



STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE ARCHIVE

Seventy-four years ago

In January 1936, King George V died and was succeeded by his son Edward VIII who, as we know, was to abdicate before the year was out. In July, the Olympic Games opened in Berlin, with Hitler in attendance. The Italians invaded Ethiopia, and the liner Queen Mary left on her maiden voyage from Southampton.

Meanwhile, in Steeple Aston, life went on at a calmer pace. This article is made up of extracts from two original editions of Dr. Radcliffe's School magazine from 1936 that have recently been kindly donated to the Archive. They tell us something of life in the village in the inter-war period when traditional rural life was still the dominant thread, but at the same time the modern world was beginning to intrude.

J.Lamb (Form IV) writes: *Mr. Cook, the dentist, paid a visit on business, which meant torture was about to take place, in January. Mrs. Collins left this school to take up another post. She was presented with a motoring rug as a parting gift.*

R.H.Thornton and Grace Phipps (both Form III) tells us what has happened to some Old Boys and Girls from the school: *William Dunsby of Middle Barton is working for Mrs. Cook of Dunstew (sic), as a house boy. He says he likes it very much. Thomas Grant of Steeple Aston is a porter on the GWR at Heyford. Robert Laughton is working for his father at Old Man Lees farm, Tackley. William Wilding, a late prefect, of Tackley, is working at the Pressed Steel Works, Morris Cowley. Gwendoline Franklin and Pearl Grimsley, who was a Duckworth prefect, are working at Elliston and Cavell's, at dressmaking. Doris Whitehead, of North Aston, is working for Mrs. Hitchen's of North Aston, She is now in London. She writes, "I went and saw the King's lying-in-state. We queued up for five hours. I was just ready to drop at the end. Then we went and saw the funeral procession. It was a grand sight, something I shall never forget." Elizabeth Davies of Middle Barton is working at Charlbury Road, Oxford, as a housemaid. Mabel Woods of Rousham works at Mrs. Kinch's of Steeple Aston.*

Gardening notes by A.Brock: *We all, I think, like gardening in Form II because we have such an interesting Master, Mr. Whetton. When its wet or when the ground is hard we have talks on gardening by him. Last week we had a talk on potatoes, how to plant and dig them in. Spring is now approaching very quickly, and work is increasing every day, for now comes the final preparing for the season's crops.*

Riddles and Jokes: Audrey Knight (Form II): Q. *When is a flat iron like the sun? A. When it's hot and scorching. Q When is a kettle like a humming top? A. When it sings.*

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If we each had a penny for every year of our age wouldn't Mrs. Stone be busy?
(editor's note- Stone's Store, the local sweet shop, was at the top of Paine's Hill- it advertised as "not a Stone's throw from the school!). *999 oranges in Steeple Aston have been made into marmalade, 56 rabbits have been eaten for dinner this Term.*

A school debate was held on the subject "That Italy has no right to invade Abyssinia". The first child's contribution held that *the Italians are very ambitious and would like to have Mussolini as the Napoleon of the world.* The opposing view was that *the Italians are good farmers and have drained part of their own country so they could drain Abyssinia and make useless bogs into rich soil.* Miss Freeman added controversy by pointing out that *"If England had not attacked countries we should have no British Empire".* (Editor's note: well that's all right then).

Phyllis Bullock (Form III) reported on a school visit to Shipton Cement Works. *We went to see the navvy at work in the quarry, which had a bucket on one side to collect the limestone. We were told that six men could sleep in this bucket quite easily. I hardly believe this but as we were a quarter of a mile from it, I expect it is true. For excitement we climbed up flights of steel ladders to the top of the silos- the top of these are over sixty feet high and we had a good view of the surrounding country from the top.*

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John Baggett (Form 1B): *There is a stage in this form room with a piano and a screen on it. There is also a stuffed lion in a glass case which was shot in South Africa and presented to the School. G and W are not very good scholars, and C and G talk a lot.* (Editor's note: some things never change)

Martin Lipson