

Memories of John Booty and Jack Seeley

Timworth and Walsham Le Willows Correspondents:

Tim Presland, past resident of Timworth

Derek Presland, past resident of Timworth

Glenda Stennett, past resident of Timoworth

Dennis Seeley, son of past Walsham Le Willows milk deliverer Jack Seeley

Tim Presland, 18/04/2020, memories of John Booty:

Hello Kate, I saw your request for information on milkmen, Hope this helps, I was brought up in Culford road, Fornham St. Martin, and Jack booty was our milkman for years, never missed a day as far as I could remember, His horse was so trained on his round it use to move from house to house without a Jack giving instruction, in the early years, Jack would dispense milk from the churn directly into the ladies jug using a long handled ladle, later on he began using return glass bottles, my brother said it was raw milk straight from the animal into a chiller, he would collect the milk from what is Fornham house retirement home today, it was then owned by Vice-Admiral Rivett-Carnac, who owned a herd of Jersey cows, about twenty five, the cowman in charge was Bill Bridges, who would milk the cows twice every day, Jack would call in on his way home to Timworth, and collect the milk for the next day, this was his routine every day for years, dad said he had never been to the coast or have any type of holiday, he was called up in the war, went to London but got sent home because he was reserved occupation, if we were walking home from bury as Jack was passing, he would allow us to ride on the back of the cart, when he turned off he would grunt at the horse to slow down but it ignored him and kept up the steady clip clop trot, we got good at jumping of that moving cart, if mum was running low on milk, we would have to stand on the corner and wait for Jack, same thing, Jack grunting at the horse but it kept going, I would trot alongside and grab the milk, it all came to an end as Jack was getting older and one evening nearing the turnoff to Timworth, a car hit the cart from behind ,that finished it, Not much here really, just my memories of Jack Booty the milkman, hope this is off interest to you, Tim

Glenda Stennett (maiden name Clarke), 20/4/2020, memories of John Booty:

Your photo brings back memories, it was taken around May 1970 when the South Suffolk Show was held at Tut Hill, Fornham All Saints. The land at that time was being farmed by Roy Stennett. His son Malcolm was my boyfriend, (Malcolm and I married the next year.)

I remember that day very well. The milk float was needed for an entry in the Young Farmers display to be driven around the grand ring.

It was arranged with Mrs. Booty that I was going to borrow her horse and milk float, and take it in the procession. The photo is of my father and me. Frank and Glenda Clarke.

I cannot remember if the horse was called Sandy.

I hope this helps.

Derek Presland, 21/04/20, memories of John Booty:

You asked Tim for a time frame, I was born in 1947 and we moved to Fornham st Martin sometime in the early 50's.

Jack delivered milk for as long as I can remember.

The era of him delivering milk by horse and cart ended sometime in the 70's with the horrific accident.

I had moved to Sweden by this time so I can only recollect what people have told me. Apparently it happened on a dark winter's night when Jack was on his way home. He normally went past Fornham on his way home to Timworth about 4'o'clock in the afternoon. As it was dark when the accident happened we can assume it was in December or January when it was dark at time of the year. He had lights on the back of the cart but they were only bicycle lights, very dim. They probably worked when traffic was light and slow but when the accident happened traffic had built up and was faster, You can only feel sorry for the poor driver of the car. A slow moving horse and cart with virtually no rear lights. Jack was severely injured in the accident, and goodness knows what happened to the poor horse when the car crashed into the back of the cart. Jack had to go to London for medical care. You asked about the name of the horse I am afraid I can't help there only to mention that he two horses. One he used Monday to Friday and a different one on Saturdays when the week day horse could rest Saturday and Sunday. Jack had a brother and sister and if my memory serves me correctly his brother took over the milk round in a van while Jack was recovering from the accident. His sister would I think meet up with him at various places with full bottles of milk and collect the empties. It was the same with the horse and cart, he couldn't load it up with enough milk to last the complete round. My first memory was as Tim pointed out was when delivered milk from a churn, the house wife's came out with jugs etc. and he filled them up. He used a two wheel open buggy at this time, the type with big wheels. I am pretty sure that he had to start delivering milk in bottles when regulations were introduced that forced him to pasteurise the milk, of course prior to this it didn't happen. Open churns, his hands going down into them countless times, sorting out the horse, and absolutely no way of washing his hands, in other words a complete lack of any form of hygiene. When he started to pasteurise the milk and sell it in bottles he acquired a new cart. Much larger, four wheels and a roof, there was a small area at the front with a bench where he sat and drove the horse and at the back the milk was stored in crates. As Tim mentioned the horse was well trained and would trot along by itself. He would replace the empty bottles in his basket thing, he carried the bottles in, with full ones while the horse trotted along. When he got to his customers he would walk up the first garden path and then along the path between the houses and then down the final path. The horse would be waiting for him there. When they started using the van it took longer to deliver the milk as they had to go and get it, get in start the engine and then drive to the next stop. And of course they couldn't refill the basket on the move. In those days houses in the country had back gardens that were used to grow vegetables, Mum never bought vegetables, and we had garden vegetables all year round. When the vegetables were ready there was more often than not a surplus, we couldn't eat them fast enough. Jack would buy the surplus vegetables in the country and sell them in town, along Fornham road. The Booty family had a shop on the corner of Northgate street and Etna road, a green grocer run by the sister if I remember correctly, I am pretty sure any vegetables left over ended up in the shop. Another little side line he had was supplying fertilised eggs. A lot of people had chickens in the back garden, we were no exception.

They provide eggs and a Sunday dinner, our midday meal.

When a hen became broody fertilised eggs were ordered from Jack and next day he would deliver them, and so the cycle continued.

Fantastic memories, you have to remember these were post war days, Britain was very poor but people found ways of getting by with very little money.

I hope you find this useful and it is great somebody is documenting this every day thing we took for granted then.

Derek Presland, 22/04/2020, memories of John Booty:

Hi Kate

Thanks for the links, I have checked them out and I am quite sure they are the carts Jack used.

The one thing that did surprise me was the fact that the 4 wheeler was enclosed along the sides and he only had access from the driving position and the rear.

I could very well be mistaken here, and mixed up things with regular milk floats.

Regarding your thought of if there were two four wheelers, I don't know.

Logically I wouldn't think not, in those days money was short and people repaired things as long as possible.

The one involved in the accident must have logically been completely destroyed, and as it was the end of an era, I doubt anybody invested money repairing it.

The only other thing is the timing of when they went from churns to bottles.

In the late 60's he was using the 4 wheeler and had been doing so for a long while, I would guess he switched from the two wheeler to the four wheeler sometime late 50's or early 60's.

I barely remember the two wheeler.

Don't hold your breath now, there is a photograph taken around 1968 of the horse and cart somewhere in the family.

Several people are looking for it but we have to remember this was taken 50 years ago.

Other than that not much more to add other than to say that we have spoken to number other people regarding this and there is a lot of interest.

I personally have memories of the era when horses were superseded by tractors on farms.

I also remember watching and helping mechanics repair wooden cart wheels on a commercial basis.

There are still a lot of memories from this era.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you want to expand on this.

Derek Presland, 02/05/20, memories of John Booty

John

Taken a while, the good weather has got in the way.

Before we go much further John we would like clear up a couple of thing.

We are finding this great fun and very interesting, really enjoying it, however we have never done anything like this before.

We are doing it in good faith and are comfortable that you understand how to handle stuff like this.

There are quite a lot of people interested in this subject, however anything we send to you are our views and observations, nothing else.

We must also point out that there is heresy mixed in with our observations, some second hand, even third hand and some from people who are no longer with us.

The photos from 1967 that we have cut and pasted further down are from my (Derek) previous wife's (Astrid Presland) private collection of photographs.

She has photographed the originals and sent them on to me in a text message, again in good faith. Of course the originals went back into her photo album and she still owns them.

If you need Astrid's contact data just get back to us.

There is a lot of family history involved here that has been put to rest and people have moved on.

We are discussing village life here now.

We have made every attempt to keep this as neutral as possible.

In no way do we want to drag up any stuff that has been put to rest and in our opinion that is how it should remain.

Ok that is out of the way.

Before we start by answering your questions we would like to explain that we have been confused by the names John and Jack.

Apparently there is a Suffolk thing where John can be given the nick name Jack, we can't quite get our heads around it, probably needs a bit more research.

So your questions.

Jack was a milkman and delivered milk to his customers, he had a few sidelines and they were to buy and sell eggs, vegetables and anything else he could buy and sell on from and to his customers along his route.

We have learnt that he also sold bottles of orange juice at 4d a bottle for example, pretty cool.

We don't think he had anymore services beyond that.

Jack was a man of few words, he was not controversial in any way.

He was in our opinion very well respected.

You can see him in one of the photographs, wearing his brown smock, flat cap and big boots. He walked quickly with determination, leaning slightly forward as he went.

Friends is difficult to define, there was as far as we know, no social interaction between the Booty's and their customers in any way, we don't think he was the life and soul of the crowd in the pub for example.

Actually we would be surprised if even he went to the pub at all.

Quite simply put he appeared to us to be a loner.

Jack did not stop for conversations even if people wanted a chat he would just acknowledge them and continue on his way.

He was not a "chatty person" over and above the weather and how many bottles of milk you want today would be the extent of any dialog.

We are not sure that Jack persisted with "old methods" so long was for any other reason than that is the way he had always done it.

We are convinced there was no ideology involved, life was not so complicated, he just got out of bed and did what he did yesterday and hopefully will do again tomorrow.

Cost, we don't think that was consideration either.

To deliver milk with a horse and cart was very rational, cost effective, environmentally friendly, and

there was no other solution available.

Of course they didn't think in the modern day terms of being rational, cost effective, etc.

The horse and cart solution worked and worked well so there was no need to consider doing it any other way.

We seem to remember that he had at least two horses, one was used Monday to Friday and then allowed to rest Saturday and Sunday.

Saturday deliveries were made with another horse.

The downside of delivering milk this way was that it was very labour intensive.

We can imagine his day would start around 05:00 and go on to late in the evening.

Over and above the work in the dairy there was the horse that needed to be attended to.

Long days just doing the same thing day after day.

Labour intensive is also a modern day term that didn't exist then, everybody worked hard and it was expected of them

Perhaps one of the most fascinating things was his interaction with the horse.

You can see the seven houses on Culford road where the pictures were taken.

He would start at number 7 with his cradle with we think 6 bottles of milk, deliver the milk to number 7 then walk along to number 6 and deliver their milk and then walk down their path and the horse and cart would be waiting.

He would get into the cart and re stock his cradle while the horses walked along to number 5, and the process would be repeated with the horse waiting at the bottom of the path to number 3.

And so it went on.

He did us a little favour, in our house there was a window sill just inside the front door.

He would open the door and shout out "milk Mrs Presland" put the milk on the window sill and of he went.

The reason Mum wanted him to do this was because the blue tits would attack the thin aluminium foil bottle tops.

The fact that the horse was "autonomous" to use a modern day expression and was a bit dangerous on the way home is something we have learnt from conversations with other people

It was a long drive home and we are sure the monotonous clip clop of the horse along with the fact he worked very long hours made him sleepy.

The story goes he would nod off and the horse would just carry on.

Of course if this was the case then it was dangerous, the horse trotting along on its own accord, the milkman asleep and cars whizzing around them.

We have many more memories from our childhood but maybe it is best to pause here and let you digest this.

One last thing, we have to remember, we are talking about the post war era, and for us it was still definitely ongoing during the early 60s.

The situation got better as the years passed.

The point we are trying to make here is that Britain's development from war through post war depression into a fully functioning society was in many ways dependent on people like the Booty's.

For our family ends just didn't meet at the end of the 50's and beginning of the 60's.

Mum just couldn't pay everybody every week, they all got paid eventually, in cash or produce, but without interest free credit from the milkman etc. well we shudder to think of the consequences. So we must be grateful to the Bootys and many others with them for getting Britain over a very difficult time.

So John digest all this and get back to us and we will happy to move things on, great fun for Tim and myself and all the other people we have been in contact with.

It would be good if you could expand a little on where all this leading, be even more interesting when we know what the objective is.

I live in Sweden and have done so for 50 + years, Brother Tim lives in the Bury area along with my other brothers and sister.

Take care and stay well Tim and Derek Presland.





Tim Presland, 30/04/20, memories of Jack Seeley

Hello John, this is Jack Seeley with his cart, I've just understood Jack worked for the farmer Kerridge, Jack was responsible for the milk collection and delivery, Tim



76. The Kerridges at High Hall had dairy cattle. The picture c1935 shows Jack Seeley, a milkman, delivering their produce.

Dennis Seeley, memories of Jack Seeley:

Dennis's father bought the only barometer in the village which was possibly 200 years old. Jack told people the weather forecast on his rounds. Regularly stopped for chats with his customers and friends

Jack was reported by a local woman for providing extra milk to a family that were sheltering refugees.

Mother helped deliver the milk too.

Acted as a barber provided haircuts for men from the airbase.

Jacks change from milk delivery to pub landlord was aided by his familiarity with local people.