Cinderford Childhood Memories of the 60's

Letter from Richard Harris, Cottage Field, Highnam to The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Review and published in the Spring of 2012

Happy memories

I'VE travelled a fair bit and worked overseas. I live in Gloucester and am married with two sons of 19 and 22 but I was born in Dockham Road Cinderford. Yes, I am a Forester and proud of it as I had the most perfect upbringing in the best part of the world.

My memories go way back and beyond my first day at Bilson School to my last day at Double View. In 1978 I left to go to college in Bristol but still couldn't wait to return to Cinderford on the weekend, see my mates and go to the Saturday night disco at the Rugby Club. In fact I still remember the opening night of the new club house, the smell of fresh paint and the sound of Bob Marley Jammin'.

I fondly recall fishing at Lightmoor, building camps, playing in the woods and old quarry at Collafield and climbing trees. Riding my bike flat out down St White's hill, down to Cannop Bottom or around the Collafield scramble track and then making fires in my mate's orchard up on Littledean Hill. All dangerous stuff by today's standards but back then boys were allowed to be boys.

Then there was sliding down the Causeway Mount on a piece of cardboard, riding my go-kart down Dockham Road or sliding on a baking tray when it snowed (Gran was the cook at Double View which came in handy), I remember going around the "scowle holes" in the woods at Buckshaft and my dad nearly stepping on a snake when I was on his shoulders.

We bought fishing gear, knives and catapults from Mr Edwards' hardware store when it was OK for a young man to carry a knife, in fact it was part of the Cub Scout list of 'must haves'. I bought pets and pet food from Bobby Byatt's, crunchy apples from Bonsers and sweets from Mr Hicks on Belle Vue Road or Mrs Freeman's at the top of Dockham Road.

I remember Carnival day and the annual pram race down Cinderford High Street, the Miners' Welfare hall parties and the Saturday afternoon kids cinema. The first time they tried it the sound didn't work but we still sat through two hours of cartoons without it.

I remember family picnics at Blackpool Brook, games on Beechenhurst and my Sunday paper round along Church Road. I could still probably pick out which houses were the best tippers at Christmas!

Then there's the first time I bought a pint for myself in the Red Lion at Coleford at the age of 15 and the Royal Oak on Littledean Hill...so many memories in such a comparatively short period of time.

So why am I telling you all this?

Well, my father died in January 2000 and my mother died more recently in January 2009. My sister, who lives in Leicester and myself, have just sold the family home in Dockham Road, a house that my father helped build on land donated by my grandma and grandad who lived next door. It was also the house I was born in.

It's all history and every family has one but for therapeutic reasons I thought I share a part of mine with you. – **Richard Harris, Cottage Field, Highnam.**