

## Philip Shucksmith A family history

I have at various times toyed with the idea of writing the history of our branch of the Shucksmith family. It has all the more significance because it is most likely that this particular branch will be finite in the next generation, at least the name will be. My generation has failed to produce heirs in sufficient numbers and the vagaries of family misfortune have not helped in its proliferation.

I have recently come across information which has given me knowledge which hitherto was lacking. Previously, I was able to go back five generations. I believe I am now able to go back another two. I do not propose to draw up a family tree; I will give the information in longhand to provide all the facts I have available. There must be many branches of the entire Shucksmith family which originate from an unknown Shucksmith born in 1604, christened at North Kelsey, Lincolnshire on 16/11/1604. Her father was most likely John Shucksmith, date of birth unknown, who was father of Henry Shucksmith, born 1606, possibly brother to a female born in 1604 whose name is not recorded. I think there must have been an unrecorded generation next, before John Shucksmith, born 1666, married Issabell Elsham (date of birth 30/05/1664), both of North Kelsey. Two children are recorded; Joseph circa 1686 and Anne.

It may be of interest that an alternative name in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was Shooksmith. Joseph, born 1686, married Anne Dowse (date of birth 1705) in North Kelsey. Their children are not recorded but one of them, Joseph (date of birth 27/01/1733) married Anne Jackson (date of birth 1743) on 08/12/1761 at Alvingham. Joseph senior died in 1814, Anne in 1822 and they produced 8 children, 3 of whom died soon after birth. It is worthy of note that this Joseph moved from North Kelsey to Alvingham during his lifetime, possibly about 1750. Joseph, the youngest of the 8 children, was born in 1782 and died in 1865. He married Jane White (1785-1855) on 21/05/1807. They produced 6 children, 2 of whom died relatively young.

Henry, their fourth child (d.o.b. 1815) married Susannah Warth on 23/05/1838. Susannah was born at Thorpe St Peter near Wainfleet in 1820. Susannah was in service at the Abbey Farm, Alvingham. Henry was a cordwainer-bootmaker in Alvingham. They produced 14 children, almost like clockwork at 2-year intervals. They all survived except for the first who died soon after birth. They lived in a small cottage, the living room directly opening to the outside with a small parlour attached and 2 very small low-ceilinged bedrooms. The workshop was a little further down the road; equally small and confined. Susannah died in January 1887, reputedly after a strenuous day washing clothes and attending a meeting at the Methodist Chapel in the evening. Her 13 children followed the cortege to the churchyard. Henry trained 2 of his sons to follow his occupation – Henry and Samuel – but I believe only the latter followed it to fruition. Henry Senior retired and lived in a thatched house in Eastfield Road – now Highbridge Road – with 2 of his spinster daughters – Betsy Ann and Sarah Elizabeth and bachelor son John. Henry died in March 1904. Thomas Warth Shucksmith (d.o.b. 24/09/1863), the twelfth surviving child, married Fanny White (d.o.b. 1869). In 1894, Fanny lived almost next door to the Shucksmith family cottage, being the youngest of 4 daughters of the blacksmith Peter White whose workshop separated the two houses. Thomas and Fanny had 3 sons – Thomas White (28/07/1897-06/12/1983), John

William (Jack) (1905-1989) and Henry Samuel (1910-1994). Thomas married Edna May Hand (21/05/1902-28/11/1989) on 29/07/1924. They had 2 sons and 1 daughter: Philip Henry (myself) (d.o.b. 26/06/1927), George Basil (30/12/1928-04/09/2010) and Elizabeth Ann (d.o.b. 03/05/1939). Philip married Maureen Elizabeth Meanwell (d.o.b. 13/03/1928) on 26/11/1949 and they had 3 daughters and 1 son: Patricia Ann (d.o.b. 09/05/1950), Maureen (d.o.b. 23/06/1952), David Ian (d.o.b. 29/06/1955) and Kathryn Lesley (d.o.b. 07/07/1964).

Now to describe a few of the above-mentioned characters, I rely on my own memories from the early 1930s. Earlier, I use hearsay and relatives' talk of times past.

Susannah is not listed as living at home in the 1851 census so it is possible she was in service. Henry and Samuel were apprenticed to their father and became journeymen; no longer were they bound to a master. Both became shoemakers. Later, they both became involved in occupations which today would be described as agricultural contractors. Henry procured a seed-drill, doing work on farms using their own horses, Henry sowing corn as demanded. This necessitated arriving at the farm, ready to commence work at 7am, the usual time to begin the day. No doubt he would have to borrow or hire a horse to travel between farms. Samuel was an interesting character, having become a shoemaker. In the 1881 census, he is listed as an engineer (driver), possibly owning a threshing machine. He definitely owned one in 1891. These machines had replaced the flail and went from farm to farm as demanded. The machine needed power to function and this was supplied by a portable steam engine which he also owned. The steam powered a large flywheel and a belt attached to a smaller pulley on the thresher and turned the apparatus at considerable speed, sufficient to separate the grain from the straw. Further mesh riddles and draught produced an end product of clean grain, the straw and chaff issuing from the other end. The straw was carried by an elevator to form a stack of straw for feeding cattle or bedding for horses and pigs. Considerable skill and know-how were necessary to have steam power ready at 7am, particularly on foggy, calm mornings. Samuel must have had considerable acumen for business. He married Jane Paddison in the early 1880s. She was in service at Boswell (North Elkington) and he used to walk there (5-6 miles) on a Sunday when they were courting! Having moved into a relatively modern house with a few acres, they were very diligent and careful financially, milking cows, keeping pigs and poultry and selling the produce, he was able to buy 40+ acres of land on which he built a barn and foldyard for 15-20 cattle, known as Red Barn, costing about £100; I saw the account myself and I demolished the barn in the 1960s. He sold this land and bought 100 acres – Highbridge Farm – in 1910, which happened to be the home of his daughter, Louisa (Pridgeon). Sometime in the first quarter of the twentieth century, he either sold or passed down his threshing enterprise to Robert Phillipson who in the 1891 census is listed as living with Samuel as a servant.

The history of the evolution of the threshing machine is interesting. I am not aware of the actual date of the first efforts to replace the flail – some progress was evident in the 1830s as labourers objected to these initiatives, breaking the new 'machines' and setting stacks on fire; hence, we have the Tolpuddle Martyrs. The earliest information I have seen is that the Lincoln engineers, Clayton and Shuttleworth – founded in 1842 – made their first portable steam engine in 1845 and their first threshing machine in 1849 and by 1900, they had manufactured 30,000 engines and 20,000 threshing machines. The traction steam engine

was developed at the same time so with the latter, the threshing system became independent, although access to all farms could not be gained; for example, Highbridge Farm could not be accessed because of the weight restrictions over the canal bridge there so the machine was moved by horses and the portable engine supplied the power. I don't know if Samuel ever possessed a traction engine before he retired but in the 1930s, it was quite an impressive sight to see the traction engine towing the machine and straw elevator (Jackstraw), moving from farm to farm. Clayton & Shuttleworth were pioneers in the development of the military tank, first used in the 1914-1918 War and their later threshing machines had the impression of a tank on the nameplate attached. Other manufacturers were Fosters of Lincoln and Marshalls of Gainsborough.

It appears that the 3 youngest of this family had a fairly close relationship, namely Sarah, Louisa and Thomas. Their father, Henry, would no doubt buy his leather in bulk, most likely in Hull where he would have acquaintances and it is most likely that he found employment for his daughters, Louisa and Sarah, in the more well-to-do area where Louisa was a housemaid and Sarah a cook. A local butcher in Hull, Henry Atkinson, claimed the affections of Louisa and they married in the late 1880s. Sarah came back to Alvingham to keep house for her father, now widowed in 1888. Betsy Ann joined Sarah to look after their father, Henry, and also their bachelor brother, John, in a thatched house that has now disappeared and was next door but one from Trafford's shop. John died soon after his father and Sarah and Betsy Ann went to live with their elder brother, Henry, now also widowed, at his house in Church Lane.

Henry Atkinson, born in Patrington, was quite a unique businessman. He was a master butcher in Hull and he also had interests in property and farms in Holderness. In 1908, at the sale of a Trust, he bought White Barn Farm (then known as 'The Farm'); 100 acres for £4,250, borrowing most of the money. He died in 1921, aged 61, and his estate was a considerable embarrassment to his 2 sons, George, 21, and John, 16, for many of their early years. A sympathetic and considerate lawyer friend guided their affairs. Both George and John became capable farmers. John spent several years at Alvingham with his many relatives, before joining his brother at Eastfield Farm at Patrington in 1925, John himself farming at Bush Farm Ottringham in 1934. However, both married but produced no children; their lives were dogged by ill-health and misfortune. I mentioned that their father had interests in property; he bought a least 4 farms in Holderness and not all were paid for when he died. Indeed, they did not clear the debt until 1941 when the BBC built a large transmitting station at Bush Farm, compulsorily purchasing 80 acres of John's land at £50 per acre. John sold his farm in 1943 and went to live in Withernsea, helping George at Eastfield. George's health was not good so he sold up in 1945 and retired to Bridlington. John also moved there. Their ill-luck continued; George's wife, Violet, died from a brain tumour in November 1947 and George died of heart problems in July 1948; how tragic. John moved to George's house in Lamplugh Road, Bridlington with Sarah (Sally), his wife, and were a very hospitable couple to their many relations, providing seaside holidays to many, both young and old. Sally died in 1958 of heart problems and John lived another rather lonely 31 years until 1989. Tom, Jack and Henry Shucksmith, his cousins, befriended him in his later years after 1959. He had many friends at Bridlington and his interests in Freemasonry gave him considerable satisfaction. He was a man with many interests; cricket, soccer, investments, a large library and was extremely knowledgeable. In later years, he

collected militaria – badges, etc – of all the many regiments and organised army formations; a most comprehensive collection which achieved considerable publicity. It was a privilege for Basil and I to be his executors and indeed we have a lot to thank John for.

Thomas Warth Shucksmith was born in 1863 and it is strange that the youngest son was given his mother's family name. He was the only child, so far as I know, to receive paid education. He cycled to Samuel Bateman's private school in Eastfield Road, Louth, each day. I have seen some of his books; his writing and calculations were immaculate. He had to leave when he was 14 to work on the farm; his brother Joseph suffered a severe shoulder scald about this time. By 1880, he was a bargee, working on the Louth Navigation Canal. He progressed to work on the larger boats, sailing between the Humber and North German ports. He was very careful with money – I have his financial records; every penny is detailed. He married Fanny White, the youngest of Peter White's five daughters, in the early 1890s. He lived in a terraced house in Lesby Avenue, Grimsby, and worked in an oil and cake mill. Being very careful with money and helped by his wife's hard work, taking in washing, they managed to buy the houses on either side. These were sold in 1908 and paid for the tenant right of The Farm when he was offered it by Henry Atkinson. Sarah Elizabeth (1861-1941) helped with finance and became a partner of T & S Shucksmith.

Thomas moved to The Farm and began farming at the age of 44. There was one tied cottage to accommodate a worker and I presume 2 or 3 workers would 'live in' at the farmhouse. These would be hired at the May Fair when, traditionally, unmarried men would 'let' themselves for a year for an amount of money, plus their food and lodging. Other workers were available in the village. Very few men sought employment outside its boundary. Two sons of Thomas – Tom and John William (Jack) – moved with the family from Grimsby, not yet old enough for work, but Tom, at the age of 12, took a test known as the Labour Exam which was available at that time which measured their standard of literacy and numeracy. It meant cycling to Saltfleet to take it. However, he passed it, along with his future brother-in-law, Henry Hand, and so he began working on the farm in 1909.

I expect beginning farming from scratch would be rather a struggle in the post-Edwardian era. In 1910, a third son, Henry Samuel, was born and completed the family. In 1914, the First World War began which gradually gave farmers a degree of profitability and put cereal and meat production as a necessity for the nation's survival. Tom was called up to serve in the army in 1916; he was in the Royal Marines, some of the time in the Orkney Islands guarding Scapa Flow. He moved in 1918 to prepare for a 'big effort' in 1919. However, the Germans collapsed in Autumn 1918 and he was spared the ordeal. He did contract influenza in the world-wide Spanish flu epidemic but survived. He was in hospital alongside large numbers of Australians who succumbed to the scourge because they had no resistance to this type of flu.

Relative prosperity was short-lived after the War but nevertheless, it gave some security to face the more difficult economic years, culminating in the crash of the financial markets at the end of the 1920s. The Louth flood of 29<sup>th</sup> May 1920 was a spectacular example of the ability of nature to create a local disaster. Intense rainfall to the west of Louth caused a rush of water, both north and south of Hubbard's Hills to converge on the Lud Valley, which spread damage to property in a wide swathe of the town. It created a national disaster and

a widespread appeal culminated in both financial and practical help being given generously. A 'village' of temporary housing was set up north of High Holme Road for some of the unfortunate flood victims, along with accompanying food facilities. The Duchess of Portland from Welbeck Hall near Worksop and who in her early life had lived at Walmsgate Hall near Louth was a prime mover in organising relief help and clothing for the flood victims and many people from that area came to help clean up the appalling filth in the houses. In 1945, when I was at college, I went to spend a weekend at my roommate's home at Holbeck near Welbeck; his mother's first inquiry was to ask where I came from. When I mentioned Louth, she immediately told me she had come to help the victims of the flood organised by the Duchess. The damage and destruction in the Riverhead area were widespread and virtually finished the Louth Canal as a commercial enterprise; in 1924, it ceased business. The contents of the warehouse's ground floors were ruined; many tons of grain and animal foodstuff. I don't think there was much insurance in those days. The floodwater came east of Louth, inundating the flood plain for the River Lud and Louth Canal, causing some inconvenience to householders involved.

To return to Thomas Warth, the relative prosperity of the war years and just after (1914-1921) gave him some security to withstand the gradual financial decline of the 1920s, culminating in the worldwide crash of 1929. Tom and Jack, his sons, were no doubt a great help to him. Jack had to leave the Grammar School in 1916 to replace Tom; a great disappointment to him as he wanted to become an engineer. Tom married Edna Hand in 1924 and in 1922, they bought the farm in High Street; about 50 acres with substantial house and farm buildings. Tom and Edna made their home there, the land joining up with The Farm. Jack married in the late 1920s and shortly after, in 1931, started farming at Abbey Farm. Jack was an interesting character who could be described as a 'restless go-getter'. In 1935, he moved to the Grange Farm – 170 acres – where he could gain more satisfaction! He sold his farm in 1943 and went to live in Louth with his wife, Violet, and children, Richard (Dick) and Jean. He cycled to the farm most days to help and at night he returned to his studies, so abruptly interrupted in 1916. He persevered with the help of some teacher acquaintances and obtained an external qualification. In 1947, he was on the move again, this time to Yorkshire where he obtained the tenancy of a warp land farm at Faxfleet Hall, situated on the Humber Bank, opposite to where the Trent flows into the Humber. Here, on this good land, he grew mustard for Colman's and potatoes in volume as well as cereals. In the 1950s, he travelled widely in the winter months to New Zealand, South Africa and Egypt, giving vent to his restless nature. He used Irish labour to harvest his crops; they lived in a spare house on the farm and their highlight was to get Jack to lead a musical evening on the piano, plying him with pints which he never touched! He had piano lessons in his youth, instructed by Owen Price of Louth; he learned to play mechanically rather than musically. In the late '60s, he was on the move again, this time selling up and moving to Bridlington, enjoying comparative ease, as much as his restless spirit allowed. However, it did not last long; Violet, his wife, suffered a stroke and died in the early '70s. Violet was the daughter of a family involved in fairground rides which were very popular pre-war when many towns hosted a fair to celebrate some local event particular to that area, the most famous being the Nottingham Goose Fair and Hull Fair. The family name was Dowse and the blacksmith at Alvingham, Charles Dowse, was a brother of the fairground proprietor and he and his wife produced many children. Their way of life was not the ideal situation for rearing children and several of them were fostered by relatives. Violet and Lilly came to their Uncle Charles

and Aunt Minnie at Alvingham. Violet went to the local school and at Louth, then to teacher training at Lincoln. She was teaching at Monk's Dyke School in Louth when she married Jack, becoming a very able wife and mother, and was also proficient in hatching and rearing chicks. Later, she became involved in the Women's Institute and supported the Methodist Church wherever she lived. Jack continued to soldier on. After a while, he moved to his daughter Jean's at Upminster in Essex.

Jean lived in a larger rectory with extensive gardens and her father's skills were tested, bringing some of these areas to decent appearance. Jean married a schoolteacher, Tony Blitz, who was also a gifted magician. They had 2 sons, Mark and Rayner. Dick, her brother, married a local girl at Faxfleet and when his father retired, Dick moved to a farm at Sancton near Market Weighton. They had 2 children, Robin and Wendy. Dick received a very hefty blow on his head in the early '80s, which almost severed one of his ears. He was rushed to hospital and his ear was successfully sewn back on. A few years later, he developed a brain tumour and died in 1987 at the age of 53. Jack, meanwhile, had moved back to Market Weighton to live his lonely life which he seemed to accept quite positively. However, he died in tragic circumstances on his own in 1989. He had been a very able arable farmer but did not excel with livestock.

Henry Samuel, born in 1910, may have been a case of the old saying, "new house, new baby," and was possibly somewhat spoiled and doted on by his maiden aunts. He went to the local Cockerington school and when he was 10, to Louth Grammar School. In the summer, he cycled each day, in winter he cycled on a Monday and home on a Friday, in the meantime staying at his aunt's house. She was Eliza, married to Joe King, and they lived in 'Lime Villas' on Eastgate opposite Trinity Lane. Their home was flooded to a depth of 3 feet in the Louth flood. He was quite a diligent student, passing the equivalent of School Certificate at an early age of 14 in 10 subjects; all credits except for French. He stayed on at school in the sixth form but did not take further exams. While in the sixth form, made up of just 2 boys, the form room was an ex-army hut from the First World War, situated near the local hospital where he took note of the doctors and surgeons, the latter in particular, driving the latest car with mahogany fittings and wearing wash leather gloves. He thought this life might suit him so he made efforts to achieve his ambition. There were no grants or help for a medical student in those days; in fact, all budding surgeons came from successful businessmen and, without exception, public school education. Here he was, the son of a tenant farmer, grammar-school educated, and with a father not prepared to finance him. It was either Cambridge or Leeds; he chose the latter and was accepted. Now it was up to him and Aunt Sarah, his maiden aunt who doted on her nephew, to provide the necessary funding. He relates arriving at Leeds Station in a black overcoat, bowler and gloves aged 17 – what a challenge. This was September 1927. He had a cousin in Leeds who I think must have helped him to settle in. He was extremely intent on achieving his goals, never missing a lecture and spending much time in the library. His studies, the length of which depended on the subjects he wished to specialise in, were some years hence. He obtained various degrees, won several awards and scholarships during a 7-year qualifying period. Then, only lowly positions were available. Senior surgeons held their place and were regarded in high esteem.

The War came. He had volunteered for the Territorial Army and, knowing he was the right age to be called up, along with several of his colleagues, the inevitable occurred. He escaped from France in May 1940 on the last ship from Boulogne to idle his time away – he may have gone back to Leeds for a short while. In late 1941, he turned up in Malta after a hazardous journey, idled away his time there, almost pined to death, until mid-1943, when he went to Sicily, at last getting some work. He followed the 8<sup>th</sup> Army into Italy, where he saw much action at Monte Casino where the fighting involved a great number of casualties. He returned from Italy in mid-1944, possibly to work with the great number of casualties expected with the invasion of Normandy and the fighting to occupy France and Belgium. Fortunately, the worst estimates were not achieved and the number of wounded, although regrettable, were not too disastrous. He did go to France for some work in late 1944. On leave, in 1944, he helped with the harvest and spent Christmas with his cousins in Yorkshire and early release saw him back at Leeds Infirmary in early 1945. Apparently, it is recorded that he went back unannounced to the operating theatre where his friend and mentor, Philip Allison, was having a difficult time with a patient, looked up and saw Henry and exclaimed, “Jesus Christ”, to which Henry replied, “No, but I may be of some help.” He returned to his old digs. By now, the lady had died but her husband looked after him – I expect he only needed bed and breakfast. By now, he was 35 years old and was encouraged by his friend to find a wife. This he did, finding a younger doctor who he thought would be suitable. She specialised as an anaesthetist so she would be aware of his tantrums and conduct in theatre and would contact him at dinner in the hospital. They married in early 1946. Snow almost upset arrangements; she lived in the Goathland near Whitby. The weather made the occasion memorable for my father and mother who went to support Henry. My aunt was called Mary but she was known as Binkie by one and all and was an able wife and partner to Henry. Two sons were born; Tom and Bill, my cousins. I was more than 20 years their senior. Henry continued to progress at Leeds, becoming a consultant but did not specialise, always a general surgeon. After bringing up her sons, Binkie went back to work for the Health Authority for schools, her sons being educated at Sedbergh and Tom later at Cambridge.

I shall always be grateful to Uncle Henry for helping and encouraging me to achieve a little in life. As boys, he always bought Basil and me a good interesting book each Christmas, so the opportunity to widen our horizons was there. He believed that most people had opportunities in life and it was up to the individual to make the most of them and increase their knowledge and ability to fit in and find a suitable occupation. He said that he learned by observation, watching his seniors at work and then putting into practice what he had seen. It is recorded that he had that rare quality among consultants of training junior surgeons and not interfering while they were doing their best – I find that hard to believe, knowing how impatient he could be! We had a few farm pupils on the farm and I believed in that way of learning-observation, even in as lowly an occupation as agriculture; the ability and degree of interest is paramount in extending your knowledge. Putting a pupil on an expensive piece of machinery demands considerable ability and dedication or else a considerable figure can end up on the debit side of the accounts.

As I write in 2011, Binkie is nearing 90 years of age. Henry died in 1994. Tom, an actuary, died in 1990 aged 53. Bill is a retired estate agent at Wetherby.

Thomas White Shucksmith (1899-1983), my father, was born in Grimsby and moved with his parents to The Farm, Alvingham, in 1908. While he was at Grimsby, he received a cut on his scalp which left a scar conveniently where his hair parting occurred so he had little difficulty with his hair style all his life. He commenced working on the farm in 1910. In 1916, he was called up for military service. He joined up under the Lord Derby Scheme whereby if you volunteered before being compulsorily called up, you were allowed to join which branch of the Forces you preferred. He joined the Royal Marines, training at Plymouth where he was photographed on The Hoe in dress uniform – very smart. He said that he completed his education during his training there, learning about naval guns. He was posted to coastal defence in the Orkney Islands to help defend Scapa Flow on the lonely island of South Ronaldsay. From here, he sent sea birds' eggs home to his young brother, Henry. In 1917, he was posted to Deal in Kent. Here he witnessed some of the exhausted survivors of the ill-fated 'Zeebrugge raid' where 10 Victoria Crosses were awarded. He was de-mobbed in 1919, counting himself very fortunate to have escaped the carnage in France. In 1920, he helped to clear up the destruction caused by the Louth flood where all the contents of the warehouses were ruined. In 1924, he married Edna May Hand; he was 27, his bride 22. The wedding was arranged for June but he had to have an operation for appendicitis at that time so the marriage was rearranged. High Street House was their home, having been bought in 1922 when Mr Dudding sold up and emigrated to Australia. High Street House was a fairly large structure by modern standards, hopelessly laid out; it had a large back kitchen with stone slab floor, copper for heating water for laundry, the remains of a redundant bread oven, a water tap to drain hot water from the side boiler in the kitchen living room, a large glazed bowl for washing up, etc, and the cream separator. The kitchen/dining/living room was equally large, with an enormous fire range, side boiler and oven with a large flue, big enough to receive a substantial piece of timber, one window facing east and a door in opposite corners accessing the back kitchen, dairies and hall. It was very draughty! Facing the road were the best room and playroom, the former furnished with a dining table, sideboard, settee and chairs of varying comfort. The playroom was unfurnished, its name is descriptive but it was also home to the incubator. It was not furnished until 1948 when it made a comfortable lounge. My father worked very long hours, many of them at hard physical tasks. He milked at least 2 cows every morning and night for at least 25 years, from 1925-1950. He would get up at 6am and milk the cows, bringing the milk in the house for mother to deal with, have his breakfast and be at The Farm at 7am to set the workers their tasks and go to work with them. Packed lunch at 9.30, home for dinner at 12.30 and then work in the afternoon 13.30-17.00 when he had his tea, followed by evening milking. If working with horses – ploughing or drilling – the hours were 7am to 2.30pm. Physically exhausting by today's standards, they were used to it and accepted it as their job and managed their lifestyle quite well. A Fordson tractor was bought at the sale of High Street Farm's implements in 1922. As far as I can gather, it was almost a liability; extremely unreliable to start and in winter, when it was cold, it was necessary to warm the oil in the engine sump by lighting a fire under it to thin the oil. The ignition system was equally crude so getting the tractor started must have been a cause for celebration! The implements that were then attached were equipment made for use by a horse so it was only partially successful. In the early 1930s, a new Fordson was bought; this had a magneto ignition – a great improvement; 3 forward gears and reverse, iron wheels, rear traction wheels with slanting angle-iron and strakes bolted on which necessitated bolting on iron rims to travel



on the road. A further Fordson on rubber tyres was purchased in 1938 – what an improvement.

High Street House was interesting as I grew up in the 1930s. An initiative at County level led to the provision of reading books in most villages. This library of about 100 books – juvenile, fiction and general interest – were changed every 6-9 months and provided an excellent service to residents. The books were placed on top of a roll-top desk in the living room at High Street House and Tuesday night was fixed for changing books and many people used the facility. In 1950, the books were transferred to the Village Hall. During the 1930s, the general feeling in the country was for a period of ‘no more wars’ after the carnage of 1914-1918 but, with the rise of the Nazi party in Germany after Adolf Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, it slowly became apparent this this country would have to prepare to meet this German expansion. Hitler’s methods of reconstructing a defeated nation were at odds with all his neighbours, particularly Great Britain and France. He made Germany a country with full employment and gradually built up an army and air force against First World War peace obligations. Natural German ability and thoroughness enabled their armed forces to become leaders in mechanised warfare. They created new aircraft, tanks and guns, capital ships and submarines and a very numerous and efficient air force to use them which could only lead to expansion and war – such a force could not be deemed admissible under the guise of homeland protection. Hitler gradually gave vent to his intentions by re-occupying the Rhineland in 1936, then he took over Austria and in 1938, he occupied the Sudetenland – part of Czechoslovakia – in 1939. In September 1939, he attacked Poland with which country France and Great Britain had signed a pact to protect so war was declared. The rest is history!

To continue my recollections of my father, he was appointed as an Air Raid Warden in the late 1930s after the government had woken up to the warlike preparations and expansionist murmurings of our German neighbours. The wardens organised the civilian population to prepare for air attacks on this country. It was expected in the event of war that the German air force (Luftwaffe) would carry out extensive attacks on not necessarily legitimate targets and therefore the civilian population could be very much involved. With this in mind, the authorities issued gas masks to all civilians in 1938. My father was responsible for the distribution and fitting of these masks which consisted of a filtering inlet, eyepiece and straps, adjustable over the head, the whole being contained in a pliable rubber material which fitted the face. The citizens came to High Street House to be fitted with a mask; large, medium or small. Some of the older ladies were horrified by these claustrophobic devices and created quite a scene – poor dears. A square cardboard box with cord attached completed the ‘gift’. When war was declared, everybody was required to carry their respirator (gas mask) with them at all times. Thank goodness we never had to use them.

As an Air Raid Warden, my father was required to attend evening meetings where they were instructed in first aid, assisting homeless people if their homes were destroyed, they would try to control fires from incendiary bombs and be on call at the Warden’s post which was at the village shop where the proprietor, Percy Trafford, and father attended whenever the air raid siren was sounded at Louth.

Father attended the Methodist Chapel on Sunday mornings but after 1935, he attended morning and evening. He did his work on the farm, put time in as an Air Raid Warden and went to a whist drive or a chapel meeting weekly so you will note he had quite a busy curriculum.

There was little air activity for a period at the start of the War; it was known as the 'Phony War' but in May 1940, the Germans attacked Holland, Belgium and France and in a little more than a month, occupied these countries. So Germany was poised along the North Sea coast, the English Channel coast and the French Atlantic coast as far south as Spain. The geography of Europe was re-written in a few weeks, the result of which allowed the considerable Luftwaffe to attack this country almost with impunity, largely at night initially but in July to September, the attacks were made by large numbers of bombers and fighter aircraft. Generally, the weather was fine and suited aerial warfare. With the help of radar and the Spitfire and Hurricane fighters, we just managed to hold their aircraft from overwhelming us and the enemy desisted by October, with heavy losses on both sides. The expected invasion had been stalled by the 'skin of our teeth'. Air raids in this area occurred from June 1940 and the sirens disturbed our sleep – we always got up initially, got dressed, father went to the Warden's post and the rest of us – mother, Basil, Elizabeth and I – huddled in the kitchen at High Street House. By and large, there were no targets around here of importance and the aircraft were most likely aiming for Hull and Grimsby; some were probably off-course and dropped their bombs randomly. The night of 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> June 1940 was the most memorable; hundreds of incendiary bombs were dropped to the east of Alvingham and ignited uncultivated herbage and also the stacks in Poplar Grove and farmyard, causing an extensive fire. The circling plane eventually dropped 3 high explosive bombs very near to the flaming stacks, killing a few sheep. Four other H.E. bombs were dropped about ¼ mile away from the fire in Cockerington Fen in Cyril Laughton's field where his horses grazed at night. When he went to fetch them up for work before 6am, they were all laid out prone near the craters. He feared the worst, but they were enjoying the warmth created by the bombs when they exploded and was he relieved when they all got up! As time went on, we did not always get up when the siren went except for father who went to his Warden's post because some of the air activity was our aircraft returning from attacking Germany. Air raid shelters were built at all the schools and if the sirens sounded in school time, we had to sit in them until the all-clear sounded. Raids by 'intruder' lone aircraft were very frightening, generally because no warning was given; they flew in low, under the radar vision. Louth railway station was attacked by such a plane in late 1941, dropping some bombs and killing quite a few people.

The War complicated the agricultural system as all produce was overseen by inspectors of the Ministry of Supply. Trading with merchants was normal but inter-farm trade was forbidden – both my father and Jack were summonsed for indiscretions of this activity. At harvest time, farmers were advised to spread their stacks – the usual custom was to put them all in the yards – so some were created in fields, causing more work as the straw had to be carried to the cattle in the yard when they were threshed. Cattle, pigs, and sheep were sold under the 'umbrella' of the Ministry of Food. Labour was scarce as many men were called up to the Forces. To alleviate this shortage, a hostel was built at Yarburgh to house Irish workers and farmers could employ them. We had 2 who helped to harvest in 1942. Prices for grain and meat did improve as scarcity and inflation made its effect.

My father gradually became more involved in the business of the farm as grandfather grew older. By 1950, he was running the farm wholly and did not work manually to the extent he had done in the past. Basil learned to erect the stacks and he became expert at many of the crafts essential to the successful running of an arable and livestock farm. My grandfather died in February 1950 and father became the tenant of The Farm and also the owner of High Street Farm and various other land which had been bought over the years since 1908, amounting to about 65 acres. Abbey Farm, which had been bought for Uncle Jack in 1930 was sold to Alfred Graves, the tenant. In 1955, father built a house near White Barn corner where father and mother and Elizabeth moved to in January 1955. Basil and Jean married at that time. Basil was born in that house in 1928 and lived in it all his life, passing away in 2010.

In 1950, we bought a self-propelled Massey Harris No. 726 combine harvester. It had an 8'6" cutter bar and it was a completely new system and we were novices to this modern way of harvesting. It caused a few headaches but father was very helpful in ironing out the problems which arose and helped us until the mid-1960s, gradually reducing his work input until increasing arthritis in his hip precluded further tasks. He was an active member of the NFU, both at branch and county level which he handed over to me in the early 1970s.

Father had always been involved in village affairs and was Chairman of the Parish Meeting, the lowest form of local government, for nearly 30 years. It appointed 2 members of the community to the Rating Committee of the Rural District Council. In 1961, an initiative was put forward to elect a Parish Council of 5 members to represent the village on the R.D.C. An election was held, the candidates put their names forward and the 5 candidates who were not elected had done the most work for the village in the past – real democracy at work!! Village celebrations like the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935, the Coronation of King George VI in 1937, the victory celebrations in 1946 and the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 were financed by public donation where volunteers went round the village asking residents to make a donation towards a get-together to provide a meal for all the population and competitions and athletic events for all ages with cash prizes. Father was heavily involved in these events along with a willing group of residents to assist.

The family bought a car pre-1930. It was a 'BEEN' – not very reliable. I understand it quite often had to be towed off by a horse when it was required! It was replaced by a Morris Oxford in the early 1930s, then by a Morris Isis about 1936 – a large car reminiscent of the models used by American gangsters of the Al Capone era. The next car was procured during the War. It was quite modern. It had been purchased by a Grimsby businessman just before the War and had to be laid up because he could not get any petrol for it; farmers could get some for essential work! Father always had a desire to drive a Rover car and he got one in the early 1950s, followed by a Rover 2000 which was a sportier style. The post-war cars were constructed of metal which deteriorated quite rapidly so that after a few years, they showed wear in the form of rust. In the 1980s, cars showed a marked improvement in the quality. He downsized his car later and used popular models of the day: Austin and British Leyland BMC.

With his hip becoming increasingly painful, he found some relief attending a weekly session at Woodhall Spa, having a bath with supposedly healing waters, followed by a massage. In late 1960, he was operated on to adjust his hip joint, the femur being sawn in two and then plated and screwed to straighten the joint in its socket. This was rather an unsuccessful exercise but total hip replacements were in their infancy then!

From the late 1930s, father and mother managed to take a week's holiday in summer; of course, it was interrupted by the birth of Elizabeth in 1939 and then by the War.

Scarborough was the usual venue but later then ventured to many seaside resorts further afield. Many short holidays were spent visiting John and Sally Atkinson at Bridlington and after Sally died in 1958, they visited John quite frequently for the next 20 years. John visited Southlands about twice a year.

Father's health remained quite good but in the late 1970s, prostate problems became manifest which made his life uncomfortable. Uncle Henry arranged for him to have treatment at St James Hospital in Leeds. The operation was partially successful and he came home to recover. However, he was rather impatient and later, progressive incontinence did not make life enjoyable. He had hospitalisation in October and December 1983 and died on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1983, aged 86. His death occurred 6 months before they would have celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary – I am sure my mother never forgave him!

He maintained an interest in the farm's activities almost to the end of his life. Until he was 80, he drove around the farm; latterly mother did the driving. He liked to help with potato riddling and other odd jobs. He had worked very hard to survive the '30s depression and he laid the foundation of a successful business from which Basil and I benefited. He had seen quite a few enterprises which had been unable to survive the 1930s which had given him a safety-first attitude so that he did not enter any schemes where he could not see a successful outcome – he adopted a safety-first business life. He never really accepted the opportunities which there were after the 1939-45 War, with the government guaranteeing prices for produce. The memories of the post-1914-18 War collapse in prices were always there at the back of his mind.

My mother, Edna May Hand, was the second daughter and third child of Peter and Annie Hand who lived at the Washdyke adjacent to the River Lud which is the boundary feature between Alvingham and North Cockerington. The house was actually in North Cockerington. Peter Hand was a craftsman in country pursuits, thatching using straw, 'plashing' (laying) hedges, sheep-shearing, gardening and he was an accomplished poacher, a quality inherent in all of the large local Hand family and I must admit that I had a slight tendency in that direction in my younger life. He had a large, productive garden and a 5-acre field to grow crops, and the sheep wash where all the local farmers brought their sheep to wash in May prior to shearing. The process cleaned the wool and also removed some of the grease (lanolin) in the fleece. He made a platform spanning the river – quite swift-flowing in those days – of substantial wooden cross members and planks to pen the sheep in prior to being put into the flowing water. They were unable to go under the platform and were assisted to swim against the flow by wooden 'poys' (long branches of willow with extensions at the end from selected branches which one extension pushed and the other pulled the sheep as required). In the middle of the river, about 8 yards upstream, a wooden tub was positioned

for an assistant to occupy to further wash and immerse the sheep using a shorter 'poy'. This person would assist the sheep to leave the water via a sloping cut in the river bank. My mother told me of being in the tub when she came home from school and more often as she got older and of being frightened of falling in – it was literally a case of 'walking the plank' to get in the tub.

School was at North Cockerington, about ½ mile south of her home, the school (Church of England) being adjacent to the vicarage – an imposing residence designed by Fowler, a well-known architect of the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> Century. It had substantial grounds of kitchen garden, lawns, tennis courts, and orchard, sheltered by trees on the north and west sides. The schoolmaster at that time was a Mr Paulson who was assisted by his wife. I think it is worth noting that all the children of my mother's era were very good hand-writers. Their style was without flourish but very neat and easy to read as taught by Mr Paulson. Mother would leave school at 14 and I believe went into service in Louth. From scraps of talk by her relatives, I believe she was very unhappy and I should think she returned home. I do know that she cycled to Louth most Saturdays to visit one or more of her many relatives; her mother, Annie, was one of the elder children of a family of 13; the Wests. I believe she visited the cinema – silent at that time – and occasionally went to a dance. It was on a similar visit in May 1920 that she was visiting her Aunt Betsy Appleyard in Ramsgate Road when the Louth Flood occurred. Afternoon tea was set out on the table when water started to come in the doorway. Aunt Betsy went across the road to tell her neighbour and by then she was unable to return to her own house, the flood water having risen with such rapidity. Mother and her relatives had to go upstairs and she told me of seeing a piano, trees and furniture going past the upstairs window, gushing down towards the riverhead; this was latish afternoon. I believe at 19.00, the water began receding and they were able to come downstairs and Aunt Betsy could return home. The table had risen with the floodwaters and settled as they receded – still set with the food. It is not recorded if they ate a normal meal. The mud and filth left were indescribable. Down at Alvingham, the flood water came down the Lud and canal valley at about 18.00. Grandad Hand drove his pig to North Cockerington to escape the flood while Granny Hand sat on the house roof tiles with a hen and her chicks in a coop. The water rose to a height of being up to the second shelf of the oven in the kitchen range, along with the accompanying mud!

My grandparents must have made quite a sacrifice of their meagre income to have paid for all 4 of their children to learn to play the harmonium – I don't think they possessed a piano, but I presume they could also play it; certainly, mother and Dorothy could. My mother played the organ in the Church of England churches of St Mary's and St Adelwold's in her late teens and she would be paid for doing so. Her parents were staunch Primitive Methodists and worshipped at the small chapel in Church Lane. This closed in 1924 due to diminishing numbers attending.

The vicar and church leaders were the leaders of the school and they appointed a teacher for the infant department after the 1914-18 War. My mother was selected; even though she was uncertificated she obtained the post, possibly because of her musical ability. I presume to extend her knowledge, she bought Arthur Mees' Book of Knowledge (Encyclopaedias), extending to 8 volumes in which she entered her name and date in her neat handwriting. These were excellent volumes of general knowledge, history, geography and all subjects

necessary for a well-rounded education. Later, I read them avidly and I believe they gave me an excellent foundation to my education.

Mother taught at the school until she married in 1924. I think she must have been quite popular with her pupils as some of them still referred to her as teacher when they were grown up. It must have been quite an experience for her to begin her married life at High Street House after the restricted room at Washdyke Cottage; the large rooms and draughty doors were not unknown to brides in those days and for quite a time afterwards! Auntie Dolly, 6 years younger than my mother, was some help, particularly so after I was born in 1927 and Basil in 1928. Mother maintained a close relationship with her parents but in 1932, her mother died aged 69. Dolly married Maurice Clifford Laughton in 1933 and they began farming at Marsh Lane Farm in South Cockerington, her father Peter going with them. If ever a couple were bedevilled with bad luck, it was Uncle Cliff and Auntie Dolly. They lost 5 horses in 2 years. Grandad Hand died in 1935, their son Bryan was born soon after, unfortunately with hearing impairment and in 1938, a daughter Joyce was born who was mentally disabled and died in 1953. Uncle Cliff was an acute businessman who overcame all these disappointments; he established himself in the farm and expanded as the opportunities came along. He was very successful in cattle-dealing. Bryan was a worthy successor who sensibly retired when he was 60 to pursue his gardening and environmental interests. Mother visited Aunty Dolly weekly – now able to drive the car. I often cycled down to visit them.

Life at High Street House followed a tedious weekly timetable. Sunday: attendance at chapel was regular, father, Basil and I going in the morning, Sunday School for us in the afternoon and mother at night. Monday was washday for clothes; Tuesday, churning the cream to make butter; Wednesday, to Louth to sell the eggs and butter; Friday, livestock market day which in the early 1930s meant an early start to drive the cattle and sheep to be sold. I can just remember doing that task when I was on holiday from school. The 'perk' was having your dinner at 'The Welcome' – a restaurant at the market. Mother usually had some domestic help on washday and no doubt at autumn and spring-cleaning times. However, life must have been – and was – a rather monotonous routine, feeding the family, feeding the poultry, quite a busy household with regular milk customers morning and after, library night on Tuesdays and all the odd jobs associated with running a farm. One of the most galling customs was providing meals for the 2 men who came with the threshing machine; this meant providing breakfast, mid-morning lunch, dinner and tea. This was in the days of the traction steam engine and the custom gradually died out as the pneumatic-wheeled tractor removed the necessity of steam. This happened after the 1939-45 War and practically disappeared with the introduction of the combine harvester in 1950. A coal fire was maintained in the kitchen at all times for cooking and hot water; the coal was brought by the railway-truck load and had to be loaded into wagons or carts to fill the stores at the houses. At High Street House, the store was adjacent to the house but originally was open-topped so when it snowed, it was not a pleasant task getting fuel for the fire. It was a great improvement to get a roof put on the coalhouse!

Mother's routine sounds like a rather miserable existence but I do believe she had so many interests in the village as well as her tasks in the house and farm and, being comparatively young, she did not resent her busy life, made more so by the arrival of Elizabeth in 1938.

The War, beginning in September 1939, added to her concerns for our safety and preserving her family. The air activity was a constant worry. She was always first to be aware of it and get us to where she thought it was safest; that was in the kitchen near the ovens and the substantial outer wall. Her life became slightly less regimented after the War.

A feature of family life before the War was the fact that younger members of the families helped to give a home to older relatives who had become widowed or had been left on their own for whatever reason. Several had periods of staying with us as our house could not be termed as crowded. Father's Aunt Betsy Ann was a spinster who had lived with her father until he died in 1904. She then went to live with her widowed elder brother, Henry, in Church Land until he died in 1929. She then spent the rest of her life living with her nephews, Tom, George and John, mainly at our house. A diminutive lady in build, she had been described as a stocking knitter in the 1891 census – she passed her time literally doing that and visiting friends and relatives in the village, wearing galoshes when it was wet. She visited her nephews, George and John Atkinson, in Holderness at various times, having an annual schedule to her life; I don't think she contributed much to the running of the house, she was rarely ill and 'mixed in' with the daily routine. Another aunt, Susan Wilkinson, from my grandmother's family was a favourite; a grand lady who had suffered tragedy practically all her life. She married a Grimsby man and had 2 daughters and a son. Her son was killed in France in the 1914-18 War, one of her daughters committed suicide and her husband was killed by a runaway horse. She scraped a living delivering milk, bringing up her remaining daughter, Daisy. She was a lively person who married well and brought up her only son. He served in the RAF and trained as aircrew. He was shot down and killed over Germany. I think Daisy was my father's favourite cousin. She and her husband, Rag Lee, were regular visitors during the War and afterwards. Aunt Susie visited us occasionally, accompanied by Mrs Hockney, another widow. They seemed to 'mix in' with little interference to mother's routine, other than providing some extra food. Another occasional visitor was father's cousin Cissy. She married a soldier in the 1914-18 War; it turned out unsuccessful and she suffered intermittent nervous problems afterwards. A lady who had connections with my mother's family was an occasional visitor – she was obviously well-educated and well above normal intellect. She kept contact until the 1950s; she was called Fanny Brumby. Once a year, mother entertained an elderly relative of her charlady to tea. She caused Basil and I some amusement – she was extremely portly and when she got going in conversation, she got quite excited, working up a frenzy until she almost exploded, gasping for breath.

Father's cousin, Lizzie, who lived in Louth, regularly visited every week. Her husband was a salesman for the jam and sweet manufacturer in Louth.

Mother's Aunt Betsy Appleyard was widowed quite early in life and after giving up her home after her adopted daughter got married, passed her time living with some of her many nephews and nieces. She was quite helpful – in fact, she was the attendant at Elizabeth's birth and she helped mother at various times until the late 1940s. I think that gives an idea of how the older generation lived out their later years in some families.

In 1955, mother and father moved to 'Southlands' – a new house on Louth Road – a considerable improvement on High Street House where Basil stayed on his marriage to Jean Bett – the miller's daughter. Mother revelled in her new surroundings. Central heating, a

modern layout and quite a good position, I think she was happy to have leisurely retirement, although she was always actively doing something, both for herself and getting involved in village affairs. I will list a few of these: the Village Hall founded in 1950, the Women's Institute founded in 1952, the Queen's Coronation in 1953, whist drives in the winter months, Chapel and Sunday School functions, daily visits to relatives and friends in the village. You could describe her as a busybody! Elizabeth was growing up and I don't think mother could quite keep up with her daughter's ideas of a modern girl; young people had moved on since the War and Elizabeth was acutely aware that she had an 'old' mother when she was at school. Until Elizabeth's birth, mother was a slim lady but put considerable weight on during the pregnancy which she never was able to lose – a disappointment to her I am sure. Her garden at 'Southlands' occupied her endeavours in that direction and a glass lean-to conservatory kept her busy even when it was raining! Mother had the pleasure of representing the W.I. at a Buckingham Palace garden party, also attending the AGM at the Albert Hall and attending the Lincolnshire Agricultural Show held in June where the W.I. had a large marquee exhibiting their various crafts; flower-arranging, cakes and preserves, etc; this visit was a 'must' in her calendar. She was a good visitor and liked being visited by friends and relatives. Of course, the years began to slow her down but she was very reluctant to do so.

Elizabeth extended mother's 'family' life after they moved. I don't think Elizabeth kept her mother young as some daughters did – some young mothers do have a yearning to dress and keep active like their offspring! She was a while settling down after leaving school, finally coming home to a job in local government. She was active in the local Young Farmers Club where she met an auctioneer, a Geordie called George McGregor Gagie (Greg) who was a pupil with one of the Estates Agents in Louth. They married in May 1965, making their home at Uttoxeter in Staffordshire. Two sons, William and Andrew, completed their family.

Father took a more relaxed interest in the farm and with mother visited John Atkinson at Bridlington regularly for short stays which were reciprocated by John visiting Alvingham occasionally. The trio enjoyed longer holidays annually to various parts of the British Isles including father's various haunts of the First World War.

Mother and father 'religiously' attended Louth on a Wednesday, she had a 'hairdo' and afternoon tea at Hanson's – the place to be 'seen'. She was not very nimble and she fell on the stairs of the aforementioned restaurant, her head made a hole in the boarding at the side but she was assisted to regain her composure. She soon recovered, leaving the shop, much to the relief of the proprietor – so much for the quality of construction in the café. She was quite desperate to 'keep going' and pushed father to keep up which must have been quite 'trying' for him with arthritis restricting his mobility. Their usual routine was to visit High Street House, then call at Trafford's shop and return home. One morning, in the late 1970s, mother did her usual routine but strangely never spoke a word to anyone and continued throughout the day in similar vein. It was apparent she had had a slight stroke. Grace Bett, a qualified nurse, attended and mother responded, gradually regaining her speech and control of her functions but was never the same as prior to this episode. She was keen to continue as she had done previously but age did not improve her mobility and she had to rely more and more on assistance from her relatives. Moreover, father deteriorated with increasing prostate problems until 1983 when he went into hospital and



died in December. One of their last family events was to attend the wedding of their grandson, David, to Patricia Curtis in 1980 at Riseholme near Lincoln.

Now mother was able to – with help – manage by day but we felt it necessary to have a night nurse to keep her comfortable. She accepted this and the arrangement worked well. Chapel on Sunday morning was still a 'must'. She attended the wedding of her youngest granddaughter, Kathryn, to Gary Appleton at Louth Methodist Chapel in 1988. A mobile ladies' hairdresser called on her weekly and in late November 1989, mother fell as she moved in the process and caused a fracture of the hip. She was operated on; the surgeon said the procedure had been successful but she had no 'fight' left in her and the prospect of a nursing home horrified her. She died within a week on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1989. A life well meant – she would have been more or less satisfied with the result.