

Being a "Webbs Boy" in the 1950s



Image: 2701.jpg A early view across Church Green to Webb House and Peakman Street. The bakery was behind web House on Peakman Street

Slicing the bread simply involved taking the 'tin' loaves (the flat topped ones) off a trolley putting them on a machine which sliced them and then wrapped them in a sort of greaseproof paper which was sealed as the loaf passed over heated plates, then removing the sliced and wrapped loaves and putting them back on the trolleys ready to be loaded onto the vans. By today's standards the machine was a bit 'Heath Robinson' but state of the art at the time. The cutting blades were open and the hot plates exposed so I soon learned what not to do. The difficult bit was when you got the end of a run, the last loaf did not have enough weight to carry itself through the blades and so had to be pushed. The trick was shown me by the foreman, take a misshaped loaf, there were always a few about, and push it end on against the last loaf, as the loaf went through the blades withdraw the pusher, which now had cuts in the end and put it aside to use the other end when you next needed to push another loaf through.

Images from the RLHS Archives

In 1957 during the summer school holiday my mother asked the bread delivery man from Webbs if he could 'find something for a bored teenager to do'. His response led to me joining the band of 'boys' who helped on the bread delivery vans.

I was told to come to the bakehouse at 7am on the Saturday and helped with delivering the bread with a young man from the Farm Road/Sillins Avenue area. On the weekdays I helped the man who delivered to our house, Benny Blaker. Ben was fun to be with but the man on the Saturday round was rather dour and always late.

When I arrived at the bakehouse I always had to wait for the petrol vans to be brought up from the farm on Easemore road where they were kept overnight. The electric vans were kept at the bakehouse being charged up. When the van arrived I started to load the trays of bread already stacked on trolleys for the round. After 3 or 4 weeks when Mr John Webb had seen me hanging around waiting for the roundsman he asked if I wanted to do the slicing of the bread, for an extra 2/-! "Show me what I have to do" I said. At that the roundsman turned up so Mr Webb told me to come to the bakehouse next Saturday at 6am.



Not Chris's, but a typical 1950s Bread Van

Image: www.abc.net.au/news

Chris Jackson Remembers.....

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Image: 2099.jpg The Village Inn, Beoley, circa 1905. The pub is still there today and was once a popular watering hole for passing cyclists.

Another was the shop on the Alcester Road by the Rose & Crown where they had homemade ice cream, again, in the summer, an extra couple of rolls or jam doughnuts would be exchanged for strawberry cones.

One Saturday Mr Webb asked me to go in early and soon after I got there the foreman gave me a basket filled to overflowing with loaves and sent me to 'Smokey Joe's' cafe on the corner of Park Road, with instructions to wait for 'the returns'. I had no idea what he meant, but the foreman was not a man to be asked questions by a teenager, so I did as he said. The 'returns' turned out to be about a dozen bacon sandwiches, straight out of the pan and in bread that was still warm 'Heaven'.

Chris Jackson



Image: Smokey Joes.jpg The "infamous" cafe on the corner of Park Road and Evesham Street