

Philip Shucksmith's Memoirs

Earliest memories

I have toyed with the idea of putting pen to paper for at least the last ten years to record some of my memories of my simple and rather insular life of the last eighty-five years. I was blessed with a very good memory and whilst it is not quite as good as it used to be, I can honestly say that the events I record are quite vivid in my mind. Having survived a second hip replacement in September 2008 and its resultant complications, I am convinced that it is time I put my pen to work before I test providence for my survival any further.

These may not be in exact chronological order but nearly so. I can remember my father taking me in his arms on his bicycle in an afternoon to the 'Hosier Hoult' near the Louth Canal opposite the Louth Sewage Works, where he was pollarding the willow trees to make 'kids' – large bundles of wood, 5-6' long with thick branches and thinner twigs mixed in to make a faggot about 2' in diameter and secured in the middle with twine or wire. Kids were a 'perk' of the tied agricultural married worker. Usually, these perks included coal, bacon, kids and potatoes. My father would no doubt be taking me out of the house for an hour or two to relieve my mother who would be quite harassed with the housework, the poultry which provided some of her income, butter making and looking after two little boys.

I was told by an older friend of an incident possibly a little earlier when I was stood near the steam engine when they were threshing; again, my father had his eye on me because he generally saw to the sacks of threshed corn, the engine driver blew the steam whistle which quite startled me, causing me to shed tears.

My mother used to visit her parents at the Washdyke on a Saturday afternoon, taking Basil and I with her. I can remember climbing a plank leaned against a building. It was not too steep a gradient and so kept me occupied.

I can't remember actually starting school. I expect my mother took me on her bicycle on the first day and after that, Fred White may have taken me on his cycle crossbar. Later, I walked with the several children who attended school from Alvingham. North Cockerington School was a Church of England school which educated the children who lived in North and South Cockerington and Alvingham aged 5-14 years which was the leaving age then. The headmaster was Mr. H J Brooks and he had two assistants who taught the juniors and the infants. Mr. Brooks had served in the army in the First World War, some of the time in Salonika (Greece) where he contracted malaria and suffered annual bouts of this affliction during his life afterwards.

He was a man of considerable ability, no doubt he had teacher training after his release from the army. He was able to play the piano and violin, was choirmaster of the church and social leader of the villages. He organized whist drives regularly throughout the autumn and winter months. He was a good teacher and was a highly respected gentleman. The teacher for the junior class was Miss Hilda Anderson, a young lady with little patience who used considerable physical assistance in her teaching, of which many of her pupils were painfully aware. I was a small child for my age, rather shy and nervous, my parents being quite strict, so Miss Anderson's system made me a quite frightened child, almost to the point of being

afraid to go to school. After intervention by my parents, the teacher adopted a more patient attitude with me and later I quite enjoyed being a scholar at North Cockerington. As I mentioned previously, the school educated children from the age of five to fourteen years. The emphasis was to prepare for the scholarship at eleven years to qualify the successful children to attend the boys' or girls' grammar schools at Louth. They were single sex schools, the boys attending six days a week. The children who did not pass continued at North Cockerington until they were fourteen when they left to secure employment generally on farms for the boys and shop assistants in Louth for the girls. The days of domestic service were disappearing, quickly hastened by the War and other forms of employment. Children did not begin school before they were five because many had quite a long distance to walk in all types of weather, so physically they were incapable of doing so and there was no school run until many years later!

I was fortunate to get a bicycle when I was about seven years old, a new one from Len Wright at the carpenter's shop and petrol filling station. Of course, it was rather too big for me, the idea being that I would grow into it and then it could be passed on to Basil. My balance was alright, but I had difficulty reaching the peddles so wooden blocks were screwed onto each side of them and then I couldn't keep my feet on them so rubber bands, inch wide strips of an inner tube were applied. Off I went round the village; I negotiated two corners but then I ran into a dyke! I soon became safe and provident.

Boyhood spare-time activities were many and varied, mainly being farm-orientated; life as a farmer in those days did not allow much free time for my father and mother. As soon as I was able physically, not necessarily willingly, I was given jobs to do which soon lost their novelty. No electricity meant using paraffin lanterns at night to feed calves. I did not milk cows as I did not have a natural acumen for that task, my wrists were too thin and weak, my father milked by hand at least two cows twice a day for well over thirty years. The milk was sieved over a piece of muslin in the house as it was put in the large bowl on top of the 'separator'. It was not cooled and the cows were not tested for bovine tuberculosis. The rest of the milk was 'separated' by means of it passing through a series of conical plates turning with considerable centrifugal speed, causing the cream to emerge through one spout – the 'skimmed' through a larger one. The speed of the separator was critical and the required speed was indicated by a bell which did not ring until the desired speed was reached. I turned the separator for several years, initially I had to have the speed worked up for me as I was not strong enough but later, I managed on my own.

In the periods of the year when it was daylight before school and after when I came home, I helped to feed the chickens which were kept in wooden huts, about 30-40 in each, which were stationed in the grass fields, generally adjacent to a hedge and having barbed wire on three sides, supported by wooden stakes 3-4 yards from the hut to allow the hens to be fed, free from interference by the cattle. Each morning, the hens were fed a damp mixture in wooden troughs of various types of ground wheat, fine and coarse bran, flaked maize, a little fish meal – not too much or the eggs tasted of it – and a small amount of the latest concoction (proprietary) to make the hens pour eggs out! This mix was fed warm when it was cold, water had to be supplied if it had not rained to fill the receptacle which was generally a large worn-out lorry tire cut vertically on the tread. Carrying a bucket of food and another of water was initially too much for me so I used a set of 'yokes' – a shaped

wooden frame which fitted across the shoulders behind the neck and transferred the load to the top of the shoulders, instead of pulling on them if the weight is in the hand. A well-made set of yokes by the carpenter is quite comfortable and was a very sensible piece of equipment to make hard work more bearable. In the afternoon, the hens were fed whole grain, spread on the grass. The eggs were collected and then at dusk, the huts were closed so that no predators could be satisfied. On Saturdays, the huts were cleaned out and supplied with fresh wheat chaff on the floor and clean hay in the next boxes. The droppings were spread on the grass. The number of eggs produced depended on the season and the age of the fowls. The amount and strength of light is a great factor in egg production as is the age – pullets (hens in their first season) produce many more and better-quality eggs than older hens. The combination of longer days, fresh young grass full of protein encouraged the pullets to lay a lot of beautifully textured eggs with strong shells and deep orange-coloured yolks. My mother had an incubator in the 'drawing room' at our home in High Street. It was 150-egg capacity, heated with a paraffin lamp with humidity control and egg-turning facility. Eggs of good appearance would be selected and placed in the tray; the heat could be controlled. After twenty days, a strong torchlight could be passed under the eggs to see if any were 'clear' (infertile) and these could be used for cooking. At approaching 28 days, cracks appeared and soon beaks and finally the chicks emerged. Generally, 100-110 chicks would survive, the rest were too weak, or had abnormalities. The chicks were transferred to a 'brooder' – a metal structure with a blanket-covered lid, again heated with a paraffin heater, maintaining heat at about 100°F. The blanket lid had a facility to act as a thermostat to avoid smothering. Food and water were available, the food being very small crumbs purchased for the chicks who had a natural instinct to eat and drink and chirp – a delightful scene. Gradually, they were given less heat and more freedom and fed a coarser feed – 'kibbled' wheat mixed in with larger proprietary crumbs. Moving from the brooder to growers' accommodation was always tricky; a cold night could lead to smothering which in the worst cases decimated the number reared. Some of the growers and hens were transferred with their huts to the corn stubbles after harvesting had commenced in August. I have a memory of going to let the chickens out one morning to be met with a scene of carnage! I had forgotten to shut the hut door the night before and a fox had had a very good night; there were dead chickens all over, some partially eaten, others partially buried. The survivors were very frightened – a nasty experience. The hens were kept for about two years; the survivors were purchased by the poultry 'huckster' who supplied various outlets, of which there were several and in the War, there was great demand from hotels and restaurants in the cities.

As well as the laying poultry, my mother hatched turkeys, ducks, and guinea fowl during the summer to be reared for Christmas trade. Turkey eggs were purchased from a neighbour and a broody hen sat on nine or ten for four weeks until they hatched. The chicks were coddled like babies, protected against wind and rain and fed all the delicacies of nature – hard-boiled eggs and cleavers out of the hedgerows, chopped up to tempt them to survive. Later, they ate more or less the same diet as the hens but it was always a worry as they seemed to have a great desire to die – blackleg was the worst disease which generally occurred in the latter stages of growth. Ducks were easier to rear and feed – eggs were hatched under each hen – again four weeks and the ducklings were delightful creatures, waddling about in saucers of water and initially fed on bread soaked in milk and later water – they grow rapidly feeding on the same mixture as hens and whole grain which they

shovelled up with their wide beaks. The ducks were housed in a part of the building which opened onto the grass field which had a nice stream flowing through it where they spent most of the day except for feeding times. Ducks were very messy and our yard was not a very clean place; with about ½" of liquid mud and faeces on it in November and early December. Guinea fowl were hatched like the others, fifteen to each sitting; the chicks were very active – like partridges – and after initial feeding, they largely scavenged a living in the stackyard and fields. The guinea fowl were fairly easy to rear, living with the chickens to begin with but occasionally they seemed to sense Christmas was coming and they left the hens and roosted in the trees in the orchard!

In mid-December, these turkeys, ducks, cockerels and guineafowl were slaughtered, plucked and prepared for the table. The house kitchen was used for this – bleeding outside and then various ladies – labourers' wives and relatives – gathered to pluck and open the birds. It was quite a big enterprise and the feather and down from the ducks added to a unique smell associated with the task.

The resultant bodies trussed up to appear almost lifelike and decorated with parsley were a sight to behold and were sold to customers in Cleethorpes and locally to relatives and others. My mother was grateful for the money that these birds generated – it was a perk she very much relied on for her income.

We did not get any pocket money in actual cash but we did have opportunities to make some by being practical. Duck eggs found a ready sale at the Wednesday poultry and produce sale – Stennetts ran one in Kidgate. This entailed quite an exercise – first, I had to get the correct eggs from a breed called Khaki Campbell – not unlike Mallard – which were kept by some farmers. They were not noted for eating; the White Aylesbury was the preferred for eating. I knew of a lady in North Cockerington who kept these ducks, so a visit to her farm to get a sitting (11) of these eggs was necessary – and extremely interesting too. The lady was called Miss Susan Grundy; her family, I believe, had been the last blacksmiths in North Cockerington. Susan was the companion housekeeper for the farmer Ernest Corden who owned a parcel of land with house and buildings down the back road to Red Leas – probably 30-40 acres – long gone, absorbed in the '50s by a larger neighbour. The yard was rather untidy but a real menagerie – several varieties of chicken of various colours and sizes, ducks, turkeys and guinea fowl, all in happy confusion round the house and buildings where I expect they roosted and laid their eggs and where the natural process of incubation took place. It was a perfect example of many small farms where the family lived on the produce which the farm provided. A few cows provided milk and calves to rear and sell at market for some revenue, a sow or two for bacon and piglets to rear for market. Horses were needed to cultivate the land to produce food for themselves and the other stock, excess grain being sold to the local corn merchant. Some grain was kept for feeding to the poultry and livestock; it was processed at the local water mill. These people were almost self-supporting – milk, bacon, poultry, potatoes, and vegetables grown in the field alongside root crops for the stock. They lived very well; the women folk were generally excellent cooks and never short of something to eat off the farm; they knew how to produce a nutritious and tasty meal, enhanced with various herbs found in most kitchen gardens. Susan was such a lady; her house was not the tidiest of dwellings – a hen might stray into the house – but apparently happy with her lot and delighted to see a stranger, even if it was a small

schoolboy. Announcing my errand, she had to search the various nesting places to make up the number of eggs needed – it was an education to me to see the haphazard chaotic life of people who I later admired as the salt of the earth – I cycled home after paying for the seat of duck eggs. These were placed under a broody hen and in due time hatched 100% and the small ducklings were put in a small hut (coop) with run attached. The hen still brooded them but after 4-6 weeks, the ducklings became independent and grew rapidly on their diet of damp meal and corn. The drakes (males) were eaten when they became big enough; the ducks soon found the stream in the field where they spent the daytime, noisily announcing their presence in the afternoon. They were housed at night and when they began laying eggs, were kept in for an hour or two to lay. They were prolific layers for a while – approaching 100%. Alas, when they stopped laying, the poultry ‘huckster’ called and collected them for a pittance and an unknown fate.

In the 1930s, farming was in a rather poor financial state; prices for all products were very poor. Cheap imports of grains meant that cereal production was not profitable. However, a slightly better way of processing the grain was to feed it to pigs and produce bacon or pork. The pig enterprise meant producing piglets at regular intervals to maintain a steady marketing procedure. Young females (gilts) were selected and mated when old and large enough. The male (boar) was generally a communal animal, used by several farmers for a fee. Farrowing was fraught with various problems at times, particularly with gilts which could become very upset and this did lead to heavy losses on occasions. My father experienced this when three gilts farrowed more or less simultaneously; the result was that one poor little piglet survived which was given to Basil and me to try and rear. With tender care and attention, we succeeded; warm milk fed with a bottle and teat until it could drink and gradually introduced to solids. It grew into a thriving animal (gilt) and when large enough, it was mated – the gestation period of a pig is sixteen weeks but not four months! I remember it farrowed on Easter Sunday in 1940 and produced ten piglets. They were given all the care and attention that was possible and they really flourished. They were weaned at eight weeks, kept for 2-3 weeks to get over losing their mother, and sold in Louth market where there was a ready sale for them in the wartime; many people kept a pig in their backyard to improve their standard of living. Indeed, it was officially encouraged with a special allowance of foods, overlooked by a Pig Club which ran an insurance and veterinary scheme to help anyone unfortunate enough to have an ailing pig or even to lose one. Our piglets (suckers) realised a decent price and the money was invested in National Savings Certificates. Father took the sow to pay for the food consumed to rear our pigs!

In countryside life, there were many events for boys to give them interest and living on a farm, there were always many tasks which a willing boy could help with in a small way. The workmen were generally quite social and would reminisce about the past. Some of these men really were the salt of the earth - we had a good selection on the farm. Some were rather boastful of their ability but by and large, they performed their job with pride in their often-mundane tasks. Alas, they are only memories; large numbers of workers belong to a bygone era, replaced by large powerful machines which perform tasks hardly possible to contemplate.

I had a bicycle which allowed me to roam, not far and wide but gave me some freedom. I visited my Auntie Dolly and Uncle Clifford at South Cockerington. Aunty Dolly was my

mother's younger sister who lived with Granny and Grandad Hand at the Washdyke (where the sheep wash was in the River Lud). She helped my mother when Basil and I were born and nursed Granny who died in 1932. She married in 1933, the reception being in the drawing room at High Street where I lived and they started farming at Marsh Lane, South Cockerington. My visits were on a Saturday; about a 3-mile journey. This continued until 1938 when I went to school at Louth – a 6-day week.

Some of our pastimes were seasonal, according to the country calendar. In the spring, the birds nested and we collected a specimen of each different breed, mounting them in a box of sawdust. The hedges provided cover for the birds to nests in secluded spots and some of them were marvels of construction. Many miles were covered, searching for nests in hedges, banks and streams, fields, roadsides, trees, rooves; we managed to collect, to the best of my memory, up to 30 different egg varieties.

Another attraction was when the corn stacks were threshed and vermin were present; rats and mice ate the corn and polluted the stacks with faeces and urine. Depending on how long the stack had been constructed, it generally meant that the density of infestation was determined by the time of year it was threshed. Therefore, if the stack was threshed in October, there would not be many rats, but if not done until March-April, numbers could be quite high and damage was in ratio to the infestation. Threshing was spread over about eight months of the year to supply a steady income, food for the cattle and shelter for the sheep at lambing time in March-April. If the threshing was on a Saturday, the event attracted many boys to kill the rats and in the wartime, it was an offence not to kill all you could; wire netting was put round the perimeter to stop them escaping. A further incentive was made; each rat tail, if taken to the Rural District Council, was paid for at the rate of 2d per tail – useful pocket money. I trapped many rats in the building and dykes where they came to drink.

At harvest time, we were encouraged to help; the ability to do this was determined by age and physical strength. At ten years old, I rode horses in the harvest field; an extra horse was sometimes needed and I helped by taking the horse back to the wagons after helping to pull the loaded wagon to the road where one horse could pull it. Harvesting peas was another task we helped with – firstly at reaping time and later turning the cut crop while it matured and then loading the peas on wagons to convey to the yard. Peas were the cash crop in farming in this area and the profitability of the farm was largely determined by the success of the pea crop. At 13 years old, I rode the binder which cut the cereals and produced the sheaves to be stooked; it was pulled by a tractor. The binder man had quite a lot to look after; the rotating sails guided the cut crop on to the moving canvas platform to the elevator – two rotating canvases conveyed up to the sheaf apparatus, a series of revolving packers and a butting board which arranged the crop into a tidy bundle (sheaf) which, at a fairly precise size, tripped the tying mechanism; a large needle threaded with twine came round from underneath the sheaf into the knotter – a marvellous invention – and the twine was tied and at the same time, a series of tines performed a 360 degree manoeuvre to eject the sheaf. The rider had levers to control the sails forward and back, up and down, another to position the knotter in the middle of the sheaf and to see that the sheaves were all tied! There was nothing more annoying to the stoker than a length of untied sheaves and the binder rider got the blame! A nice stood crop of corn was a delight to harvest with rows of

tidy sheaves but if there were flat patches that were difficult to get into and through the binder, the field would look very untidy. Nevertheless, some laid crops denoted heavier yields and therefore had to be put up with. After the cutting of the crop and maturing in the field – generally two weeks – it was carried by wagons to the yard and stacks were erected, the idea being a day's threshing in one stack. My father was an excellent builder (stacker) and the aim was to lay the sheaves so that rain would not enter and ruin the grain – this he managed to do with a fair degree of success; I assisted in this under his guidance. He was a strict mentor and I like to think that here I inherited his thoroughness; it was hard work for me, every sheaf had to be laid precisely – the heads higher than the butt, each course (two sheaves deep) interlocking to maintain stability. When I was 15, I was promoted to drive a tractor and take on more responsibility, but still being at school, I was only able to help at holiday time. I left school in July 1943 and started work full-time – a lot of it rather menial but I didn't fancy office work and by and large, farmers' sons were expected to follow on in the family tradition. I think I had no other aim than to do this but I believe that my parents did not share my sentiments and had doubts about my future. I had attained a useful School Certificate and a school teacher acquaintance suggested that I should seek further education. I obtained a prospectus for the Midland Agricultural College at Sutton Bonington, Nottinghamshire. I applied for a 6-month course and attended an interview at County Offices Lincoln in April 1944. During the interview, I asked if I could attend a 2-year diploma course. I was successful in being given a place on the course as well as a Lindsay Scholarship to help the fees and I started the course in late September 1944. More on this later.

A boy's life in the '30s was not very exciting compared to the more attractive leisure activities available post-war. Family relationships were mostly close – my uncle and aunts lived in Alvingham and in nearby villages and contact could be made with them if time permitted. We had a car as far back as I can remember; prior to that, the pony and trap was the mode of travel! My parents travelled in that way to Louth station to go on their honeymoon! Family reunions occurred rarely but exceptions were at Methodist Church events such as Harvest Festivals and Sunday School Anniversaries. The SSA was a great weekend when the children, helped by their teachers, sang and recited, generally adorned in a new dress or suit. On the Monday, a tea was given and the concert was repeated. Our relatives attended and we returned to enjoy their efforts at South Cockerington and Grimoldby. The food provided for lunch, tea AND supper was fit for a banquet which we enjoyed on our many visits. These occasions were a bit of a trial for some children including me, rather nervous, reciting to quite a large congregation. By and large, life centred to quite an extent around the chapel activities; morning service and Sunday School, quite often a mid-week function and visits to a large chapel at Louth. In my early teens, a retired minister and his wife ran a Youth Club and I must say their work with us had quite a good effect on my future and I am forever grateful. In the '20s and '30s, all religions were well attended, Methodism possibly being the strongest in the countryside. My mother's family were Primitive Methodists, working class and voting Liberal; her father was a skilled worker – thatcher, sheep shearer, gardener – with four children who all learned to play the harmonium and all became church organists. My mother was appointed an uncertificated teacher (primary) at North Cockerington Church of England School, largely because she could play music – needless to say she played at the church too. She bought a set of Arthur Mee's Encyclopaedia – 8 volumes to increase her knowledge. Later, I spent a lot of time reading these books and I believe they were a great help to me. The Primitive Chapel closed

in 1924; it became a workshop and now is a small dwelling. My father's family were Free Methodists; self-made artisans without family wealth who worshipped at the chapel in Highbridge Road. It closed in 1933 when Methodists of all persuasions united to form the 'classless' Methodist Church. The FMC was bought by the retired minister, Charles Hill, who had some knowledge of the building trade; he demolished it and built a bungalow more distant from the road than the chapel had been. He used the windows to good effect and the finished structure was practical but rather amateurish!

The Wesleyan Methodist Church – generally the province of the more well-off worshippers is now the only chapel left in the village, adjacent to the shop (now closed). Whereas my generation were catered for in their education by the church, mainly, I think, because there was little else to attract us, nowadays there is not much employment in villages and education has widened the horizon for all who strive to better themselves with commensurate salaries in these occupations and opportunities which are available.

Farming used to be described as a 'way of life' but I believe now it is more of a struggle to survive. It can be 'comfortable', but many factors are involved which are not topical in this memorial! It is little wonder that the countryside is depleted of its indigenous population and this has led to the villages becoming the preserve of the professional and the commuter.

In my early years, our house in High Street was quite a central point in the village. An early attempt to help 'educate' the wider public, the country authorities provided a library service in most villages. Ours had 100+ books and these were stacked on top of the sideboard in the kitchen. These books were changed at regular intervals to provide variety. The residents came and selected their books on a Tuesday evening between 6pm and 7pm. Some of them chatted with my father and I listened to some of the conversations; one old man had been a sailor in his earlier days and had sailed round Cape Horn on a sailing vessel. He prophesied that the Allies would win the War because they had more financial depth; probably true when America came in but I don't think he'd heard of nuclear fission. There were always the regular milk customers calling so we were not at all lonely.

During the mid-'30s, it was realised in some quarters that this country was pretty defenceless to combat the rising militarism of Germany, led by Adolf Hitler. Defence from air attack caused some alarm with the probability that poison gas would be used. Accordingly, in 1938, the whole population was issued with a gas mask; these had to be fitted according to size (of head). My father had been appointed an Air Raid Warden, along with Percy Trafford (who was wounded at Passchendaele in the First World War) the Wardens Post being at the shop in the centre of the village. The gas masks (respirators) were fitted at our house; a number each night arranged in alphabetical order of surname. Some of the elderly reacted quite alarmingly. I expect they felt the experience rather claustrophobic. When War broke out in September 1939, everybody had to carry their respirator with them everywhere – not very conveniently - in a square cardboard box. Thank God they never had to be used in reality. Nevertheless, I expect civilians had some comfort in case these dreadful chemicals were used.

The Army came to Alvingham on 2nd September 1939 in the early hours of the morning – it was an anti-aircraft unit of Lincolnshire Regiment Territorials from Gainsborough. Their equipment was rudimentary; a searchlight in our field plus a generator in the yard about ten yards from our bedroom window! This Lister diesel-driven generator required two men to start it, cranking it on half compression, and it made quite a noise, but we got used to it and did not necessarily wake up if it was started in the night. Various units served during the military presence; here, the Lincs Territorial's were replaced by Territorial's from London, some units were nondescript. In 1940, the Sherwood Foresters took over, a cluster of huts were erected near where the Village Hall is now, housing about 30 soldiers; there was a parade ground (vehicle park) and a captain was in charge. Further up the field, the equipment was increased to three searchlights and three Lewis machine guns protected by earthworks about 4'6" high and the necessary complement of men to use their facilities. The guns were only fired in anger once; on a lone intruder who attacked Louth Station using low cloud cover in November '41. Manby Air Force Station trained many thousands of airmen in all the necessary different trades needed to keep combat aircraft serviced. Many men had to be accommodated elsewhere and we had eighteen men who slept in the two attics and spare front room in the house at High Street. They were bussed in and out each day. A canteen was set up in the Methodist Schoolroom to provide some comfort for the service personnel; it was run by various ladies who gave their time for this facility.

One of my most lasting memories is of the aircraft which bombed Germany and Occupied Europe. To see the Lancasters taking off in an evening, appearing over the western horizon struggling to gain height with their heavy bomb loads aboard, circling round until they were all assembled and then disappearing to the east and the survivors returning in the early hours; then, the morning's formations of American Flying Fortresses with vapour trails sometimes evident and the survivors coming back, sometimes with a destroyed engine and jagged holes in their wings and fuselage.

At the present time (2009), there is quite a debate concerning care of the elderly. The problem was evident in the '30s and I think it is worth recording how our relatives met the needs of some of the elderly. The house at White Barn is quite large but not convenient – it had 7 bedrooms of various sizes and at any one time, could have had a minimum of nine residents in the '20s. In the '30s, the family members were getting older and various members died, leaving some unsupported. Grandfather and Grandmother provided home for Eliza King, Grandfather's sister from '34 to '42, Aunt Sarah, Grandfather's sister and partner in the farm. She died in 1941, death probably premature due to fear of the German bombers. Betsy Ann, Grandfather's spinster sister, after housekeeping for her widowed elder brother Henry until 1930, spent her time with her relatives, including Grandfather, us at High Street and with her adored nephews in Yorkshire, George and John Atkinson at Patrington and Ottingham. She died at John's when the house was bombed in 1941 – delayed shock. We at High Street had our share of relatives – mother's widowed aunt, Betsy Appleyard, stayed regularly and helped in the house; she was the midwife when our sister Elizabeth was born. Dad's Aunt Betsy Ann, aforementioned, stayed at intervals – she left a lasting impression. In the 1881 census, she was described as a stocking knitter and that was what she was in the 1930s; she must have knitted countless pairs of socks in her time, she wore pince-nez spectacles, peering over them if anybody appeared and conversing in quite a friendly attitude. Dad's widowed aunt, Susie Wilkinson (Grandmother's sister), also stayed

at times. She was a gem of a lady who had had a hard life; son killed in the First War, daughter committed suicide, husband killed by a runaway horse in Grimsby and her only grandson shot down and killed over Germany on his first raid! Such is the stuff of legend.

Neither White Barn or High Street had a bathroom or indoor toilet; how did our forebears manage? I could go on but I will let it rest.