

Brattleby Tales

My story begins on July 8th 1933 when I was born on a Saturday morning early and as the old saying goes, "Saturdays child works hard for a living". They got that right anyway.

This event took place in a cottage next door to Mr J Emersons house on the North side of the village and was a tied cottage, which means that if the occupant leaves the farmers employ he had to leave the property and go somewhere else. This was usually on "Lady Day", April 6th when wagon loads of furniture and belongings could be seen traveling down the road to the next employers tied cottage.

My birth was attended for delivery by the local midwife and as there had been no problems during my Mothers pregnancy the Doctor didn't attend until afterwards. It was the custom then that if the Midwife was busy elsewhere a local village midwife was called in to help. As we didn't have a telephone, you either used the local call box, got a friend to make the call for you or cycled to Ingham to alert the midwife.

When I was about two weeks old and it was felt that my Mother was strong enough to leave the confinement bed I was Christened in the local Church of England of Saint Cuthbert dressed in a white shawl, Holy water put on my forehead and named Arthur William Melton, with the Vicar, my Parents, and Godparents in attendance.

When I was about three years old I can remember the Brattleby Football Club players using our scullery as a changing room while my Mother would wash, dry, and press the players strip ready for the next match for which she received a small payment. Water for washing these garments was either used from rainwater butts or was carried from the street pump about 100 yards further up the road. The Football pitch was in the field called "Redmills" which was on the left side of the road between Brattleby and Cammeringham just before the double bends.

Brattleby was in the valley below the cliff so in harvest time sheaves of Wheat, Barley, etc was loaded onto wagons to be stacked in the farmyard in the village. These loads therefore had to be taken down Brattleby Hill and to ensure the wagons didn't over run the horses, blacksmith made, wrought iron shoes were made and fitted under the rear wheels of the wagons and secured to the wagon framework with strong chains. This provided the braking for going down the hill as the shoes prevented the wheels from turning and slid along the road surface. Once they were on the level road the shoes were taken off until next time.

About 1936 my Father left the employ of Mr J Emerson and went to work for Mr R Fieldsend of Aisthorpe who had a farm at Ingham cliff where we lived until 1939 when it was decided to build an airfield subsequently, called RAF Cammeringham and later changed to RAF Ingham. We then moved to Glebe Farm, Brattleby and was still employed by Mr Fieldsend. This was a busy farmyard with horses to be feed, cows and calves to be looked after, cow to be milked for the household supply, non pasteurized, and the pig to be fed. Also, in winter bedding to be carried in for the animals. This bedding was, in the Springtime, cleaned out of the yards for use as manure and spread on the fields. Another winter job was the thrashing of the Wheat and Barley which had been put into stacks during the Autumn. It also fell upon my Father to light the fire under the steam engine boiler and have steam up for when the workers came to thrash the sheaves.

In the winter of 1947 we were snowed in for six weeks with snowdrifts level with the hedgetops and as the thaw set in the thrashing machine owner decided to take a chance and go down Brattleby Hill with the Engine, Drum, and Elevator, The elevator was sometimes referred to as a "Straw Jack". Due to the slippery conditions this rig

ran away with him and finished up in the ditch. The front wheel bogie was sheared off the engine and the front of the Drum was stoved in.

A pastime we had, as youths, in the wintertime was sledging down Brattleby Hill. We used to make a track of packed down snow and see who could travel the furthest before coming to a stop. This practice upset the council roading authorities who would come and spread grit all over the road surface so when they had finished we would go get brushes and brooms and sweep our track clean again. Soon after the roading Foreman would drive around in his car and find that half the road had no grit on it, so he would threaten us with all sorts of dire consequences if we continued, sometimes we did and sometimes we made a track in adjoining fields.

My sledge came in useful in 1947 when we were snowed in for six weeks and I would collect our groceries which had been left at the village shop by our Grocer Mr Lucas of Sturton by Stow load up the sledge and drag it up the Hill to Glebe Farm.

These were some of the experiences we had working and living on the farm and at Brattleby, they were busy but happy days.

The Brattleby Inhabitants I remember

Mrs Squire Wright, was an old lady who lived in Brattleby Hall. Sometimes she would bring homemade soup to the people she considered were in need. Every year the youngsters in the village were invited to a party where we got jelly and cream, sandwiches etc, and afterwards played hide and seek, and musical chairs. Also there was a large rocking horse which we all loved to ride on.

Her son ***Denzil*** lived away somewhere. To my displeasure I only met him once when I was climbing a tree in back lane and this stranger told me to get down. I asked him "who he was?" and he replied he was "Squire Wright and if I didn't come down he would get my Father the sack".

His son Jonathan came to our school at Scampton for a short while.

Alec Clarke. Alec, who I met a time or two and visited his workshop down the lane opposite the church gates and memorial and who appeared to be only in the workshop some of the time. A little yarn about him was about the time a steeplejack was employed to repair the Aisthorpe church weather vane and as he was climbing his ladder up the steeple he became aware there was someone close behind him, it was Alec.

Sid Rowett. Sid for most of his working life worked in the quarry near the Cammeringham "Cow Hill" crossroads. Many, many lorry loads of limestones were carted to Scampton airfield during extensions there during WW2. I visited him once while he was working in the quarry and watched him breaking out slabs of stone with a large sledge-hammer and chisels.

I first came to know Sid when I played cricket for Aisthorpe CC. Sid was on the club committee and in one match I was last man in and needed one run to make a draw, the bowler came running in bowled the ball and got me out. Sid never forgave me for that.

I discovered later he was a special constable.

Stan Rollett. Stan also played cricket for Aisthorpe where he was the star bowler usually bowling inswingers his only problem was completing his milk delivery round so that he could be ready for a 3pm start.

He lived in the village near to Alec Clarke's workshop and for his milk round had an old Vauxhall car pulling a trailer. He collected milk churns from Mr Fox's farm dairy and took it to the Lincoln & Carlton dairy where the churns were off loaded and re-loaded up with crates of bottled milk which was then delivered to the housing estates in Lincoln.

I went with him a few times, unpaid labour, but he would buy me an icecream at lunchtime, bless him.

In his car garage he had two spare Vauxhall engines for his car with which he would replace the one already in there, this happened about every month and I helped him do this. I don't know if he had had them repaired in the meantime but they always looked the same as when they were removed, maybe I was wrong!!.

George Brader. George lived in the backlane at Brattleby with his wife and daughter Margaret. He worked as a gardener /handyman for Brigadier Westropp who lived in the Old Rectory opposite the church in Thorpe lane. One of his duties was to come around the village on his old bike with 28 inch wheels, to get us to go as "Bushbeaters" for the organized shoots which Mr Westropp organised for the local gentry and invited guests.

The bushbeaters job was to plod across field, through woods, across ditches and dykes, scaring game in front of us to where the shooters were hidden and awaiting any game that came their way so they could shoot it. For this we were paid eight shillings for a full Saturday until one day we decided we wanted ten shillings and when George came looking for us we told him we wouldn't do it for less. Mr Westropp sent for us so along we went and he was a bit savage but we stuck out for our ten shillings which we got. His parting words were that, "If they shot a rabbit we wouldn't get one".

The Keys. Old man Key had a blacksmiths shop in back lane. I can't ever remember him working in it. They had a daughter named Olive who married and moved away, and two son's. Joe who was a Engineer /Draftsman and worked in one of the factories in Lincoln. He was also Aisthorpe C.C.'s opening bat until he married and moved to South Carlton. He used to ride a beautifully maintained Velocette motorcycle.

Eric the second son used to keep about 100 hives of bee's in their orchard and when he was extracting honey it wasn't safe to go around there. Eric was also a pretty good batsman for Aisthorpe C.C. his speciality was the French Cut which caught many a fielder napping.

"Shep" Holden was Mr Fieldsends farm shepherd lived at Shepherds farm in Brattleby's back lane and acted as the sheep's midwife, attending to them when lambing usually when it was snowing heavily, hence the name "Lambing storms". After he retired and moved on my Father moved from Glebe farm down to Shepherds Farm and lived there until he died in 1985.

Miss Woodforth, Lived next to the Key's property in back lane and had another lady as a companion. Miss Woodforth used to be my barber until I was about 15 years old when she told me she couldn't cut it anymore as "people may talk," after my visits.

The Sutton's. Lived on a farm in Brattleby and "Jim" Sutton was Mr Fieldsend's farm foreman until he retired and built a house near Thorpe Lane end. The children were Desmond, Sheila, and Terry. Des and Terry both went to University while

Sheila married an RAF Navigator who, strangely, was posted to the squadron in Nicosia which I had just left so I never met him. This was in 1956.

The Heath's, Lived near to the village phone box, I suppose it's still there. A room was used as the Post Office and as a collection point for Mr Lucas the Sturton by Stow grocer

Mr Heath spent most of his time maintaining St Cuthbert's churchyard and his garden near to the church gates and memorial. There were two daughters Janet and Rita. There was also another female who lived with them called Betty Brewitt, she was the church organist and I would get invited to blow up the bellows for the organ when these were manually operated.

Mr Les Fox. He farmed and had the farm on school lane after Mr Emerson moved on. He used to keep Guinea Fowls which roosted in the tree branches over the road. These would kick up a terrible racket if anyone walked past there at night with calls of "Come back, Come back" we used to name them Les Fox's watchdogs. Stan Rollett collected milk churns from the farm milk shed. Les Fox later retired and built a house adjacent to the post office.

Mrs Waller or Starr. Lived one house down from the school house. She was the village midwife stand-in if the normal midwife was busy and anyone local needed help. She also prepared deceased people for burial.

Her son Bob played cricket for Aisthorpe C.C. until a ball knocked his front teeth out. He never played again.

Mr George Scott lived in the school house. The school was never used in my memory so I had to go to Scampton in 1939. Mr Scott moved on and was followed by a Fred Ford Poor Fred was an army reservist and was called up to go fight in Korea, where he was killed.

Mr Drayton lived two doors down from the school house, near to the village pump. He worked on the farm for Mr Fieldsend. His son George worked in Lincoln at the then Ruston Bucyrus works who made Excavators

The Burr's lived in the house three doors down from the school house. I can't remember what "Jack" was employed as but Mrs Burr kept a small shop selling chips, and sweets and such like. When they moved on The Marshals moved in. "Bob" Marshall worked for Mr Fieldsend and had three children. Alice, John, and Brian. I think Brian now lives in a house which a "Bill" Reeves used to live in.

"Bill" Reeves was the gardener /handyman for the Brattleby Hall. He also thought, true or not, that it was his responsibility to be gamekeeper for the Brattleby Estate. He was also an excellent shot with a .22 rifle having been in Burma in WW2. So one day in fields below Brattleby he saw a stray dog some distance away so he took a pot shot at it and hit so that it had to be destroyed. He might have got away with it except for the fact the dog belonged to Les Fox and was his prize Border Collie. This episode cost "Bill" quiet an amount in fines.

Like I said he was a good shot and one day he decided that Brattleby church's Cockerill on the weathervane needed an eye, and it's had one ever since.

When I discovered that Brattleby had a website I thought that a few words from a villagers point of view would be interesting for those who can remember some of the old days and to maybe jog some memories and maybe prompt a few answers through the news letter columns. As I now live in Australia and getting more grey hairs every day it's very unlikely that I shall return to Brattleby again and I like to keep in touch with what's happening around the place. It is still "Home".

If anyone should feel so inclined, young or old, I can be found at artesian44@hotmail.com