

Further Reminiscences

by *W. H. Hackwell*

(A former builder at Everton, and local Councillor)

In the old days the water-driven Efford Mill was in constant use with sufficient water available, and it ground practically all the corn grown in this district. The corn was taken to the Mill and then collected when it had been ground, the cottagers using wheelbarrows or donkey conveyances to take the corn to the mill and to bring back the flour when ground.

At this time some farmers still used flails for threshing corn, a very ancient and laborious way of carrying out this work. Now modern machinery and transport have made all this obsolete, and the mill is just a landmark.

Everton Grange (now being demolished) was built by the late Col. Goff on the site of an earlier rambling old house. He spent a good deal of time and money improving the estate. He also wanted a rookery in the adjoining wood, so his gardener had to comb the high trees, use birch brooms, and make imitation nests. However, it was labour lost, for although the rooks would parade there sometimes, they would never stop to nest.

Like many other owners of large houses, the Colonel was very strict about punctuality on the part of his staff. He had a large bell installed which had to be rung punctually at certain times – for the outdoor employees to commence work; at meal times; and at the end of the day's work. On one occasion the Colonel saw a gardener still digging after the dinner bell had been rung. He called the man's attention to this, and told him that he was expected to be back after dinner with his hand on the spade ready to start work at the first sound of the bell.

Colonel Goff had some ponds made in front of the house and diverted surface water from the north and west sides of the

Village to fill the ponds. In later years this was very disagreeable for a subsequent owner, as some of the houses in the village laid foul water drains to empty into the ditches. Previously they had dug a hole in the garden and buried any waste matter.

Whilst living at Myrtle Cottage (now Olde Mellow), I returned one day from my work at Milford and went into my yard on the opposite side of the road, where I saw a man making three little heaps of brickbats and large stones in front of the three houses. I asked him the reason for this, to which he replied that he had been playing his instrument in front of the houses and none would give him a copper, and he was going to break every window in the houses. I walked up close to him and told him that I would not allow him to use my rubble for such a purpose. He then used the most vile language and said that he might as well go for me as any other. In his temper he threw open his overcoat and jerked a sheath knife out of the inside breast pocket; but he did not notice this. When he put his hand in the pocket for the knife, I told him that the little bit of steel he wanted was gone; at this his vile language stopped, and his fighting attitude was at once cowed. I then told him to pick up his instrument – a flageolet – laid against a gate post, and to be on his way. He started off, and I then picked up the knife (a dangerous weapon, pointed and very sharp), and also a short piece of iron pipe for my own use if necessary. I then called to him to come back for his knife, which I held out to him. He said he would not come back unless I put the knife down in the road and walked away from it. This I did, and the man then came back, picked up the knife, and turning to me said, "You must be a — conjurer!" and then went on his way at the double.