker boats. There were no safety devices at all, and only one or two of the men could swim. Pots were rarely laid more than mile offshore, but I can well remember being tied up to the last pot out, directly off Mason and Bolt Head, waiting there for hours before my father's ship came steaming in from the horizon. By this time the Channel swell had taken its toll of my young stomach and I'd had my first experience of feeding the fishes.

Mother used to get cables giving his ETA off Bolt Head, and if 'twas daylight and the weather reasonable, we'd go out to see him, usually of course in a motor boat but sometimes in a rowing boat. This was when he was back on the banana boats (about ten thousand tons) and frequently he would pass inside us when we were already inside the line of Prawle to Bolt Head. One time, as he seemed to be heading for the Bar, and Prawle Coast-Guards were signalling madly "You are standing into danger", he overheard one of the crew say to his own cabin steward, "Blimey, the ole man's gorn daft - ee's taking us right up the bleedin' 'lgh Street!" And so it appeared, till he ordered the helm to be put hard over, to run parallel to Rickham and to clear Prawle. But many a fisherman got a buckshee complete Lunch (i.e. not just a hand) of bananas from Cap'n. Jimmy - and so did we, I might add, much to the concern of the local Customs Man.

Earlier I mentioned about bulk cargoes arriving by barge but I don't think I mentioned that almost exclusively, all local deliveries were made by horse and trap. Milk was still brought round in churns every day to every house, and likewise the baker called daily, plus several times a week, vegetables from the local shops and from Batson were brought round in carts, sometimes these coming up from Plymouth in the summer with plums, pears or strawberries. Sometimes one of the horses would leave his "visiting card" in the Street. This was in fact welcomed, and then there would be a race to see who could get their basket and shovel first.

One of my lifelong friends, Miss Bertha Harding, told me a story recently re. milk deliveries and her Mother. The milkman, who shall be nameless, called one day and Mrs. Harding remonstrated with him about her finding hair in the milk on two recent days. "And

look there, I've Just found another one today. Really it's just not good enough". Now Mrs. Harding was a tall, handsome and dignified lady. The milkmen tugged his cap and said "I'm mortal sorry Missus tut thur be a monstrous gale blowing up as th'ill and the ole mare be moultin". Another time Bertha's grandmother answered the door one morning to find a little maid standing there, so she asked the little girl if she could help her in any way. The little maid said "Be you Mrs. Harding?" "Yes" came the reply. "And do my Ant Mary come to wurk for ee every day," "Oh yes," said Mrs. Harding, "That must be my Mrs. Blank from Batson." "That's rite" says the little girl, "Well 'er can't cos 'ers daid"

Oh, going back to the Post Office in Fore Street (now Upstairs Downstairs, opposite the Salcombe Hotel) the Head Postmaster was Mr. Yalland, grandfather of Michael Stone. As I've already said, we used to get pretty frequent cables and telegrams from my Father and also from his owners in Leadenhall Street naturally. One day a cable arrived addressed RODICK, SALCOMBE (that was all that was needed and I proved this still to be true when is the Middle East during the War and later again when in Malaya). The cable was passed to one of the telegram boys for delivery. Later the boy, returned and told Mr. Yalland he had been out to the old Lea Mount where we lived, but there was no one there. "Did u try round the back?", he asked. "Course I did" says the young boy. "Tis important idn't it" he ses "So wot can I do Wit?" "Well, of course", says Mr. Yalland, "Tis a lovely summer's day, so Mrs. Rodick will be over on the sands with the children, so over you go and find her." And sure enough (or iss fay, which means the same thing) the telegram boy arrived at Sunny Cove where we were that day; he spotted us and up he came saying, "Telegram for you, Mrs. Rodick". I expect Mother gave him something for his efforts, but what personal service.

Memories of playing round the quays and up in the Park: cowboys and Indians on the Burry, in the Crofts and undercliff to Batson at low tide (no road or car parks then - just foreshore.) Birds nesting, including tiddlies in Cow Lane and seagulls around Sharpitor, Bolt Head and over the other side too. Blackberrying, mushrooming, cockling at Blanks Mill, chestnuts from the woods up Beadon Lane, fishing, boating of any sort, and scalloping in December. Oh yes, we had a pretty full life one way and another, and for our parents there was usually something on perhaps at the Town Hall in Market Street. - already a cinema for 4 days a week. Other events at Cliff House and sometimes in the schools. Whist drives, dances, euchre tournaments, community singing, jumble sales, auction sales, concerts of various types, sometimes plays too and musical evenings by the Girls Friendly Society and by the Scouts too at one time, plus the visiting shows. Then the big events in our lives and I don't mean Christmas or Easter or our birthdays - they were merely family things - but the Regatta, rowing, swimming and sailing, plus the "Bang and go back" for motorboats. The magic of Woodcot grounds, dressed overall with thousands of candle fairy lights, plus the Metropolitan Police Band from Plymouth, playing "Moonlight and Roses" on the big lawn far dancing, and all Salcombe there. And then Kingsbridge fair, Anderton and Rowlands Galloping Horses and Chair-o-planes swinging right out over the water at the top of the quay. The marvellous and beautiful steam tractor engines, electric lights everywhere as soon as twilight came, and overall the marvellous noise of the steam organs and the automats playing miniature drums etc. Sometimes we'd go up by boat, as we did to Kingsbridge Regatta. Also by boat to Hope Cove Regatta. The Gymkhana and athletic meetings at Marlborough and Galmpton, the Kingsbrige Show. And then in Salcombe, the Sunday School Treat, by paddle steamer to the tea gardens for games, sweets, a big tea - and chasing girls! The Christmas Tree in the Infants School for Church Sunday School children: top prize, literally the fairy at the top of the tree and prizes for attendance, getting smaller for lesser attendances. I regret to say the three Rodick children never got more than the basic apple and orange which everyone got. (I tell a lie -I think Dorothy once got a sort of canvas pencil camel).

In the summer months much of the Town's interest was directed to the Saturday sailing

races, and many people went to Cliff House Gardens to watch the racing, usually races for 12 ft. C Class dinghies, maybe some 14 footers and 16 footers, and the pride of the fleet, the 20ft Raters, carvel, deep keel, Bermudan rig, almost exactly like Dave Gibbons *Intombi* today. A marvellous sight to see six or more all tacking close together, or running with spinnakers set, especially during low spring tides: But if it was sailing in the summer, 'twas Rugby that dominated the Town winter weekends. when about half the Town went up the Hill to see the Chiefs play and/or the Reserves. Certainly one of my earliest memories was going along the Buddle and up Bonfire Hill to watch my first game, I suppose, with my Father, and with the road crowded as far as the eye could see. Dr. Dan i.e. Dr. Twining was the Captain, and there were men like Eddie Distin and Toby Pratt, Ken's father. So many people went up to watch the matches that most of the shops stayed open late on Saturdays so that those watching the match could still do their Saturday shopping before the shops shut.

I'm blowed if I know whether anything I've said tonight has given any of you any idea of the real flavour and atmosphere of those days, or even stirred any memories. I've often wondered whether it was better to be born here or to discover it for oneself. It may not have been the most wonderful place in the world to grow up in, and life may not have been perfect for some families, in fact far from it, but I don't think many of us would have swapped places to live anywhere else. And I hope children growing up here today still feel the same. There's nothing really magical about it, but I can tell you one thing (and I thick many will agree with me on this at least) that once Salcombe enfolds you in its embrace, it takes a heck of a lot to break free! And after all, so far as us locals are concerned, this is only due to an accident of birth; just think, we might have been born in Wigan - or even Kingsbridge! Just a couple of thoughts to close...How I wish you could walk out from here tonight and see the fleets of herring-drifters out there as we used to see them. Just a mass of twinkling Lights, looking just like a huge seaside town (as I suppose it was, in a way) with its length only confined by the silhouette of Limebury and Bolt Head.

Should our grandparents ever look down here, the thing that would shake them most would be the mass of boats of all shapes and sizes: "Is that thing really a boat?" In the winter then the harbour was virtually empty, but in the summer I suppose about 50 or 60 boats moored off the quays or on the mud. And every boat was instantly recognisable about a quarter of a mile away at least.

Well. "Ther 'tis, me deers". Of course I'm not wishing for a return to the days of coppers and mangles for the Monday wash, or milk being "on the turn", or of getting up on a freezing morning (and that was in the bedroom) to go to church in darkness... (but what of the joys of reading under the bedclothes with a torch ?) Ah well, there were some lovely sides to the old life, and that's the truth. But if I could have a wish, it would be to see our Town once again with every house a home for 12 months of the year: to see it and to feel it breathing and living completely again - if I had a wand I could wave, that's what I would do.

Additional Notes by Alan Rodick

My grandfather, who had already retired from the Royal Navy and gained some considerable reputation as a deepwater racing yachtsman came to Salcombe in 1892, my Father being eleven at that time. He too became a first-class helmsman in Salcombe, especially with the 16 ft. *Falcon*. Within a couple of years of his arrival, my grandfather played a leading role with four other gentlemen in founding the Salcombe Yacht Club. My father joined at an early age - probably when he joined the *Worcester*. He was made an Honorary Life Member for "an outstanding act of seamanship" in 1928 or 29 after he brought his ship *Jamaica Settler* safely to Falmouth after being disabled for 3 weeks in mid-Atlantic in a hurricane. He married my Mother, daughter of an old Portlemouth farming family in 1910. I was born in Devon Rd. Salcombe, in 1915. I first joined the Yacht Club in 1946, I

think.

My Mother was born in "Smalls Farm" in 1860, came to Salcombe with family when "er wur a litel maid". She later taught at the Infants School, teaching Arthur Laphorne, Billy Gunn and at least some ladies. She won the Ladies Race (Sailing) on at least one occasion, just before the First World War.

Notes for a lecture to the Probus Club, Hope Cove.

When my father did manage to get any leave in the summer, the motor boat would be put into the water, instead of just the pulling boat, (that is a rowing boat to most people.) And then we'd come down to Hope for the day. I can well remember the thrill of seeing my Father dive off the fairly new Breakwater at about half-tide, I reckon. "A brave sight, me deers" and some of the Fishermen even cheered, I seem to recall. This was before the Regattas started and we would always come down by boat when Father was home. 'Twas only a 17ft. open clinker boat. Once when we were down - I think I had won the boys under ten swimming race in the Regatta, and we, with other boats were moored about halfway across the bay, when one of the fishermen yelled out to shore "Hey Jack, 'Arry wants ee to go wi' ee in mens' two-oared race, drekly." To which kind entreaty Jack called across the water at his most eloquent best "OH ER DO, DO ER! ' Not a man to waste words. He was not called Jack, by the way, but was a very well known and liked local fisherman and sportsman. The only thing that kept him from the highest pedestal to us in Salcombe was that he played soccer and not rugby - but soccer was of course the local game here (Hope.) Any other local memories? Whenever we came over here by boat or later by car, my Father would always look up one of the old fisherman who may have been a Jarvis. or was he a Hurrell or a Pearce? Always seemed to be doing sets or crabpots on the Lifeboat slip, and lived in one of the nearest cottages there.

Some of you probably know something about the local wrecks hereabouts. In 1925 a large tug went ashore by Soar Mill, and we went out in our first car, a bull-nosed Morris 12 Saloon, turned off for Bolberry from Soar Rd. and then stopped by the Frog pond (wonder if it still does frogs today?) then over the fields to the cliff, with just about a full gale blowing. And I can still remember seeing my Father on the edge of the cliff, wearing an overcoat and literally leaning on the wind to look down on the wreck. Later we learned that her name was the *Joffre*, and the extraordinary thing was that in the latter part of the war, my Old man had been a gunnery officer installing guns on merchantmen at Newcastle, and he had actually supervised the fitting of a gun on her for'ard deck.

Just one other Hope connection, but this belongs to the next war (1939-45). You must all know the story of the *Louis Sheid*, the Belgian ship that got wrecked under the cliffs here at Hope? My father had retired in about 1934, and so when war was imminent, he tried to get back into the Navy again. So when a salvage company was set up here at Salcombe, he was asked to take charge of the sea operations and specifically the *Ben Rien* a small ex-tug, I think. They did a good job by all accounts. And when the call came for small boats to go across the Channel to help at Dunkirk, he and his local crew, all ex sailors or fishermen, including two from Hope, volunteered to take the ship over. In fact, I still have his farewell letter at home, saying what was expected of me if he didn't come back, and he obviously didn't expect to. Not surprising, as they had a dicky engine with top speed down the face of a big sea with a following gale, of 5 knots, plus the fact that they drew over 6 ft. at the stern. Thank God (and I most certainly did) their kind offer was refused, and the following day at Bletchley Park, where I was working in S I S (although I didn't know it at the time - yes it really was that secret), I got another note from the Gov'nor giving me this news and saying how disappointed he and his crew all were. (Suppose Acker isn't here tonight?)

Going back briefly to local fishermen: I think it only right that I should admit that whenever

the Salcombe men wanted to catch some specially big crabs, lobsters or crayfish, they would go all the way down to the Tail to set their pots: and usually they would be successful and the trip well worthwhile. However, it is also equally fair to state that when men from Hope wanted to catch some really big crabs, lobsters or crayfish they would set forth to the east and Bolt Head, to set their pots, and strangely enough they would normally be successful too. That's a perfectly true story, and even as a child it sort of amused me. I am sure there must be a moral in it somewhere.

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