

HAPPY MEMORIES OF A SECRET TUNNEL

From an article in a local paper published in the 1980's

Sixty years ago, with other village children, I spent many happy hours playing inside the Cliff Path tunnel at Chilton. It ran from bottom meadow under cliff path and came out in the old pleasure gardens. It was also a short cut to get a swim or paddle.

The meadow was farmed by the late William and Albert Anstey and I went to work for them on leaving school. We started to fill the tunnel in from the meadow end after a cow got in and we had hell's own job getting it back out. We began putting in all the old rubbish, cabbage and sprout stumps and all the half-burnt straw from the Chilton farm fire. I also tipped, with the aid of my pal, who still lives in Ramsgate, a cart-full of broken farm tools and broken horse harness. How I would like to have those old brasses now.

The Ansteys moved back to Devon in 1940 and the tunnel entrance was further covered by a later farmer by levelling off a bank and bushes that ran from Pegwell Road almost to Coast Guard Cottages some time after the war.

Regarding the seaweed for the Convent field (now Goodwin, Minster and St. Lawrence Avenue, we used to bring this up by cart using two heavy horses at two shillings and sixpence a load through the Little Cliffs End farm tunnel also farmed by the late Anstey Brothers. The convent only had one light cob, not strong enough to haul seaweed through either tunnel.

Not many of the original villagers remain, but there are still a handful who have never been away except for war service. These remember the old tunnel well - and a lot more folk living in the town remember as children being brought by parents on the old horse brakes of Gore, Wackett and Haskings, etc. to Pegwell and having a picnic by the old Cliff Path tunnel entrance.

A CHILTON VILLAGER (name and address supplied to the Editor).