LYMPSTONE LIVES - DAVID ATKINS



Born in Pontefract, Yorkshire in 1939, moved to Hertfordshire 6 months later. Parents moved from Barnet, near St. Albans, Hertfordshire in 1945. Father was working with the Air Ministry in the South West as a surveyor re airfields with war damage. He had digs in Majorfield Road in Topsham with a Mr and Mrs Barnett. Arrangements were made for my mother and I to join him (he considered the area was a safer place than St. Albans).

We moved from Topsham to Lympstone Village and stayed at the home of Mrs Reynolds and Miss Mitchell (Topsy and M) beside The Swan (then known as ‘The Railway Hotel/Pub’ - Mr and Mrs Wheeler being the tenants). The property known as ‘The Firs’, at the bottom of School Hill, was about to be put up for sale and father managed to purchase it.

I was put to school at a private school at Topsham called ‘The Moorings’, the Headmistress being a Miss Jackson who resided at Lympstone House. The Wheelers daughter, Ann and Wendy also attended with me. Once settled in at ‘The Firs’, I attended Lympstone Primary School before being sent to Mount Radford School in Exeter.

Being next to the open field belonging to Albert Ware I was asked by Charlie Ware if I would like a ride on the carthorse known as General, to which I agreed. I then visited the farm ‘Town Dairy’ and watched the hand milking of the cows and soon was instructed on how to get the milk out of the cows. (Not by pumping the tail!) I also helped Tom Ware do part of the milk delivery round in the village at weekends and school holidays. Bill Ware was the tractor driver (a Standard Fordson). I was 7 years old when in the field below the Marine Officers houses I was riding on the foot plate and Billy got off to clear the cultivator of trash, which had built up between the tines. Leaving me holding the steering wheel. The hedge that bordered the area where the houses are was fast approaching and I started to get worried as to what to do (I could not have stopped as the clutch and brake were both in one pedal) thus I made a decision to turn the steering wheel and bring the combination around to line up with where it previously travelled commonly known as a land. The best way to learn!

I was then allowed to drive on other occasions. I left school with great relief in 1954 and went to work at Pitt Farm before going to Bicton School of Agriculture 1955/56. I then was granted the tenancy of Potters Farm in September 1956 at the age 17, father having to hold the tenancy. In 1960 I took on the tenancy of Pitt Farm and kept Ayrshire cows at Potters and Guernsey’s at Pitt.

Having been in the church choir and a server I joined the Parochial Church Council (P.C.C) before being elected to the Parish Council in 1968. In 1973 I gained a place on East Devon District Council which had taken over from all the small borough and rural councils in East Devon. To this body I became Vice Chairman of the Environmental Committee, then Chair of Property services, followed by Chair of Tourism, then Chair of Planning. I was on many outside bodies including Governor of Exmouth Community College, Bicton School of Agriculture (now Bicton College) and Lympstone Primary School. I was also the first Chair of the PTFA of the school and have been Chairman of the Parish Council on three occasions during my 50 years on the Parish Council. I also represented all the District Councils in Devon on the National Association of District Councils in London in respect of tourism.

I have a daughter, Paula Lee married to Nigel and two granddaughters, Katie and Sophie.