

Memories of Bygone Granby

Before the many developments from the 1960's onwards Granby was a totally different place. For instance the entire area from the Chapel, along Chapel Lane and along Dragon Street to where "The Eaves" now stands was a stack yard with a large pond. The village was a self-contained unit where everyone worked in the village or at Barnstone Cement Works. People knew each other and relied on local skills for their daily needs.

Local Trades

Mr Burkitt was the local cobbler and lived with his extensive family in the one-up, one-down house which adjoins the home of William Cook today. Bill Cook, William's father, was a joiner and carpenter at Mrs. Watson's Old Dairy and Mr. Buxton was the wheelwright, blacksmith and farrier on Old Forge Lane.

Alfred Welbourne assisted George Hopewell in baking bread at the old bake house, (Lodge Farm on Church Street). Alfred moved from Yew Tree Cottage to Bunny Cottage where he built a bake house. Later this was owned by William Wilkinson who continued to bake bread and was known locally as "bunman" – hence the name Bunny Cottage. There was also a bakery (now Charlton Cottage) opposite the Post Office on Old Forge Lane and Martin Wilkinson from Sutton remembers in the 1950's taking pork pies there to be cooked as the ovens were so much better for the pastry. Martin also recalls seeing Miss Pepper and Miss Patchett, who jointly ran the Post Office, sitting at a table drinking tea when he visited with his mother to buy stamps. Mr. Patchett had a 3-wheel Morgan which he used when delivering the mail.

Both Neville and Michael recall the grocery shops: - Harry Slater sold from a house next to Keyworth Farm, Parnham's sold paraffin as well as groceries in the corner shop opposite the Church. Neville remembers that they sold cheap sweets for kids and his father was not pleased when he spent a spare penny (1d - just less than ¼ of today's penny) on sweets – this would buy 10 chocolate caramels. This was not least because his aunt, Lou Wilkinson, sold groceries and sweets in what is now called The Old Post Office.

Young's ran a shop up the jitty and Mr Young also repaired bicycles – an extremely important job as this was most people's mode of transport. (Miss Hall of Newbray had the first motor car in Granby and employed a chauffeur/gardener and two housemaids).

The slaughterhouse was at Manor Farm where Jack Wilkinson was the butcher.

Mr Doubleday had a slaughterhouse near to the Chapel until he moved his business to Parnham's shop. Freddie Johnson did odd jobs for farmers in war time and was also a slaughter man and he used to terrify the young lads with his large knife. Pigs averaged about 26 stones (165 Kg) in weight and the meat was very fatty. Simpson's of Cropwell Bishop regularly delivered tons of salt to Granby Lodge Farm for preserving the pig joints.

Running a fish and chip shop once a week was a hobby of Neville Hopewell's grandmother (Wilkinson) in Manor Farm and Neville remembers her chipping potatoes for this. Fish and chips were not rationed. The fish was brought from Grimsby.

There was an egg packing station in Newark which used to collect between 50 and 60 dozen eggs each week from Granby. Nottingham Co-op collected the milk and took to their dairy on Meadow Lane in Nottingham. This got bombed during the war.

Neville remembers local women taking jugs to Manor Farm to collect milk.

Water and Electricity

The existing water pump opposite Lilac Cottage was characteristic of the many wells in the village. Lodge Farm, had a water pump outside and a large cistern of soft water which was used for washing clothes.

Some of the houses were tenanted and five of the houses around Lodge Farm were such, the tenants paying 3/6d (17½ p) a week in rent.

Neville remembers Henry Wilkinson, his grandfather, being in discussion with Rev Jenkinson regarding 13 signatures being needed in Granby to get electricity to the village. This happened in the 1930's – but it was mostly downstairs in the houses, not upstairs. Until then “Cat's whisker” radios were used but even so, a new electric radio was a very expensive £12. Neville contrasted this with the cost of a return bus fare to Nottingham of 1s 6d (7½ p). His household became the proud owner of a radio in 1938 and he recalls the joy of being able to listen to the cricket scores.

Public Transport

A local farmer, Mr Randall of Grange Farm, had the first bus locally and he ran this occasionally when he had time from his farming.

The local trains were used from Barnstone to get to Melton and Nottingham.

The Hopewell boys used to walk a horse and cart to Elton station to fetch large, empty railway bags at threshing time. These would hold 19 stones (120 Kg) of corn or beans, 16 stones of oats or 18 stones of wheat or barley. When full these needed to be loaded on to the cart and Neville says “it's a heavy weight on your back”, so he made sure that the cart was positioned as close as possible.

Wartime Memories

Neville Hopewell recalls the poles with lights to attract bombers being put up suddenly and particularly the cables and lights along Dragon Street. After the bombing of May 8th/9th these lights were taken down.

A bomb landed at Manor Farm and also at the Police House in Barnstone. All the local lads went to have a look.

The lads were also fascinated by the open-ended ammunition dumps along Sutton Lane and Plungar Road – again they looked but didn't touch the boxes of ammunition. A glider crashed in fields near to Jericho Woods and was quickly removed. A Lancaster bomber crashed between Barnstone and Langar, probably trying to get to the Lancaster base there. A memorial now stands at the entrance to Langar airfield.

During the war Neville did a nightly fire watch as part of the ARP (Air Raid Precautions). This involved walking around the village twice a night. The derelict house next to Charlton Cottage was used for training and mock practices for dealing with fires.

Rev. Marson dug up the village green and scouts were given allotments, but Michael Hopewell, Neville's brother, remembers that potatoes grown there were very small as the ground was of poor quality.

As well as services at the Chapel, Christmas was celebrated by decorating a branch from a box tree with baubles.

School

Pupils aged 5 to 8 were taught in the little room which had a small fireplace. Mrs Stubbins who cycled from Bingham taught these.

Older children were taught in the big room by Miss Parks who lived in the School House.

Connie Hopewell, Neville's mother, also taught there during wartime. Her help was particularly needed in 1944 when many evacuees (possibly more than 50) were brought to Granby and Sutton and overcrowded the school. Some did not stop long as they came from Nottingham and were visited by their mothers at weekends and then tended to go back home with them. Children from London did stay longer. A brother and sister stayed at Lodge Farm with the Hopewell family.

Neville left the village school to go to West Bridgford Grammar where he joined the ATC (Air Training Corps). The children there were excited when an air raid warning sounded as they ran outside and down the steps into the shelter. Lessons were suspended for the duration.

Leisure

White clad council houses on Sutton Lane, now privately owned, were built in the 1930's and Neville remembers that his mother, Connie, used to play tennis in the court alongside Drake's Field which contained hens and ducks. Drake's Field was where Sutton Lane green and the Housing Association bungalows now stand. There was another tennis court in the paddock next to Bunny Cottage.