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# Talking to the old inhabitants of Wheathampstead in 1956

by Daphne Grierson (1909 - 1994)

Transcribed by **John Wilson**, Lamer Lodge, between 1987 and 2002

Updated 24 August 2007

## CHAPTER 11. EVENING

It is almost time to go home now.

For some reason, perhaps because they have been talking about plans for the **Christmas party**, the members of the Club are in high spirits this afternoon; anyway there is a lot of cheerful banter and bursts of singing.

In one corner a member of the Committee is discussing a **grant for chiropody** with a young man who has been sent from the **National Old People's Welfare Council** with a great many official forms. It is not being very easy to talk sensibly against the background of noise; however the Representative puts his case with much patience and clearness, and the member of the Committee listens as best she can. At last **Auld Lang Syne** starts up in the **Hall** - we have already had **Knees Up Mother Brown** and **Just A Song At Twilight**. The Committee member smiles rather desperately,

"I'm afraid I shall have to go and join in this, won't you come too?"

"Well", he hesitates, "I would like to but the fact is I've a long way to go and time's getting on".

After the singing everyone wraps up and starts for home. It is getting towards evening and it is what might be called the beginning of the rush hour in the village. The children have come out of school and are being hurried along, some of them, to do a bit of shopping before tea and television. The **school 'bus** has left and two other 'buses are manoeuvring for positions in the **High Street**. The shops have lit up and there are **white and red Christmas decorations** already in the **baker's window**. Soon the **factory hooter** will blow and the men and women will be back from work. The **trains**, one after the other, will unload the familiar little processions, each in its different direction from the station doorway. The pavements will become

quite crowded and **Mrs Collins** (having put her coat on as it is turning chilly) will be busy giving **petrol to a number of cars**.

The old people are returning home after their **Club** afternoon and laughing and talking as they come along the road:

"Are you going to see the wedding on Saturday? All blue and white it's going to be, they say - fancy blue flowers this time of year, I must have a look if I can get down there."

"I'm just going across to see my son's grave and I'll pop into the **Dairy** I think. Are you going that way?"

"I can't think what we'd do without the **Club**; it does you good to get out and have a change."

"Have you noticed the birds just lately? There's a blackbird outside our place that sounds just like spring; they do at this time of year."

We can take some of them home, that is the least we can do and we can go to the door with them if necessary, but we cannot stay long because we must hurry home ourselves and get a meal for our families. But we'll come again next week.

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Lady Daphne Grierson, The Dell, Wheathampstead; October 1956

[Everybody forgets. In what I have written there are probably many inaccuracies, but even where I know one to exist I have not altered it on purpose if someone else has done so in another chapter.]