

WHICHEVER way you approach the village of Milton Malsor you are sure to end up at the Green and Milton Stores.

This bright and modern self-service shop is owned and run by 34-year-old Mr. Ken Johnson, with the help of his younger brother, Richard. Ken can trace his family, through his mother, nearly 350 years in the village. His great-grandfather opened the Hope Brewery, built alongside the Greyhound and converted buildings, on one side of the Green, into Maltings. This business was passed down to his grandmother and sold in 1910 to the Northampton Brewery Co.

The family moved from the Greyhound to the Laurels, an attractive house, now known as Stone Gables and owned by Mr. John Green, the Northampton builder. Each member of the family was given a piece of land, and it is on the land given to Ken's mother, Mrs. Lottie Dew, that the present family house, built in 1935 and shop stand.

After leaving Towcester Grammar School, Ken went into farming, giving this up to take over the store in 1959. Both his mother and father had become ill partly through heavy demands made on them by custom from the M1 building parties.

If he is not too busy, one can coax him into reminiscing about village life during the war years. He recalls vividly the day the big red London Transport buses pulled up with loads of evacuees, who were all set upon by the local lads. Lessons were held in the chapel rooms as the school was too small, even though divided by a curtain.

Victory party

Ken has radiant memories of V.E. Day, when the entire village had a party. Tables were laid in the street, and in the pound, and flags and bunting were flying from the telegraph poles and wires. Local farmers gave huge pieces of meat and a free feast was had by all.

Mr. Reg Turner, of Green street, made a neon sign, saying "V.E. Day" and put it on the front of his house, to the amazement of the children who had never seen such a thing before.

No shopkeeper could be more helpful and obliging than Ken. He makes every customer, even down to the tiniest feel a person of importance. Every December, Father Christmas comes to the store and each child in the village queues up to visit him and receive sweets and a toy. Just one example of Ken's goodwill.

Last year Father Christmas was played by Mr. Mells, at 93 one of our oldest inhabitants. For the past five years also he has donned the robe and beard to be the central figure at the school Christmas party. His identity has always been kept a secret from the children.

The school is a very different place now from when Mrs. Emery arrived to teach here in 1907. Some 175 children were packed into the two rooms, suffocating in the summer and freezing in the winter. Ninety-two children, many only three and four year olds, were in the infants' room with two teachers.

Mrs. Emery decided to leave after a month, but was persuaded to stay by the

Milton Malsor, a village of so many memories

This report on "Characters of My Village" was entered by Milton Malsor Women's Institute in the Mercury and Herald Literary competition, and was one of nine to be highly-commended.

rector, The Rev. A. C. Neely and Sir Ryland Adkins, lord of the manor.

It was the custom to go to such places as the Manor on February 14 and sing:

*"Say good morning Valentine,
Empty your purse, and fill up
mine,
Say good morning Valentine."*

They would be given apples, cake or money to spend at the village shop, then opposite the school.

Mrs. Emery also recalls the club feast at Whitsuntide when the Free Gardeners paraded the village with band and banner and the Bugbrooke Brass Band played in the overflowing church.

Whit Monday saw another parade followed by dinners, sports, tea and dancing. At that time there were two bakers, a butcher, milkman, coalman, cobbler, blacksmith and even an undertaker in the village, all of whom have disappeared in the march of progress. Mrs. Emery's husband followed the now unusual occupation of thatcher, in which he was helped for a time by Mr. Battams, another of our oldest residents.

Kate Henshaw, a former pupil of Mrs. Emery, comes from a family of 10 children, all born in the village. They lived in a cottage which was "two up, two down" and the only means of cooking was on a tiny fire with a small oven at the side.

Of necessity meals had to be taken in two sittings, and no doubt a great deal of ingenuity had to be used to cook for 12 people. One way was to have a boiled pudding and steam the potatoes in a crochet net on top of this.

Every Sunday when the family went to Church, they passed the bakehouse and it was the children's duty to take the Sunday joint to be cooked in the bakers oven while they were at the service.

At Christmas time villagers had to book their seats on the carrier's cart two weeks beforehand, to get to Northampton to do their shopping. Even then they perhaps had to sit on a box or barrel. This carrier would also do any shopping for people who could not go themselves, and the horse and cart were parked at the Bull and Butcher (opposite the Plough Hotel).

One of Mrs. Henshaw's vivid memories is the Pancake Bell. This was rung from the church belfry at 11 a.m. on Shrove Tuesday to remind the house-

wives to mix the batter.

At this time Miss Caroline Dent lived in the Manor. This little lady, with a white lace cap, dosed the sick with homeopathic remedies and the first thick slice of meat was cut from the middle of the joint and sent to invalids. As there was only an elderly maid living at the house with her, a gentleman's top hat was kept in the hall to warn off unwanted callers.

The present owner of the Manor is Mrs. Daphne Raynsford, a well-known figure both in Northampton and the county. She and the colonel came to the village in 1923 with their three children. After serving in the A.T.S. during the war Mrs. Raynsford took up public service with such bodies as the County Council, St. Crispin Hospital, Towcester Grammar School, St. John's School, Tiffield and Milton School. For many years she was president of Milton Malsor Women's Institute.

A founder member of the institute was Mrs. F. Turner who was born in 1885 and came to Stockwell Farm at 11. A keen member of the Baptist Chapel, she spent the first years of her married life in the Manse and the arrival of the first baby only interrupted her organ playing for three weeks.

The baby bag

In her "Memoirs of Milton" Granny Turner, as she was known to all, wrote of the Baby Bag, which was a linen bag as big as a pillow case, containing all the baby would need for its first few weeks. Any expectant mother was able to borrow this and return it after use.

She also recalled how the children would wait for the race-goers coming back from Towcester on Easter Monday in their donkey carts and broughams. According to the state of their pockets, coins would be thrown to the children as they cheered them on their way.

Granny Turner was a woman of numerous interests — reading, dressing dolls, embroidery, crochet, pillowcase, miniature gardens, cacti and make do and mend. She started tatting at the age of 70 and a mat of hers is on the dressing table in the Northamptonshire bedroom at Denman College.

One of her greatest joys in her latter years was the flowering of her yucca, which bloomed only shortly before her death.

Next week: Ringstead.