

Preface



In 1994 a group came together to create a Milland Memories weekend, as part of the celebrations of the centenary of the creation of parish councils. We were a mixture of locals and 'incomers' but with a common sense of purpose: to remind people of what the old Milland had really been like, to bring old friends back to the Valley for a reunion, to form the basis of a Milland archive, and to let old Milland mingle with new Milland and teach it a thing or two. This highly successful event was repeated the following year by popular request and drew in long-ago familiar faces from as far away as Kent, Somerset, London, Bristol, Leicestershire, Yorkshire, Wales, Germany, South Africa and Australia.

One result of those exhibitions was an awakened interest in Milland's past and over the years this developed into the idea of a book, which became more purposeful as part of Milland's celebration of the new millennium. This eventually became *Milland: The Book*, a comprehensive history of (broadly) the civil parish of Milland, stretching from prehistory to modern times.

Milland: Living Memories was originally intended to form a section in *Milland: The Book*. As it turned out, the latter became substantial and as the memories were so extensive it was decided that they deserved a book of their own. Fragments from the memories do appear in *Milland: The Book*, but they are only fragments, serving to explain an anomaly or to enhance a history.

The two books complement each other and need to be read together. Oral history is a wonderful thing, bringing to life a drier history compiled from documents, maps, deeds, wills, old books and other sources. But oral history is also, of course, very human – which means that memories can be selective, or can become a little hazy over the years or even wrong, or may deliberately conceal or alter the 'facts' to suit the teller of the tales. Thus there will seem to be contradictions, both between the memories of different people in this book and between their stories and the 'facts' given in the companion volume. That is one

of the delights of local history: there is plenty of detective work involved, with many a leap of the imagination to pull the countless pieces of the jigsaw puzzle together and turn it into a complete picture in which as many facts as possible have been verified or, where they have not, at least a version of the most likely picture.

No apology will be made here for the occasional jumbling of memory, or for looking at the same subject from many different points of view – a very good way of making it three-dimensional and perhaps the best way of getting at the actual truth. No attempt has been made to draw together stories about a particular place or person related by several different people: it is up to the reader to pull threads together and untangle the tales, if that is their interest. Some of the memories recorded over the last two decades or so are based on long conversations, often several of them with the same person, or that person in company with others, and so I have not always transcribed them word for word but have turned them into a combined narrative. Some of the recordings included material that could not possibly be published, especially where forthright opinions have been expressed or slightly dubious comments made about other people! But for the most part the recorded interviews have been transcribed just as they were spoken, so that the unwittingly selective mind of the listener does not interfere with the voice of the memories.

It is impossible to express the enormity of the debt that I owe to all those who have contributed to this book. For a start, they have welcomed me into their homes and into their lives and have made me feel that Milland has always been my home – as if I, too, had been born and bred here and was part of the extended families that were at the core of old Milland. They have always been generous, with their friendship as well as with their memories and their wonderful old photographs, some of which are in this book and some in the other. There will be a series of later booklets expanding on some of the themes of both books and these, too, will draw on personal memories and photographs. I would welcome contributions from others who used to live in Milland so that their memories, too, and their photographs, can be published in a follow-up to *Milland: Living Memories*.

Like *Milland: The Book*, it would not have been possible to put *Milland: Living Memories* between covers without substantial financial assistance, and I am deeply grateful for a Local Heritage Initiative grant received for these projects. The LHI grant, which also enabled us to scan a large number of old photographs for posterity and establish the beginnings of a Milland Archive, was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Nationwide Building Society through the Countryside Agency. It has enabled the Milland Memories group to publish both books at a price far lower than would otherwise have been possible, the aim being that they should be affordable to a large number of people. I should also like to thank West Sussex County Council for a separate generous grant towards other aspects of Milland's local history projects.

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