

Winter Warmth and Summer Cooking

Text: David Gibbs Photographs: page 1 as noted, page 2 David Gibbs

It wasn't until the mid-1920s that electricity was connected to the village and the mid-1950s before gas arrived. Before electricity, lighting was by oil lamps and candles; cooking was done on an open fire during the winter months and oil stoves in the summer. As late as the late 1940s, there were still many village homes without electricity (or gas) and they continued to rely heavily on oil.

The first two images, reproduced courtesy of Graces Guide www.gracesguide.co.uk, show some of the household appliances in common use at that time. As for personal warmth, the 'stone' hot-water bottles like the one shown on the following page? Due to the shortage of rubber, they were introduced during the war. This particular one was purchased in the early 1940s from Mr Chedzoy, a travelling ironmonger/oil salesman who visited the village every Saturday (see the Old Photos archive for a photo of his van). Wearing its knitted tubular 'overcoat' for safety reasons and to conserve the heat for as long as possible, for years it saw sterling service warming the feather beds in a local cottage home and is now a treasured family heirloom.

And can you recall the days of candlelight, when candles such as those shown were extensively used? Mr Chedzoy used to sell those as well but this particular packet was bought at Merriott Co-op in the 1970s at the time of the three-day week and widespread powers cuts. At that time, they cost 15p, just over a penny per candle.



A vintage advertisement for Valor Heaters, Cooking and Boiling Stoves. The ad features the brand name 'VALOR' in large, bold letters at the top. Below it, the text reads 'HEATERS, COOKING AND BOILING STOVES' and 'Registered Proprietors: THE VALOR CO. LTD.'. The advertisement includes two main illustrations: a tall, cylindrical heater on the left and a larger, more complex cooking and boiling stove on the right. Below the illustrations, there is a testimonial: 'The famous Valor Heater or the most efficient and economical method of portable warmth.' and 'The Valor Cooking and Boiling Stoves for Reliability, Economy and Efficiency.' The ad also states 'AN ALL-BRITISH VALOR GIVES BEST RESULTS' and provides contact information for 'Anglo-American Oil Co. Ltd.' at '85 ALBERT EMBANKMENT VAUXHALL, LONDON, S.E.11'. At the bottom, it lists 'THE VALOR CO. LTD.' as manufacturers, with 'VALOR WORKS, BROMFORD, ERDINGTON, BIRMINGHAM' and 'Phone: Erdington 1691 (3 lines)'. The ad also includes a small illustration of a Valor heater on the right side.

