



This elderly man is taking his ease with his faithful dogs one warm summer's day. He is sitting on the bench outside his shop and post office in the village of Hilton where he was born. He ran the shop for many years with rarely a day off. Who knows what he was thinking as he rested on the hard bench softened by an old cushion covered in oil skin? I like to think that that he is looking back down the years to his boyhood and reflecting upon his life. I hope that he took pride in all that he achieved for I think he showed remarkable fortitude and courage. He was my Grandfather Oakett.

As a young boy of thirteen he was orphaned and with no-one to care for him walked to St Ives and was taken on as a stable lad at The Dolphin Inn. Only he knows what hardships he endured then - and in all that was to follow. When he was old enough he joined The Royal Marines and fought in the Boer War.

Many years later when stationed at Plymouth he met and married a local girl and they had nine children. The final pregnancy produced twins but killed their mother.

My grandfather was left with nine children and no wife.

Fortunately for him his unmarried sister Ann came to his aid.

Grandfather brought a house back in his home village and he and Ann raised the children. To support them he ran the shop and post office, raised pigs, mended shoes and slaughtered livestock for the villagers.

My mother was his seventh child. She inherited her father's spirit, loved him unreservedly and was intensely proud of him for the way he kept his family together.

I am glad that the shutter clicked on this day and captured this moment of ease in what must have been a life of anguish and toil.

Sheila Burke (nee Stearn)