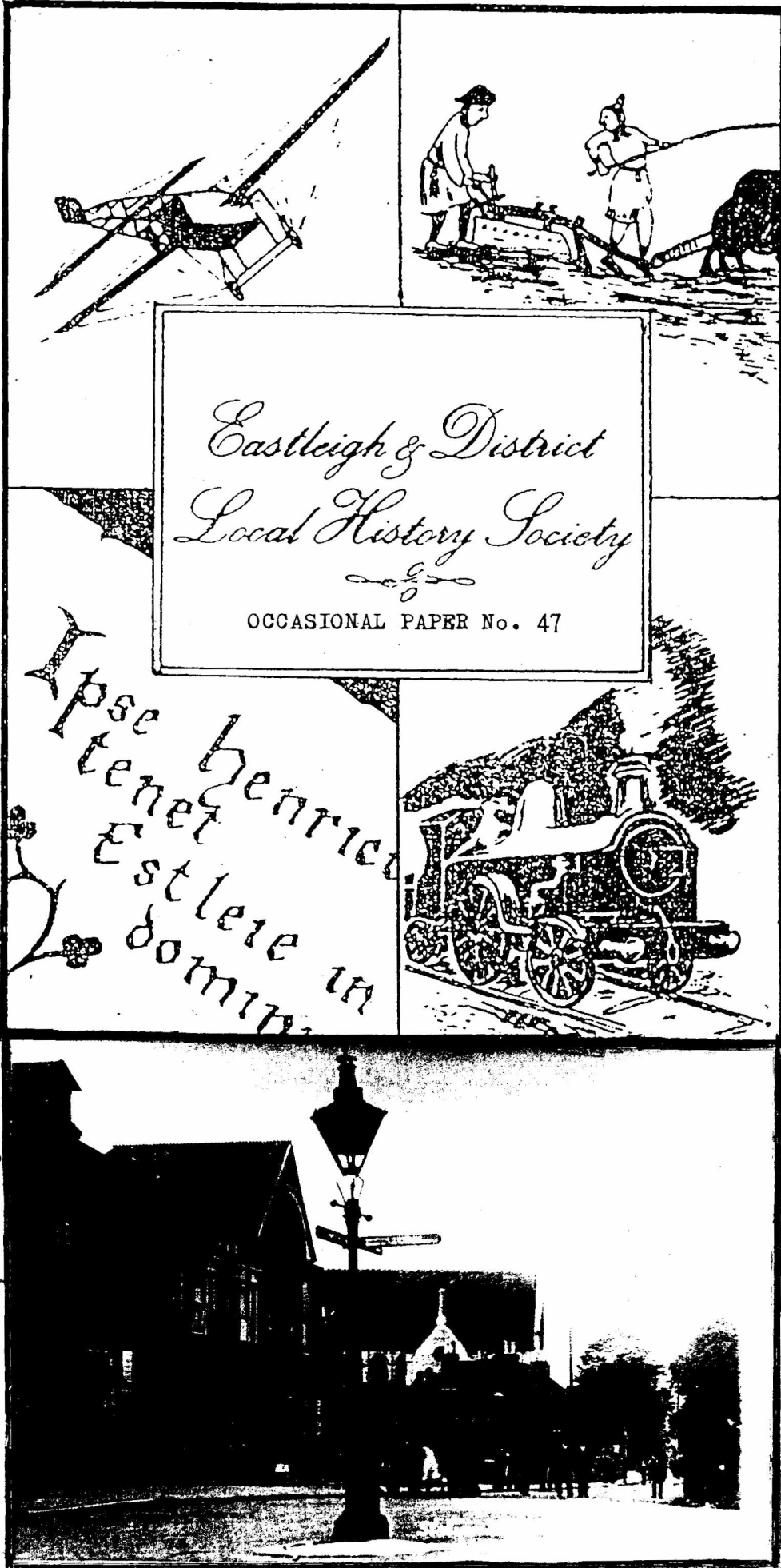


# Fond memories of bygone days

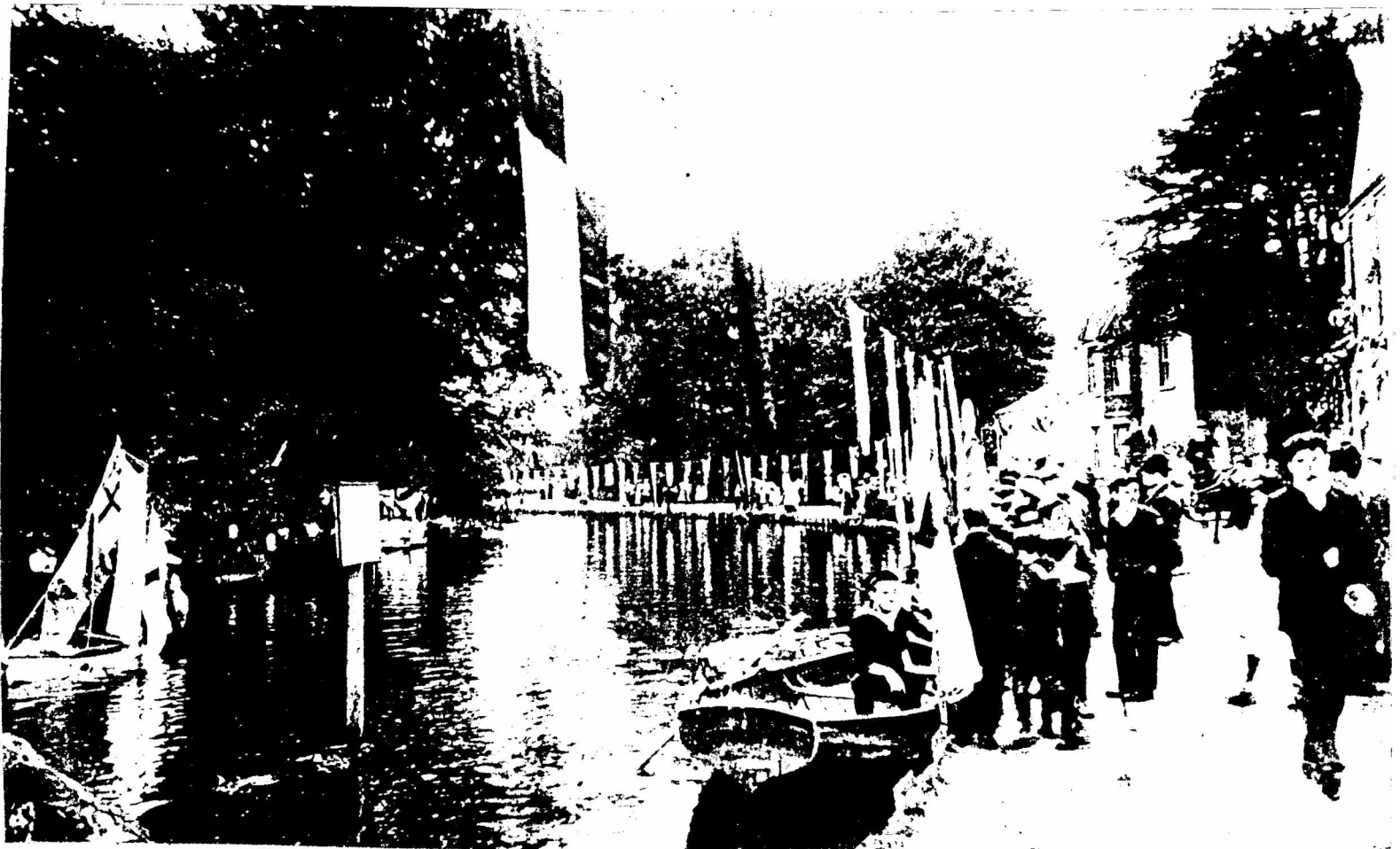




MARKET STREET

The Palace of Varieties

The Picture Palace



Regatta at Bishopstoke

## FOND MEMORIES OF BYGONE DAYS

I was born in Eastleigh in 1901 at No.6 Station Hill, where in those days Ryder, Scammel and Bowyer, Architects and Surveyors, had their offices. In later years, Mr P. Bowyer was Mayor of Southampton. Living on the "Hill" as a child, I used to see the men-folk going and coming to and from the Railway Works each day. My father and sister worked there for a number of years, my father until he retired and my sister serving twenty one years before going to Australia to join my brother who had emigrated out there in the year 1912. My two brothers emigrated together but one was killed at Gallipoli in the First World War. At that time we were living in "Sainfoin Villa", a lovely old house standing back from the road. I still have photos of it taken whilst we lived there. I remember the photographer's name was Mr. Morgan and he lived in The Crescent. Alas, our house is gone now and I see that it has been replaced by a large block of offices.

I remember all our neighbours on the "Hill" in those days. Mr. Van, the Chemist, was a near neighbour and I spent a lot of time at his home; he used to let me fill the small pill boxes ready for the shop and I used to help his daughters running errands to Prissall's to collect the groceries and other odds and ends. I thought it was marvellous in my small way. Our other neighbours were Mr. and Mrs. Batt, Drapers, Mr. Cox, Sweets and Confectioner, and next door, Mr. Dowling had the small off-licence, serving customers and sealing the bottles with sealing wax if it was children who were buying. He used to make us laugh by wiggling his ears and making his cap move up and down. He was quite a character.

Going down the "Hill" there was The Crown, licensee Mr. Butt; next door, The Home Tavern owned by Mr. Vowels, and across the road, the Junction Hotel in the Station Yard - strange that the last pub of which I was the licensee was The Junction in St. Denys, Southampton, where I had gone in 1913. One of my brothers worked for the Co-op in the Bakery and my mother was on the Co-op Committee. I have some photos taken of a ladies meeting going off somewhere for the day all dressed up in large hats, the fashion in those days. I think it was about 1900.

How times have changed. Gone are lots of the old landmarks. The old church is burnt out and the Vicarage next door turned into a Railwaymen's Club. The rest of Romsey Road still looks about the same. At one time it was where all the doctors lived; in my mind's eye I can still see old Dr. Grant riding along on his bike. Speaking of doctors, my first sight of a motor car was when Dr. Simmonds of Bishopstoke came chugging along with his wife, her flat hat tied on with a scarf and the Doctor in his dust-coat, cap and goggles.

Eastleigh in those days was a large village stretching down Southampton Road, along Grantham Road to Nutbeem Road and back round to The Crescent. I attended Winchester Road School where Miss Cooks was my teacher. Mr. Youatt was the caretaker and he lived in a lovely old house in the school yard. How as children we loved to watch Mr. Farmer, the blacksmith, shoeing the horses and to watch the bellows throwing sparks like fireworks. I spent a lot of time there as they were friends of my parents.

On being taken for a car ride to Bishopstoke recently my friend said to me when we reached Station Hill, "Which way now?". I said, "Over the bridge and straight on; you will pass the water meadows where we used to go and pick flowers such as cowslips, king cups and various sorts", but to my surprise we passed men playing cricket on the left side. I had to laugh. We went on and came to where they have built a new pub by the river and then on round to Annie Miles, correctly named The Anglers but still going strong. Then I was in for another surprise. The old church I remember so well as a child had gone. Coming home from a Sunday evening stroll with Mum and Dad in the twilight and passing it with its ivy clad walls and old gravestones green with age, the owls tooting and the bats flying around and the sound of rippling water, it was very eerie to me. I was always glad when we had passed it. That's a child's imagination for you. Then back past the Barge where we used to go with a jam jar and fishing net to catch tiddlers. They were happy days.

How Leigh Road has altered. When I was a child, it was a lane. You had to go over a small footbridge and if a horse and cart came, they had to go through the stream that flowed across the road. Now it is a major road going straight on to Chandlers Ford which has grown out of all recognition. At one time, we lived in Cranbury Road. The back gardens of the houses opposite went nearly to the cornfields stretching over to Stoneham. It's all houses now. I wonder if the old Drill Halls still exist? My father was a Territorial and his hall was at the back of Desborough Road. I have several postcards taken at various camps and some of the Annual Carnival with girls in the Linen Room all dressed up to represent various things. I expect they are all gone as it is such a long time ago and we have had two world wars. For me, the last war was worse as I was living in Southampton during the Blitz. It was pretty grim. I hope we don't have another, but having reached the age of eighty-five, I think I have seen enough. So I will now say, "Cheerio, all".

Mrs. D. M. Wilkinson (née Hill)

I was born at Bishopstoke in 1914. My first memory is of the day my mother took my two sisters and myself pushing a wooden pushchair with a carpet seat (we had to go everywhere on foot in those days) to the Co-op in Eastleigh to receive our cups commemorating the end of the First World War. I still have mine.

I remember that our house was surrounded by lovely fields and woods. We had wonderful hay-making days and the old brick kilns still stood nearby. As young girls and boys we made a habit of doing the "Monkey Walk". That entailed walking along Eastleigh Market Street, into Factory Road and then into High Street; we would go round and round hoping to make a conquest. Then we would go and play on the old cannon in the Recreation Ground. A shop that I recall in Market Street was Hann's Milk Shop with the big white china swan in the window containing brown eggs and the lovely creamy butter in green wrappers. I believe that Benny Hill, who later became a famous comedian and entertainer, used to work for that dairy and he would call the ladies out to fill their milk jugs. There was Brixey's the Baker Shop, Sanger's the Sweet Shop, Peacock's the Fruiterers, Ruff's the Jewellers and the Home and Colonial Store. In High Street we had Varnes, a Pork and Sausage Shop, and Mr. Stubbington who would help the housewife by accepting weekly payments for goods. You would hear it said, "I must go to old Stubby" as they called him affectionately. We would climb the stairs of the Co-op offices to order coal. There was a Drapers Shop in High Street that always fascinated me as they put the money in a cup and pulled a chain sending it along a kind of wooden tramline. A brass rule was attached to the counter for measuring and instead of getting one farthing change for a bill of two shillings and eleven pence three farthings, you would get a packet of pins.

George Wright's two cinemas were in Market Street. In the days of silent films, us children would go to the films every Saturday for two old pennies and we would be given an orange and a bun on entering. When the Talkies came to town, that really was something. Charles Furrel and Janet Gaynor sang "Tip-toe Through the Tulips" and Al Jolson sang "Sonny Boy". Before the coming of Talkies we would have music played in the pit below the screen and then the usherettes would come round selling the sheet music for six old pennies.

I was sorry to see the front of the Railway Station altered and the old Junction Hotel gone; Jane of the Daily Mirror (Christobel Drewry) used to come there. There was a taxi rank outside the station. Mr. Webb, Eastleigh's famous photographer, had his shop in Leigh Road next to Mr. Ingram the tobacconist.

The Eastleigh Weekly was printed at the Eastleigh Printing Works with Mr Ivel in charge. Superintendent Pragnell was in charge of the Boys in Blue. I remember some of them, P.C.s Spicer, Donaldson and Poulter. They made a habit of going round the shops at night to check that locks were fastened.

I shall always remember Eastleigh as a railway town and specially doing her bit in World War Two when the Carriage Works was taken over by the Admiralty and the Air Ministry. They were days of happiness and of horror but there was wonderful friendship all round. Then came the days when the Yanks would be floating round and the Snowdrops in their jeeps watching in case of trouble. They were the American Military Police, known as "Snowdrops" on account of the white helmets they wore. I remember what a lovely sight the Fire Brigade made, so smart with their shining brass helmets; my uncle, Jim Cripps, was the Captain. Then there was Tommy Green, the Olympic champion walker, and George Wright, the English bowls champion. How proud we were of them.

As a young girl, I worked at Home Farm. What memories I have of those extensive green fields all round which have now become Fleming Park. The farmers used to gather together on Lady Day at the Cricketers Arms in Stoneham. The head cowman's cottage stood where the hotel is now in Passfield Avenue. Once it was occupied by Mr. Gerald Fowles, the farmer's son, with his wife and children. The lane that ran beside the Leigh Hotel had an old cottage where the Woodley family lived; they worked as carters and did general work on the farm. It was a splendid old farm with much history.

I remember the huge fire range and the Dutch oven and the two big dressers and the pewter dish covers, large and small, hanging on the wall. We baked bread, made brawn, pressed beef and pickled walnuts. There was plenty of hard work but it was satisfying to have jobs well done. Mr. Basil Hockey, the Grocer's son, used to call every week with the groceries.

How I regret the loss of our two old mills, Nutbeem's at Barton and the other at Lower Bishopstoke, where Father would go and collect the poultry feed. General Gubbins owned the big house on the Longmead Estate where the German Kaiser once planted a tree. Then there was Sawyers, another large house, where Lady Diana Cooper used to visit. The Escombe family lived in the old vicarage. The Sherwood paint family lived in the house by the river. Mr. Bourne lived in the Manor House and Miss Barrow-Symonds in Whitehall. There was an asylum in Church Road - long since gone.

Eastleigh was once called Bishopstoke because the early railway station was known as Bishopstoke Junction. Mr. Snelgrove, a baker in Spring Lane, told me that the name of Bishopstoke derived from the fact that the Bishop of Winchester used to come down and bring bread for the poor, known as "Toke"; hence, Bishopstoke. My grandpa used to tend the Churchyard round the old church which has been demolished. The Anglers Pub was known as the Annie Miles, an old-worldly inn where you walked in the little front door and up a stone passage. We used to have lovely carnivals with fairy lights fixed all along the river bank. It was a real fairyland sight. The Mount where Mr. Cotton lived became a Sanatorium. I believe he lost most of his money during World War One. There were steps leading down to the river where boats were moored and we children had wonderful times there.

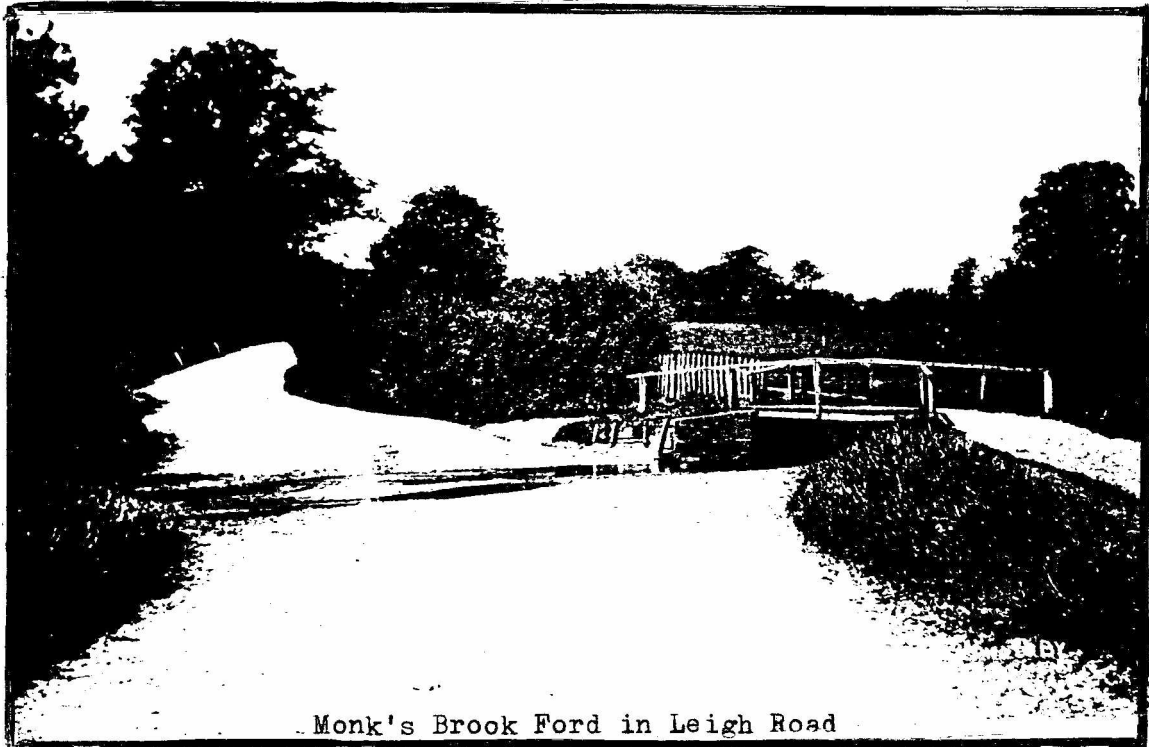
What excitement when the green buses began to run from Eastleigh. Two drivers from Eastleigh were Mr. Reg. and Mr. Vic. Bennett. The buses looked so fresh in their green paint. I believe the first radio shop to be opened was run by Mr. Brice of Southampton. I shall always remember the Sewage Cart coming down from Stoke Common. The driver used to ring a bell to let folk know it was on its way round about midnight. And I shall never forget New Year's Eve when at midnight the Works hooters would blow, the church bells would ring and the villagers would come out to wish each other a Happy New Year. What has become of these old traditions?

Schooldays for us were at St. Mary's Church School. We would sit for exams and if we passed we had the privilege of going to Barton Peveril School on Barton Road. Now it is a big VIth Form College.

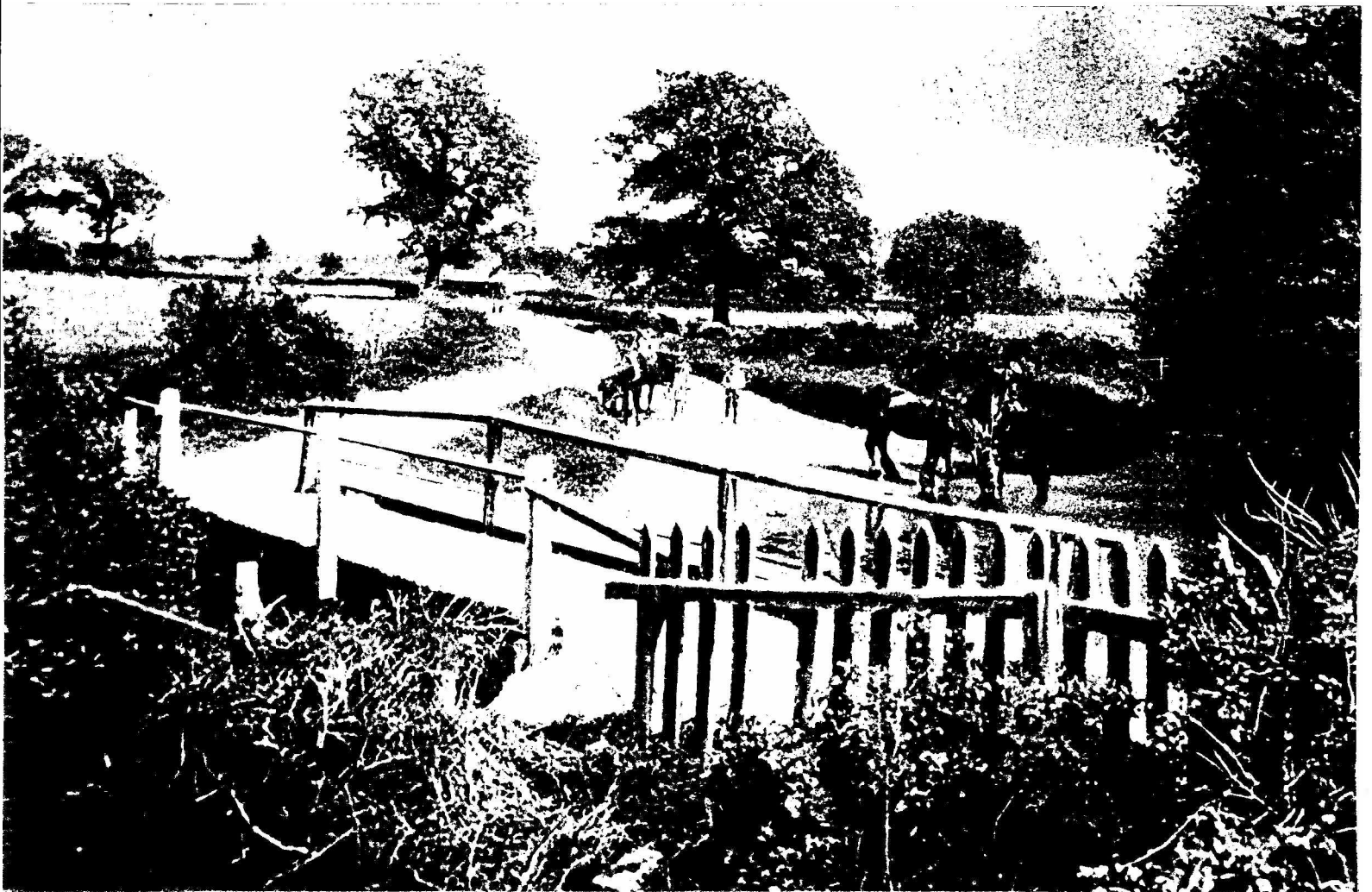
I wonder if the walk we knew as Ricketty is still there. I am happy to see that the Barge River walk can still be used and that the Prince of Wales Pub still exists but the Anchor Inn seems to have gone.

And so back to Home Farm and taking the children to paddle and catch tiddlers in the ford that used to be on the road to Chandlers Ford. They were happy days for me and although I have resided in Bournemouth for over fifty-six years my heart goes back to where I spent my happy youth. One has to move with the times, but when my sister and I visit to tend our parents resting place in Bishopstoke St. Mary's Churchyard, it is then that time stands still and nostalgia takes over.

Rosetta E. K. Fay



Monk's Brook Ford in Leigh Road  
Looking towards Chandlers Ford.



Looking towards Home Farm in middle distance