

Paul Farrow  
Gardener and Trimley Postie



*Paul Farrow*  
*August 2018*

Any conversation with Rosemary is always a seamless blend of the past and present. Having known so many local people in the course of her long life, they often pepper her conversation in a manner which suggests I knew them as well as she. Mr Walter Hammond, the familiar Postman of her childhood has been mentioned before now but he cropped up again recently when his skill constructing compost heaps was mentioned.

*"I don't think my mother was very pleased when he showed me how to make a square compost heap. He was supposed to be cutting the grass and tidying the borders. That's what he was being paid to do, not teach me gardening techniques."*

Rosemary effectively suggested her mother's tart accents as she described this incident but she remembered the instructions and described exactly how to make this geometric compost heap, so maybe the money wasn't ill-spent as her mother thought.

Perhaps it is the early start in the morning which presents hard working Posties with the opportunity to diversify their skills and activities. Certainly, Paul Farrow maximises the rural benefits of the Trimleys when his working day and round is over. You may remember Paul as the Postman who had his head shaved for charity in 2016. Rather like the late Mr. Hammond, when he is not delivering the post he may be found engaged in matters horticultural. He was happy to demonstrate his gifts in this arena, when he talked and walked me through his allotment and garden on two separate occasions. But prior to that, he gave me the background to his working life.

As well as working here, Paul now lives in Trimley St. Martin although he was born in Bury St. Edmunds and grew up on the Priors Estate. He is justifiably proud of his working-class background and told me he had been an Altar Boy when he was a lad being educated in St. Louis Middle School and St. Benedict's High School. He subsequently took up a five-year apprenticeship at Denny Brothers, a highly respected world class printers in Bury. There he learned the various skills required

in the printing industry: typesetting; binding; printing. After a twenty-two year career, he accepted voluntary redundancy brought about by technical progress in production methods. He allowed himself six months off while he considered his next employment move and moved to Trimley St. Martin in 2003. The next step he took turned out to be his entry into the Royal Mail on a part-time basis. Subsequently, his hours morphed into full-time employment and he has now worked as a Postie for fifteen years. Initially he covered one of the Felixstowe rounds delivering to the area around Links Avenue and Beatrice Avenue. But changes within Royal Mail, resulted in a different focus and altered rounds. He might now be kindly described as a “floating” postman since he covers all five rounds in the Trimleys, in the absence of others postal workers. He knows all of the walks intimately and is familiar with the whereabouts of all of the different houses in both villages.

Paul described the difference between the days. Mondays and Tuesdays are always quieter while Wednesdays and Thursdays are full of the busyness of mid-week mail. One of the areas he enjoys covering is the large estate in Trimley St. Mary, known as the MacManus Estate during the 1960s and 1970s. He finds these residents particularly amenable and chatty. When he described the size of another round, the Faulkeners Road area of about 700 calls, I quailed at the thought of so many letterboxes. As with other Postmen he is aware of the very elderly residents of the Trimleys who are about to receive telegrams from the Queen to celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday and indeed the aspect of the job he favours most is meeting people; by definition it is a very sociable job.

We then moved on to Paul’s own time and he described the main motivators in his private life. It is nature and horticulture he delights in. He observes with endless curiosity. A grass snake outside Keeper’s Cottage in St. Marys had captivated his eye earlier; there are more about than perhaps we realise. Later, he emptied a flower pot to show me some tiny, white pearl-like objects. They were snail eggs he and his daughter had seen being laid a few days earlier. Like other Blog Interviewees Paul is aware of subtle seasonal changes and he is another St. Martin’s resident who has a taste for foraging. On the day I met him he had been collecting horse mushrooms from a local wooded area. These are edible wild mushrooms which are often confused with Yellow Stainers, but beware. do not misidentify them or you run the risk of pain and sickness. The chrome yellow colour inside the stalks determines their name and Yellow Stainers are definitely off the menu with their propensity to upset a would-be gastronome’s stomach. He continued to chat, describing the eradication of a wasp’s nest at the end of his garden. There has been a proliferation of these pesky, buzzing creatures this summer and he, in common with many others have been plagued by them. They had to go.

*“I’d never wiped out a wasp’s nest before. A mate of mine had all the kit Beekeepers wear and he showed me how to get rid of the wasps. There must have been four or five thousand of them and he’s going to come back because we didn’t finish them all off. If you look at the bottom of the garden, you can still see them.”*

I did look and was suitably discouraged not to go any closer as the lazy wasps hovered above the entrance to their home in a defensive manner.

Paul lives in an under populated area of our village, with a garden large enough to grow and experiment with seeds and plants. A couple of years ago he and a fellow gardener became involved in growing herbs. It is possible you may have come across them at the Suffolk Show where in both 2015 and 2016, he and his “growing” partner were awarded the Silver Gilt Medal at the Suffolk Show.



*Silver Gilt Medal certificate from the Suffolk Show in 2016*

Paul took pride in showing me photographs taken of a Wedding Reception, where the Herbs took centre stage on the tables. You may view these images if you follow this link:

<https://anythingexcepthousework.co.uk/trimley-herbs-photo-gallery/>

where you may see for yourself the stunning display the Partners provided. Trimley Herbs were also invited to the Snape Farmers Market and at the Aldeburgh Food Festival were asked by Fergus Fitzgerald the Head Brewer at Adnams to provide herbs for the celebratory ‘Alde Beer’. Paul continues to grow a flourishing selection of herbs in his garden. His greenhouse contains as a vibrant and dominant Chilli Plant, bursting with vitality and fiery red fruit.



*Red Chilli Plant growing in Paul's Greenhouse.*

He supplements his growing habit on one of the allotments on the Poores Land where his ability to grow and nurture plants from seed indicates his indisputable green-fingered persona. The 6 feet high

asparagus and bristling sweet corn were impressive. The samples I was given proved to be sweet and juicy and this bounty was compounded when six fresh eggs from Paul's chickens were placed in my hand. In a box, I must swiftly add. They exhibited pale pastel coloured shells and when cracked the stunning sunny interiors glowed invitingly.

I found it reassuring to witness this continued attachment to the land and growing. It indicates to me that despite the many changes which have happened or may happen to our village, it still retains its rural character and so do many of the inhabitants. After meeting Paul, I mused on the knowledge he has, not only as a very green-fingered gardener but also as a Postman. In a serendipitous turn of events, I found an old newspaper article from a Letters Page later that day. It had been published in the Daily Mirror on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 1965 and was from a Mr. E. Goodchild of Cavendish Road, Trimley St. Martin and said:

*"I wonder if our village is unique? There are two churches, St. Martin and St. Mary, in one churchyard and the postal addresses on the High Road go through both parishes...Furthermore, the bungalows on the High Road have their letter boxes on the High Road side but their numbers on the back in Cavendish Road which runs parallel to the High Road!"*

to which The Mirror replied, in typically chirpy manner:

*"Cor - your postman must wonder whether he's coming or going!"*

But I think we can rest assured. Postman Paul really does now where he is going.



*One of the Asters Paul grew from seed.*