



FROM FARMWORKER'S SON TO MAYOR

By DENNIS BATER

*The life and times of a Devonshire man,
including truths, myths and trivia picked up on the way*

*I dedicate this book to my dear late wife
and best friend, Lesley*

THIS GREAT LITTLE TOWN OF HATHERLEIGH

A proud town that, throughout the one thousand years and more that it has been a settlement, has many times missed out when prosperity was just around the corner. Despite this, Hatherleigh has stretched out and left an imprint at many points around the world, and is doing so still today. When the cover photo was taken on my leaving the Fire Service in 1995, I said I would write a book of my life in Hatherleigh and the surrounding area. This is it!

HOW TO FIND HATHERLEIGH

Hatherleigh lies on the A386, between Okehampton and Bideford, in the heart of West Devon.

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The sheep statue that has become the symbol of Hatherleigh

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FOREWORD

It is a great privilege to be given the opportunity to write a foreword to Dennis Bater's wonderful book.

All of us country-born folk of a certain age will recognise Dennis' childhood - a Devonshire world not rich materially but one abounding with a deep sense of community; one which produced 'characters' whose idiosyncrasies linger long in the memory.

With his vivid prose Dennis brings such folk to life and illustrates how, so often, the strength of village life exceeds the sum of its parts; how all the strong, the delicate, the wise - even the feckless - play a role in creating a vibrant community.

A further strength of this book is that it is devoid of sentiment. Dennis describes his life - and the way of Hatherleigh and the area - over the decades, telling how it was and how it is. No 'things ain't what it used to be' nostalgia; no judgments passed; no complaints made.

This is a chronicle which, in years to come, students of social - and local - history will look upon as an essential reference book, while folks of today will enjoy it as a fascinating record of the life, so far, of an exceedingly interesting and accomplished countryman and the community in which he has lived.

A fascinating read.

TED SHERRELL

PREAMBLE

The book you are about to read is my account of the way I saw Hatherleigh and the neighbouring village of Iddesleigh as I grew up. I tell of my own experiences, and those of others that I have been told about and which, to the best of my knowledge, are true. I had originally compiled this book to bring the story of Hatherleigh - published when I was Town Mayor first in 1981 - up to the close of the 20th century. However, now in 2008 I find so much has happened over the last few years that I have decided to extend it.

I recommend some books that should be read in conjunction with mine, to get more depth of understanding to some of the events I have included. In particular, Reverend Banks', a Vicar who was interested in local history, did a great deal of research in the eighteen seventies and eighties. His researches record many events that townfolk from Hatherleigh have stretched out across the world and, somewhere, have made impressions of some kind.



I have possession of a book of Parish magazines through the kindness of John Watkins (pictured right) who purchased it in Barnstaple Market and lent it to me on several occasions. One day he said that I should keep it as it might get lost when he died. Sadly he died barely twelve months later! Reading it inspired me to get to work and record my own memoirs.

I also want to thank the following people for their assistance and advice, and for lending photographs from their collections: Brian Abel, Hatherleigh History Society, George Dunn, Eric Rowe, Derek Coysh, Peter Fishleigh, Alan Jones, the Miller Twins (Mrs. B Heaman and Mrs. D Ball), Morris Thomas and G Andrews (NDJ, for cover photo).

Dennis Bater

THE BEGINNING, NATURALLY!



Week Moor Cross, and the cottage where I was born.

My father Fred Bater married my mother Violet Dennis in 1938 - hence I was named Dennis Bater. Fred had been a farm worker all his life; his wage at the time of their marriage was 35 shillings a week (mother told me her wedding reception food cost thirty shillings!). They rented a small cottage at Week Moor Cross so I started life in very humble beginnings.

My mother wanted me to become a car mechanic, but I would not be told and went on to become a farm worker! I had my way and later became, at various times, a lorry driver, the owner of a Fish and Chip Shop, a Postman, a Fireman, an amateur film maker and a school Governor. I also worked in Hatherleigh Market for some 30 years, where I was involved in collecting stall rents, building work, security work, controlling traffic and other odd jobs such as driving a digger, clerking and, once, helping bailiffs! This experience has helped me (I hope) to become an understanding Councillor who enjoys being able to help and steer the community I live in.

A garden was an essential and my father Fred was a keen vegetable gardener.



I was born on May 1st 1940 at Week Moor Cross - the house on the cross roads with the post box in the wall. My first memories are of playing in the well-kept garden in front of the house. In those days, from what I saw as a two year old child looking out from the garden gate, it seemed to me that the whole world passed by. I think the cross roads were busier in those days than they are today.

One early memory was the lady who passed by five days a week. She was called Mrs. McDermott and she taught at Iddesleigh School. She would cycle every day from Hatherleigh in all weathers, wearing a black gabardine Macintosh and head scarf.

From Farmworker's Son to Mayor

My mother was in service working for the Reverend Paramore before she married my father. Rectories in those days employed gardeners, farm workers, cooks and chamber maids, of which my mother was one. It was a standing order that all staff had to attend church every Sunday morning. Parson Paramore was noted for his long sermons and after they had been written they would be laid out on his desk in his study. So, mother's orders on a Saturday from the other staff was to spy on his Sermon.



Myself at 18 months old standing in front of the cottage.

She would count the pages and pick out points so that when they all sat in church the following day they could see how much was left and when the sermon was coming to an end. His youngest daughter Dorothy, who spent a lot of time with the staff, would also want the information! The Reverend Nick McKinnel, in paying tribute to mother at her funeral, remarked on this and the many tales she told him of her past service in Iddesleigh rectory.

Considering that the farm worker's weekly wage was then only some four pounds it must have been hard for my parents as, from 1943, we had holidays in Dartmouth. My early memories of these holidays are of D-day equipment

covering the New Ground and Quay!

My Mother and Father with Janet my youngest sister in 1966 at Dartmouth with Lesley (second right) whom I would marry.



Mum in her uniform.



HATHERLEIGH TRIVIA – 1

SOME OF THE CHARACTERS

Hatherleigh has had an influence on all the parishes that it bordered. People relied on the town for most of their services. Deliveries came out from the town most days - delivered by characters such as John Edwards the baker, Burt Goss the butcher, groceries from Sam Ellacott who had his shop in South Street at what is now called Cobweb, and Wilfred Jerwood who had his shop at the Market and High Street junction. The fishman however came from Exeter. He was called Wally Rice. I believe that he was well known in that city, running a stall in Exeter Pannier Market and later a shop in Burnt House Lane. Coal came from Letherens (who traded until the mid-nineties and are now known as Cornwall Farmers), and also from Victor Brooks. He would also bring Sam Ellacott's groceries on another day of the week; on the same lorry he would carry paraffin and the odd few bags of coal he had missed on previous rounds, all covered by a sheet.



Football Club members. Mrs. MacDermott is front row right, left of Mr. E Pillivant, Hon Secretary. (Back Two Rows) J Reynolds, B Balsdon, ?, E Rowe, ?, G Short, R Alford?, (Man Standing right at Back) E Pillivant jnr, Mrs E Pillivant jnr, A Edwards, R Short, J Westlake, Mrs J Westlake, ?, E W Johns, D Edwards.(Front Row) ?, G Hands, H Watts, ?, ?.



Sam Ellacott and daughter Gladys.



Victor Brooks in his coalyard.



Burt Goss and John Edwards were drinking pals who always met at the Duke of York, Iddesleigh, on Friday evenings after the rounds were over.