

TRANSCRIPTION OF STAN HOBBY'S RECORDING OF MARCH 1993

As we grow old our memories are subject to inaccuracies. The transcription below has been annotated in italics where better information is available. Punctuation has been added and where local vernacular has been used the transcription seeks to retain it as much as possible.

The best approach is to listen to the recording alongside the transcription and judge for yourself.

This recording is made by Stanley Hobby on March 4th 1993. Subject old Milford, the changes that have happened here during my lifetime and of local characters and people of note.

I was born on June the 9th 1909 at number 1 Hillside cottages, Barnes Lane and have lived in Milford all my life except for six and a half years in the forces 1939 to 1945.

It is said that the Hobby family and the Rickmans started Milford with the Rickmans beating us by a short head. I can trace my family back to 1778. A Hobby and his wife or mistress came from the Southampton area and stayed the night at Lyndhurst Poor House and there the woman gave birth to a child, they finally landed at Milford where they were given land in Milford Common to work and pay their taxes. According to the church records they were unable to pay these taxes but it was settled by an anonymous person. We lost trace of the Hobbys for a period but when they came to the fore they were reasonably well off, no doubt they came to become involved in the smuggling business which was rife on the Hampshire and Dorset coastline and Keyhaven and Milford were well known spots for landing their kegs and their merchandise.

I attended the Church of England school on the Lymington Road which was walked twice a day approximately 4 miles in all weathers, now today children are coming and conveyed by motor car. The main structure of the school is much the same, extensions have been added to cope with the increase of children and the playground has been vastly improved. During my period of schooling the headmaster was Mr Beesley, nicknamed Gaffer Beesley, a man feared when punishment had to be administered, the cane hurt whether it was on the hand or the backside. He was also the organist at the All Saints Church and on his retirement he was followed by a Mr Austin nicknamed Skip Austin and his assistant Mr Fenner other teachers were Mrs Moore, Mrs Tizard and Miss Jury.

Now catapults were very much in the fashion by some of the boys at school and they were good marksmen and one of the targets was the church clock. The minute hand has always been knocked backwards and forwards and the locals were often being heard to remark that the Church Clock could not be relied on. Now there was a mole at the school and this practice suddenly stopped, there was a large concrete surface in the playground which was used for PT and one morning the senior boys and girls were being put through their paces when lo and behold round the corner of the school building appeared the two masters, a civilian, a police inspector and the local bobby. Now the boys with the catapult knew they had to act quickly and the catapults were passed down the line to the girls who hid them up their knicker legs.

On the search of the boys nothing was found, the girls bless them saved the day and the Church Clock from then on kept good time.

On one occasion Gilbert Chase a super marksman saw a bird on the air ventilator on the school roof, I don't know what went wrong but the stone went through the open window of the head classroom and on the mantelpiece over the fireplace stood a glass case approx...2ft by 2ft of stuffed birds with a framed photograph of two sailors Godfrey and Clifford Mogg on the top and of course that stone had to hit that. Gaffer was at the open window in seconds and poor Gilbert had to suffer, I don't think he was able to sit down in comfort for days.

Gaffer was always biting his nails and always rubbing the cane through his hands when in a temper, his desk was raised on a platform so that he could have a good view of the class. One day the boys cut the cane halfway through in the centre poked it up the chimney for a coating of soot and you can guess what happened, rubbing his hands up and down the cane, biting his nails at the same time and the cane breaking in half on delivery of the blow.

In my youth you walked the muddy footpath on the edge of Sturt pond, you crossed the rickety wooden bridge at the Cut. on your left you had a fair sized field which housed two horses before you came to the shingle and the beach now that has all disappeared over the years and I can also recall a very rough road or track you could walk to Hurst Castle between the sea and the shingle called the Spit.

My uncle was a postman who delivered mail to Keyhaven and Hurst Castle because the bungalows there had families living in them and the Castle had a garrison of troops he walked this route and when the sea took over he used the sailing boat.

Now moving up to the White House owned by Mr Walker Munro's family who also had Rhinefield House and a house in southern France. In my youth I played cricket on the land in front of the White House and now that has all gone and the shingle has been pushed back to within 20 feet of the boundary wall of the White House and the cutting further on called Paddy's Gap is now half the length it was. The shelters on the cliff front there are now getting precariously near the edge due to erosion and cliff fall and further at Barton and Southbourne buildings that had a garden now open the back doors are now on the edge of the cliff. I see a vast change in the coastline and the sea has claimed much, I wonder what it will be like in 50 100 years' time it's frightening and the breaking through of the sea at the spit is already causing headaches.

Another notable change is the disappearance of the big houses now replaced with smaller buildings and 2 or 3 storey flats and their large gardens now have 10 or more buildings, every piece of land available is now built on. On the whole the architecture is quite good but I guess Prince Charles would say a few ghastly carbuncles can be seen. Take the Rookcliff Estate the triangle area of land from Kivernells Road left into De la War road left on the main road called Park Lane to Kivernells Road. When a young boy Rookcliff House and Lodge a gardener's bungalow and the herdsman's small building with cattle and cart sheds were the only buildings on that land now it's a maze of roads and houses and 3 storey flats a rough estimate being would be 150 plus with Rookcliff House being turned into flats and it's lovely view to the Isle of Wight being lost due to the building development. *(Rookcliff was demolished in the early 1960s)*

On the whole length of De La War Road had a six foot high concrete pebble wall on the Rookcliff side, the pebbles undoubtedly came from the beach. Due to the development most of the wall has been knocked down but there is still some of it to be seen. When I think back hardly a building in Sea Road, Hurst Road, Kivernell Road, Pless Road, Whitby Road, and Manor Road and so I could go on most was then corn or pasture or rough land. Milford has grown developed in popularity over the last 50 years or so.

Here I must relate a true and amusing story Kivernell House has recently been pulled down and one of the few buildings in Kivernell Road was a school for young gentlemen run by a Mr Horace Mann. My father started his career as a telegraph boy became postman and his delivery of mail was Milford Common and the cliff and on many occasions had to make special deliveries to Kivernell House because of the massive weight of personal letters, circulars and packages of samples then it suddenly stopped except for family mail and the reason, someone had apparently misread an advertisement and a piano arrived on the spot.

I said my father started as a telegraph boy to postman my uncle also a postman and on his retirement his son carried on the good work and on his retirement was awarded the ISM, Imperial Service Medal, by the Queen.

The Village has changed although its general layout remains unaltered, houses have been pulled down and shops erected, other shops have had a facelift, new buildings up Church Hill and a new road constructed saving traffic going through the High Street. In my young days there were only 23 shops no pavements, no tarmac road, chickens crossing the road in complete safety scratching on the green. The green I am glad to say remains unaltered and I hope it will remain unchanged in the future, the character of the village is tied up with the green and any disfiguration would prove disastrous to the village, the green is like the jewel in the crown.

Now the traders were all local families Fred Keeping started making bicycles in the High Street and when the motor car came into fashion he moved to the garage, number one High Street next to Lloyds Bank, the family also had a vast paint shop, a blacksmith shop and the repair bay in Keyhaven Road. Then we had the Miles family a grocery business, wine and spirit shop and the Bake House this was run by Tom, his sister and Henry. The other brother George had the thriving butchers business with the slaughter house and stables behind the shop. All these shops were in the High Street and Tom also farmed Aubrey farm at Keyhaven. Jurys had the newsagents business where the Hair Shop.... where the hairdresser is now (*where the Parish Council is in 2018 was the Hair Inn*) before building and moving to the other side of the road. The Spreadbury family were in the ironmongery trade and the Nicholsons owned the Milford Steam Laundry and had a coal business both situated in Laundry Lane, Keyhaven Road, later they opened an electrical shop in the High Street opposite the Red Lion. The Jupe brothers Joe ran a greengrocers and fish shop in the High Street and George had a fish business in Keyhaven Road. The three Knight Brothers were in business in the High Street, Edward had a shoe shop and was the Borough Mayor for several years, Lewis had a grocery, toys and sweets shop with tea rooms upstairs and Herbert was in business at the Old Smithy. Telford Stone had a small shop selling stationery etc. and overhead he had his printing presses and on the opposite side of the road his father had a small bakery. A saying by the old Milfordians was "folk came miles for Miles bread but sometimes had to finish up by eating Stones." Frank,

Mogg and his large family of sons and daughters sold green grocery and all the family worked in the business. The Hames family were in business general stores sweets and tea rooms and at the rear the daughter Olive Hames had a large hut which she had a basket making business supplying all the big firms in Bournemouth, Weymouth and the Southampton area, she also became the first lady mayor of the borough.

I recall in my early days the happy hours spent hawking flat fish in the cut river, socks pushed in your boots tied together by the laces hanging around your neck, armed with a long stick with a table fork fastened at the end. To stab these flat fish, you had to be mighty quick their skins match the riverbed and a sudden puff of mud told you you had another miss.

Milford promenade was the stretch of grass from Sturt Pond to the White House, beach huts all colours dotted on the front with a popular Granny Prude., mineral and tuck shop by the White House. The beach and the cliff were popular spots and so was the pine forest, Sharvells. It's only the people who lived in Milford for 60 or 70 years recall what a popular and beautiful spot it was. In recent years it had been allowed to deteriorate overgrown with brambles and deadwood when the big storm hit it in 1987 followed by another in 1989 it was absolutely ruined the bulk of the fine pines were blown down most having stood the weather for 200 years or so (*subsequent estimates suggest around 100 years*). People used to come and inhale the pine smell which they said was good for breathing ailments. My mother like other mums used to take their youngsters in the pram collecting fallen wood and fir cones for firing especially during the First World War it was lovely to watch the red squirrels dashing from tree to tree. Note no grey squirrels in those days. There they were extracting the seeds from the open pines cones and dropping the shucks to the ground like rain, it's sad to see it all gone but I'm sure the good work being done by the MEG, Milford Environment Group, something nice will rise from the ruins and become another spot for the future generations of Milford. If they plant pines again which I know they won't it will take many many years to become Sharvells copse as I knew it.

The first early character that comes to my mind is Harry Vickers who was employed as a handyman by the Nicholson family at the Milford steam laundry. Harry lived in the smallest house in the area about 10 foot square, one room up and one room down at the end of Neal's Terrace, Keyhaven Road, one small window to each room which was never cleaned full of cobwebs and impossible to see inside. A shed type door with a latch and no lock, inside a fireplace, a rickety table an orange box as a chair and a box holding crockery etc. The ladder leaning against the wall took you through a hole in the ceiling to the bedroom which only contain a filled palliase on the floor. He lived a tough life, always wore corduroy trousers tied at the knees with a cord (*uncertain of transcription here*) but on full stretch would have been a full six foot his skin tanned and not due to the sun probably from the smoke of the fire or lack of washing. Harry always went to work wheeling his wheelbarrow empty but returned at night with a little bag of coal in it. Now the young boys used to play games on Harry by getting the ladder outside placing a large slate on the chimney pot, replace the ladder and wait for Harry to return with his bag of coal and when the fire got hold the smoke soon appeared through the badly fitted window and door frames and finally Harry roaring and cursing at the offenders.

Another interesting character was a little man called Mr Akers who landed at Milford out of the blue with his two shaggy dogs a Shetland pony and a brightly painted pram which was loaded with all his worldly goods. He housed himself in various cart sheds but finally took up residence in the stables behind Miles butcher shop and the slaughterhouse and where he was found dead one day. He was loved by the children and the grownups too, was always clean and tidy about 5 ft. tall always wore a bowler hat and smoked a short clay pipe the tobacco was from picked up cigarette ends. He loved his animals who performed jumping through decorated hoops and riding on the ponies backs. The coppers he earned were spent on coloured crepe paper from Jurys and tins of coloured paint from Spreaddurys. Any piece of ground in the public eye he would tidy, dig and place large stones painting them all different colours, planted flowers and grew vegetables and so make a dull spot colourful and his pram I might add was always changing colour. He was a nice old man and I am sure many youngsters shed a tear when he died, they called him Lord Akers or Rodeo.

Another well-known Milford character was Dicky Dunford from Keyhaven he was the slaughter man for George Miles the butcher, he had an unusual laugh like rough sandpaper being rubbed together and at the same time swinging his right arm and leg which gave one the impression he was going to do a Scottish reel.

Then there was Bert Springer and Harry Langdown who lived in Lymore. Bert was the blacksmith and Harry did haulage work with horse and cart.

Another well-known character was General Young who lived in Carringtons and when his two daughters married he and his wife moved to St Berins in Barnes Lane. He was 6 foot plus tall upright to the very end of his life, when he gave up motoring he took to riding a 26in frame ladies cycle, he was a good Christian and every Sunday always read a lesson at the church 11 o'clock service. After the war his brother Sir Julian Young and Lady Young came to live in Kivernells road and it was one of my duties to collect them from the gentlemen's South Hants club every Wednesday at 7:30. They were both topping their 90s and the conversation heard in the car was most laughable 'where's my young brother got to Hobby' and the dressing down he got for losing a billiard match which he should have won and so it went on.

I can claim quite a number of well-known people in business writers, sportsmen, artists and inventors.

Westover was built for the Siemens family in 1897, they were Germans and had large factories in Germany called Siemens Electrics producing electric light bulbs and domestic appliances known the worldwide. Might I add here that being a German during the First World War the Home Defence Corps like the Home Guard patrolled the grounds of Westover with their wooden rifles and bayonets because it was said that signalling was possible to enemy craft at sea rumours of course. Siemens lived in Hanover and fled from Bismarck (*Siemens fought in the Austro Hungarian war & after demob came to England to work in the family business*). He and his brother brought electricity to England and also laid the first cable across the Atlantic. He was finally interned during the 14/18 war which affected him deeply and he never fully recovered and when he died Westover was sold after his death in 1928.

The house then became the residence of Sir William Morris later Lord Nuffield the founder of the famous Morris, Wolsey and MG motor car. His massive factories were at Cowley Oxford and Abingdon and when I worked for Keepings garage I had the pleasure of driving him on several occasions to catch the train at Brockenhurst for Oxford he was a very ordinary man a man who had worked his way up through the ranks and I got on well with him.

Now the writers, Maude Speed who resided at Sedge End, Salt Grass Lane, Keyhaven also Colonel Peter Hawker writer of wildlife and his adventures on Keyhaven marshes he lived in the house before the Gun Inn called Hawkers Cottage and a cutting in the mud flats is marked on the survey maps called Hawkers Lake. Going through the lych-gate at Milford church on the left rising ground is a 15 foot cross mounted on a stepped base and this was erected in his memory.

Then we had the Aldis family who lived at Redscar, Shorefield Crescent. The father invented the Aldis lamp which the navy still use for signalling.

Another person famous for his marine paintings, sea scenes, all types of ships and galleons was Montague Dawson who lived at Hurst, Hurst Road with his studios at the rear I have spent several hours watching him with his brushes he was a fine artist his paintings have been accepted by figures heads of the worldwide including Kennedy, Eisenhower and the royal family. The only modern painting I have seen was the HMS Hood which was sunk during the war with only 10 survivors I believe and this painting he presented to the Boldre church.

Now I come to Commander John Ouvry the son of a vicar a man who hated the sea was in the Navy. His job finally was dismantling mines. The magnetic mine which was causing disastrous losses to shipping was dismantled successfully by him and its secret revealed and Churchill said when Commander Ouvry was decorated by the King 'the solving of how the magnetic mine ticked turned the outcome of the war in Britain's favour'. He lived in Deans Court, Milford a perfect Gentleman witty and enjoyed walking and cycling I spent many hours with him relating the war years sadly he died aged 96 last month

Another war hero was Admiral "Tony" Everett who lived in Gillinghams Barnes Lane he was remembered by the part he played in the River Plate battle with his ship the Ajax resulting in his scuttling of the German battleship Scharnhorst in Rio de Janeiro Harbour. *(The German pocket battleship was the Admiral Graf Spee and her captain (Langsdorff) scuttled her in Montevideo, Uruguay)*

The Admiral and I were good friends and from our talks I knew the full details of the battle from start to finish. A film was made of this battle and Admiral Everett was at Elstree Studios so that the details were correct in every respect.

Another person the Rev. Tubby Clayton the founder of the Toc H movement although he lived at Little Hatchet overlooking Hatchet Pond Beaulieu his brother sister and sister-in-law Lady Clayton lived in Milford. He was a frequent visitor seen at Milford a great character and a man with a wonderful memory. The Toc H he started in 1915 at Poperinge, Belgium where he opened the house for the leg weary soldiers from the front and the horrors of war in Flanders the movement has now branches throughout the world.

Another person Mrs Gillespie who lived at The Old Vicarage a woman that was difficult to understand and had a story to tell but was reluctant to relate. I was a fortunate person and I spent many hours in her company and heard her story she was Lord Shawcross' secretary at the Nuremberg tribunal where Goering and his gangsters were on trial. Goering once a plump figure was now slimmer with this clothes hanging and ill -fitting and right to the end she told me thought he was going to get away scot-free but you know the outcome.

Of the sportsman living in Milford was Alexander Edwin "Mike" Keeping professional footballer captain of Southampton and later transferred to the Fulham Football Club. Before he was discovered by the Southampton Scouts he played for the Milford team he was a stylish player and had a great following by the locals.

Richard Beesley whose parents lived at Seacroft Cliff Road was one of the crew in the Cambridge Boat the annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race was always exciting but to have a local member in the crew caused much more excitement.

Many of the old buildings sadly have been demolished and destroyed by fire but Myrtle Cottage overlooking the green and Aubrey House Keyhaven are still standing and several old terraced houses in the High Street can still be seen.

Newlands Manor is a building that's got a story to tell if the walls could talk old Milfordians would turn up their hearing aids to hear it all. King Edward was a frequent visitor along with many notables including Kaiser Wilhelm. He was a visitor and on one occasion brought a team of technicians who tried to fire mail from Keyhaven Marshes to the Isle of Wight by rocket it was a failure but it shows in early 1900s they were rocket minded. (*The experiment with rocket mail was in 1934 conducted by Gerhard Zucker. The Kaiser died in 1918.*)

He planted a tree at Newlands but at the outbreak of the war my uncle, who was head gardener, had the pleasure of cutting it down. Gay life and grand parties were held and a servant told me that cotton was stretched across the bedroom doors to see who walked in their sleep.

Milford can be proud of providing the Borough during my lifetime with five mayors Capt. Goodhart, Edward Knight, Stuart David, Mr Stokes and Olive Troke the first lady mayor. As the years come and go changes invariably will take place both in the planning, in development and in society. The village of Milford I'm happy to say retains its character and I hope it will do so. We old Milfordians are gradually fading away, my 84 years have been happy ones because I think Milford is a lovely area and my memories are nice to be recorded for future information.