

Mrs Kath Pierce, from Windmill Close, has lived in the village since the 1960's and here Kath talks about how life has changed over that time.

I came to Bridge in 1964 from Canterbury to move into a new bungalow on Bridge Farm estate, as it was called, before the Close had a name. Affectionately it was called 'Daddy Fagg's Farm'. There were no shops in Western Avenue then, just a field, and there was still one small little cottage standing next to the row of houses in the High Street.

My late husband, Bill, knew Bridge as a boy, because his father was a vet and served the farms as well as Higham House, where Count Zborowski had animals. Higham House then was renamed Highland Court after Count Zborowski died in a car crash and his mother moved away. A Mr Whigham bought it and he didn't want to be known as Whigham of Higham. That was why the name was changed to Highland Court.

The Old Bridge School was in Patricbourne Road and the classrooms had open coal fires – lovely in the winter. My son, David, attended the school when he was 5 years old. He started in 1970, then in 1971 we heard the good news that a new school was going to be built in Conyngham Lane. But it had to be built as per the plans of 1948. So it was built but it had a mobile classroom as well because it was too small already and the plans could not be changed.

The Methodist Chapel in Patricbourne Road was used during the week as a baby clinic. My two children went there regularly when they were tiny. Soon after Dr Hunter died, who had a surgery in the High Street, a new surgery went to one of the bungalows in Green Court which was built in 1965. As the village grew with all the extra bungalows, the Bridge surgery was far too small and so the new surgery was built in Patricbourne Road just passed the Recreation Ground. A very modern and efficient surgery too. There were two butchers in 1964, Jordans and Welch. Sadly Jordans has gone and Laurie Wakeham took over from Barry Welch, and it is now a very thriving butchers. He sells homemade pies of all sorts, and cheeses as well as lovely fresh meat. The bakery was thriving then too, run by Mrs Baker. It has changed hands since, and now sadly has closed down completely.

Once the Bridge Farm estate was complete and the two Closes were given their names, Windmill Close and Ford Close, a line of shops were built at the beginning of Western Avenue. The grocery store has changed hands several times, and the previous one is now called Londis. The photography shop is in another store and the middle one is now a hairdresser's instead of a hardware store. We are still lucky to have a post office and a chemist shop, and the post office won an award this year for the most efficient post office in the area.

Interviewer - *One or two questions. First of all about your husband's father. He was a vet you say. Did he live in Bridge?*

Yes he was a vet. They lived in Canterbury and worked with the farms because there was a lot of countryside round the area in those days and my husband used to drive his father to the pubs. When they had their market days and sold their cattle, a lot of the farmers owed him money (vet bills), so my husband had to go with his father to the pubs to try and get the money off them. He remembered going to one pub and his father hung one of the farmers up on a meat hook in the pub so that all his money fell out and said to the other people "what he owes you, take what money you want and we will put the rest back in his pocket". In those days they were honest weren't they.

Since when you first moved here, has the bus service changed?

It has changed but not for the best. When I was first here we had a 15, 16 and 17 go through the village. Now, sadly the 15 doesn't come through at all. Some of the 89's don't come through the village and the 17 is only one an hour. But at least we have got a bus service still to Canterbury and the other direction.

In terms of shops, you mentioned Jordan's and Welch's and the bakers and the Post Office.

There was also another. Peter Malkin bought out Skippers and before Skippers took over it used to be a little grocery store, before the ones at Western Avenue. Then it was changed to a cycle shop, and then it was a delicatessen before Skippers took it over. It has changed hands quite a lot.

You knew Dr Hunter?

Yes, he was a real gentleman, and he had the last grave in the churchyard was available for him. Down along where mine is with the two boys

Now I know you go to church and you have seen a number of vicars and priests over the years – and I won't ask you to comment on them all.

Well, I will tell you one, Canon Perry. When we first came to Bridge in 1961 after the boys died. Canon Perry married me in St Paul's Church back in 1948, and when I came out here Gladys Flynn used to be the sacristan at the Church, she bumped into me because she used to be the sacristan at St Paul's Church where I got married, and she said to me come to Church on Sunday Kath but I wasn't sure yet (still being upset at losing the boys). She said, "you have got to come on Sunday, there is someone you know there". When I got there it was Canon Perry, I didn't know he was a vicar. It was fantastic.

And he had been at St Pauls?

Yes, I was so surprised to find Canon Perry here.

It is quite a thriving Church isn't it, with a thriving congregation?

Yes it is, because there was Canon Perry, then after him it was Raymond Gilbert and then Paul Filmer and now, of course, Simon. They now have 5 churches. I go to Bridge Church 2nd and 4th Sunday, and I go to Lower Hardres 1st and 3rd Sunday's because I like Lower Hardres because my son used to live over there and used to go there quite a bit. I am attached to both churches.

You lived in Canterbury before you came here obviously?

Well, my father came to Canterbury in 1945 as Telephone Manager just before the war ended and we lived in St Augustine's road in those days. Then I got married in 1948.

Tell me a bit about Canterbury after the war. What did it look like?

When we came in 1945 the High Street looked terrible. It was just derelict all the way through. It was very depressing in 1945, but they gradually built it up and quite quickly.

You lived in St Augustine's Road?

Yes, not far from the city. Then when I got married, my husband and I bought a house in Beaconsfield Road, close to St Dunstan's church then.

And you worked in Canterbury did you?

I used to work in Telephone House as a Clerical Officer, but when I got married they transferred me to the Food Office just up St Stephen's Road where the Registrar is now. I have been in Canterbury since 1945, over 60 years ago, living for 45 years in Bridge.

Did you find that thinking about the people of what you know are living around Bridge now, has it been a population that keeps on moving, or are there quite a few people that you knew when you first came here?

As far as my Close is concerned I am the only original one left in here, and there are about two in Ford Close in Western Avenue. It has changed quite a lot but is still quite a very friendly area I must say.

Well that's the value of a village isn't it; you really get to know people.

I like the old shop next to the village hall. It was a little grocers shop before (I can't think of the man's name who was there then). Shame it had to go.

Now, let's think about celebrations in Bridge since you moved in. There is the bypass?

Oh yes, I remember sitting down by the bypass. 1976 the bypass was built and we had a big party round the maypole outside The White Horse. My daughter danced round that. That was in Wendy Tomlin's time after Mrs Knight retired. I still send her the church magazine since she left all those years ago. She went to Dover and now she is in Norfolk.

And of course the school has grown. I don't know how many children there were when you first arrived.

Oh gosh, they had to pull down the swimming pool to build the extra part of the school didn't they. I remember when we had the old school and they moved to the new school, all the children carried little chairs through the park right up to the new school. I remember the coal fires, they were lovely, which you wouldn't have today would you due to safety.