



As I started to write this, I reflected on the last thirty years that I have been sweeping chimneys. One of the first chimneys I swept was a Mrs. Bullman of Church End, who used to make jam and and enter the jam making competitions on the village green every year.

Since then, I have swept so many I have lost count, from Hatfield House to mobile homes; met some famous people along the way. Patrick Moore, Vinnie Jones, Darren Anderton to mention but a few.

Sweeping Change?

Mr Badger is retiring after keeping chimneys clean for three decades or so. He pauses to share some reflections.

I could write a book about it. I have worked at many film locations, such as Mentmore House etc. with the BBC. The chimneys were swept for health and safety reasons as they never actually used real fires. Unbeknown to those sitting watching at home, they were gas - but still swept by the old fashioned methods, so modern technology has not completely taken over yet!

But all in all I have met a lot of nice people along the way. One of the funniest ones I swept was a gentleman in Chorleywood. When I put my cloth up in front of the fireplace to sweep the chimney, I switched the vacuum in to

start, while unbeknown to me a squirrel came out from behind the sofa and tried to make his way through the glass french doors. Of course, my cloth was blocking his escape route. I went to fetch the owner to tell him what had happened, but when we came back into the room, the squirrel was nowhere to be seen. We searched everywhere but could not find him. I went home thinking that the gent might have thought I had been seeing things, but to my relief he rang me back four hours later to say he had found the squirrel behind the radiator, where there was a one inch gap. I felt relieved that he had found it, as you can imagine...