

Mr J. Scott,  
"Sunnyside"  
BRATTLEBY,  
Lincs  
LN1

12<sup>th</sup> October 2007

Dear Jerry,

I am just back from visiting my mother of 94, who racked her brains for memories of Brattleby in the years she knew it . . . basically the decade from the late 1920s, when as a teenager she visited her grandparents and Uncle who lived there in houses close by you known as 'The Firs' and 'The Poplars'. Her Uncle, Edward Rollett, lived in 'The Firs' with his wife Edith; and his father Arthur Rollett retired



to live in the neighbouring cottage, 'The Poplars', with his wife Ruth. They had five children. The photograph is of Ruth Rollett outside 'The Poplars' circa 1930. Edward farmed land rented from the Squire. He died in 1937, just two years after his father Arthur, so that is where my mother's recollections largely end.

'Sunnyside' at that time was occupied by Charles Carver Clarke and his wife Violet. Charles was a carpenter and builder, as well as an amateur water-colour artist. They too had five children brought up in that house. The Rolletts and the Clarkes were naturally close living as they did in a village of less than 200 people and being neighbours. Edward's eldest son Stanley married Charles's second daughter Gladys, and the two took over the tenancy of 'Sunnyside' upon Charles's death in 1940. Violet died in 1944. My mother first met her husband,

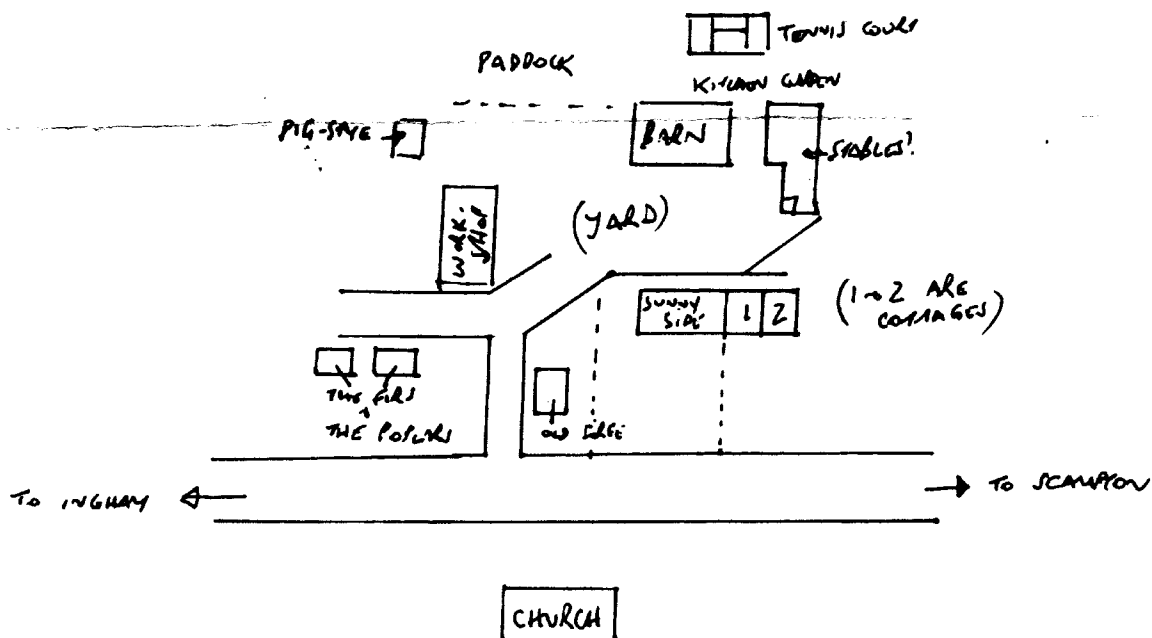
Noel, the youngest son of Charles, when visiting her family as the children of the Rolletts and the Clarkes played together. They eventually married in 1936.

Stanley and Gladys lived at 'Sunnyside' until Gladys died in 1962. Stanley remarried then, to Grace, but moved away when he retired. He worked as a

milkman for Carlton Dairies in Lincoln post-war. His day began by touring local farms in a battered old Vauxhall and trailer collecting churns of milk then delivering them to the dairy in Lincoln. A milk round in Lincoln followed. He played cricket, I think for Scampton, in the early days I knew him (late 1940s).

Brattleby then, as common to many such villages, was owned largely by the Squire. The Brattleby website shows Philip Chetwood Wright as 'the Squire' and living at Brattleby Hall in 1900. He, or his successor, was still there in the late 1920s. 'Sunnyside' was rented from the Squire. My mother recalls little of the Wright family at that time except that the youngest son was Rector of the Parish Church and that they family held an annual garden party for their tenants. The village was isolated, with no bus service, and largely self-contained. Transport was still largely horse-drawn, and the village blacksmith had his forge adjacent to 'Sunnyside'. I would guess that if his cottage is still standing it is known as "The Forge"? There was but one village shop-cum-Post Office, run then by a Mrs Minns.

I am no draughtsman nor artist (that gene did not get passed down to me from my grandfather Charles Clarke), so forgive the technical incompetence of the sketch below showing 'Sunnyside' as I remember it from visits to my Uncle and Aunt, Stanley and Gladys, in the late 1940s/early 1950s. It is badly out-of-scale too, but I hope helpful in putting a context to the description which follows. 'The Firs' and 'The Poplars' are inserted where my mother tells me they were. I never ventured down that turning. Neither did I ever see the two cottages adjoined to 'Sunnyside', as they were not visible (from my small height then) from either the yard behind nor the front garden. The cottages were, I know, further to the right than shown on my sketch; and, I am told, demolished sometime to make way for a new bungalow?



Before moving on to the house as it was then, I will try to describe the yard and outbuildings as I recall them well over 50 years later. There were three main buildings. Immediately behind the house, across the yard, was a large black wooden barn. I don't recall ever going in there, nor indeed the other outbuildings much either. I guess they were considered a danger to two small boys as my brother and I were then? The huge workshop I did enter, perhaps guiltily, for it was a treasure-trove of old woodworking and cabinet-making machinery including a massive band-saw. It had not been used since the death of Charles, my grandfather, and is doubtless now gone. Beyond the workshop, half-hidden beneath a massive weeping willow tree were the pig-stys . . . then still in use. A pig used to be slaughtered each Christmas, and home made pork pies, etc. produced by my Aunt to feed the visiting family.



The only painting I can find of "Sunnyside" well pre-war is that reproduced here. The watercolour itself is in pastel shades so the contrast has had to be increased. This, I think, is the stables which you have now converted into your holiday cottage? My recollection of it has only two strands . . . one, the ladder which led to a hay-loft; and two, the nearer door housed the outside lavatory . . . basically a bucket with a wooden seat over.

A path between the barn and the stables led to a big kitchen garden, and beyond that was a grass tennis court . . . much used my mother tells me back in the early 1930s but by my time no longer so.

Immediately to the rear of the house was an flag-stoned area enclosed by a low stone wall. Beneath that flagged area was the well. To the left of the house as you faced it from the yard was a store-room, which was once known as "The Shop" . . . being, I believe, the earliest workshop my grandfather had. To the right was a 'garage' used as a general store for Stanley's milk-round bits and pieces.



This photograph of "Serryside" was taken much later, in the 1980s, when passing through Brantley. My family no longer lived here then. In describing the house as it was late 1940s I will start at the back door . . . for I rarely used the front one!

Immediately to the right from the back door was the kitchen. This was exactly the living room to all intents and purposes. Dominating it and against the back wall was a huge black kitchen range, wood-fired, and used for hot water and cooking. To the right facing the range was the sink and the brown-painted pump for drawing water from the well. A large table in the middle, cupboards, and a cheese-tongue with a green cover completed this living area . . . oh, and always shiny fly-paper hanging from the ceiling!

Opposite the kitchen was the "pantry". This was the cold-store. Its floor was below ground level, with only a small window, to keep it cool! Later, after my years of visiting, it was converted into a bathroom.

The passage from the back door opened out into the front hall. Before that, on the left, was a huge dining room. I never ate there, but my mother recalls big family gatherings at Christmas. The dining room had an impressive fireplace and, more exciting to me, a "hidden" staircase in one back corner which led up to a small bedroom but requiring the lifting of a trap-door at the top to gain entry!

To the right of the hall at the front was the lounge . . . the `best` room and rarely used, and certainly out of bounds to small boys unless accompanied.

Upstairs I don't recall much. I slept in either the bigger or the smaller of the two front bedrooms . . . remembered mainly for the sound of Lancaster bombers from the nearby Scampton airfield (home of the 617 `Dambusters` Squadron) taking off over the house for night flights. There was more upstairs, but nothing I visited.

The house then was perhaps typical of the time. The kitchen was the focus, where one ate, sat, played, and had ones bath in front of the range. With no bathroom, it was a trek across the yard to the outside lavatory. Washing was done in bowls on the bedside dressers . . . matching in design the chamber-pots under the beds for night-time emergencies. The best part of the house was kept that way . . . polished brass doorknobs, carpets, and soft chintz-covered settees. Likewise the front garden was for sitting-in and walking round, not for playing-in. The play-area was the yard out back.

I doubt that the actual layout of `Sunnyside` has changed much over the past 50+ years, though undoubtedly creature comforts will have arrived. I guess, too, that as a house it is not as big as I imagine it still? I was then aged from about 4-9 years on my occasional visits and stays. The house still brings back happy memories for me though. My family on both sides came from farming stock, but visiting Brattleby is as near the country as I have come . . . then or since!

I hope that amongst the family history there is also enough to satisfy your curiosity about the house itself as it was when I knew it. Sadly memories fade and recollections become increasingly unreliable. If these few pages add a little to the Brattleby history as well it has been worth the effort. The Wright family dominated the village back then in the 1920s, but the likes of the Rolletts and the Clarkes living there then are equally part of the village history.

I will keep a copy of this letter for my children too to read should they ever become curious about past generations. Talking to my mother proved interesting and worthwhile for me too. There was more about family-history unconnected with Brattleby I learned once I got her talking. One tends not to ask without a reason, and you provided that reason for me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Clarke', written in a cursive style.

(Roger Clarke)

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