

Peggy Woolhouse Remembers Coming to Flackwell Heath as A Young Bride.

Just before we were married in 1952 we bought from Mr Arthur Wilks of Fennels a plot of land fronting on to Swains Lane. We moved into the house we had built there in 1954 and I thought I 'd moved to heaven! There were no pavements, no street lights and no traffic. Fennels Farm (now Fennels Farm Road) was opposite our house and our milk came from there.

At the top of Swains Lane was a small wooden shop housing Whitemans the butchers and round the corner was a small Co-op where I would leave my weekly order to be delivered at the weekend. The Post Office was owned by the Jennings brothers and their wonderful home baked bread was baked on the premises. Fresh turkeys were chosen and bought from Jennings Farm and on the site of Cherrywood Gardens was a fruit orchard where I used to pick my own fruit as the elderly owner was too arthritic to manage his ladders. Buses ran regularly, but I used to walk down Treadaway Hill with a pram, get in the guard's van of the train at Loudwater and be in High Wycombe in five minutes! Of course walking back up was a bit of a push but I was young then. Our children were able to play safely in Fennels Wood and no one ever locked their doors.

The village school (on the site of the present Community Centre) was for infants only; junior pupils were expected to walk down to Loudwater. Luckily Carrington school was built in 1960 but such was the growth of the village that the old school was still used as additional classroom space until the Infant school was added.

In the sixties there were many Cherry Fayres and the Scout Hut was built through the efforts of an enthusiastic committee of parents and Scouters. What is now the library was the original Community Centre but on the construction of the present Centre it became part of Carrington School.

High hopes were raised when Pembroke School was opened for secondary pupils. It was splendidly equipped, particularly the stage, and many village events were held there including pantomimes and music concerts. Unfortunately reducing pupil numbers meant combining Pembroke with Wye Valley, but its closure was a great loss to the village.

When the motorway was being built there was sadness at the huge swathe cut through Fennels Wood and the enormous numbers of chalk carrying lorries going past our house involved the fire service being called in to hose down the road, such was the density of chalk dust deposited there. Throughout the fifty one years I have lived in Flackwell Heath I have seen many changes, few of them for the betterment of the village. The loss of so many orchards, green spaces and indiscriminate inbuilding has changed the area for ever. However, having moved from near London Airport I am still happy to be here and wonder if I now can class myself as a "Heathen"

Peggy Woolhouse founded and still runs the Heath Singers. She features in the video Flackwell Heath – The Special People which is available from the library.