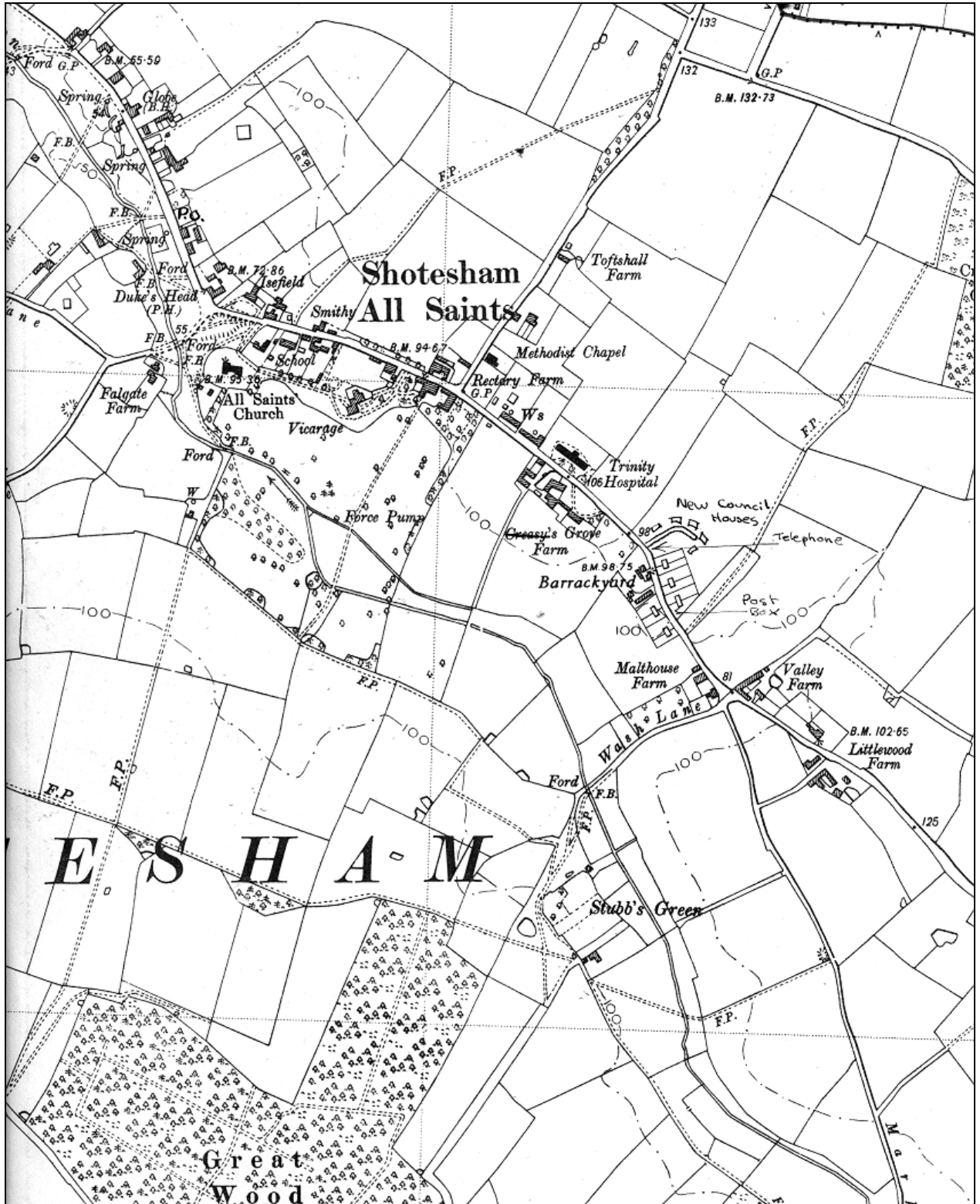


SOME PERSONAL MEMORIES OF SHOTESHAM ALL SAINTS

Malcolm Anderson



My Grandfather GEORGE TYRRELL was born on 13th December 1874 at Saxlingham Nethergate, Norfolk, son of ALFRED TYRRELL (born 1832), a farm labourer, and MARY ANN (née POTTER). His birth was registered at Henstead on 22nd January 1875. As a young man my grandfather also worked on the land before becoming a regular soldier in the Norfolk Regiment and served for a long period in India. He met Alice Gaul in the British Legion Club in Princes Street, Norwich when he was a Private in the Norfolk Regiment based at Britannia Barracks. They were married when he was 39, and she was 31, on 4th August 1914. At the time she was living at 59 Barn Road, Norwich. She was born ALICE ALDRIDGE on 10th October 1882 at Burrell's Yard, Middle Street, St Augustine's, Norwich, daughter of ABRAHAM ALDRIDGE who worked as a riveter in the shoe trade. Her mother's name was Martha (née Smith) and they lived at St. George's. Martha was apparently illiterate because she signed her daughter's birth certificate application with a cross. On 25th November 1905, when she was 23, she married Walter Gaul, aged 21, son of George Gaul of New Catton, both of whom worked in the shoe trade. They produced a son, my uncle Walter, who features later in this story. Walter senior died in his twenties leaving Alice a widow. She and her son Walter junior went to live with her mother and sisters in Muspole Street, Norwich.



C" Coy, 1st Norfolk Regiment, Winners Inter-Coy. Hockey Shield 1909
 The earliest photograph I have of my grandfather George Tyrrell,
 seated in the middle row, second from the left



Grandmother Alice Gaul in 1913



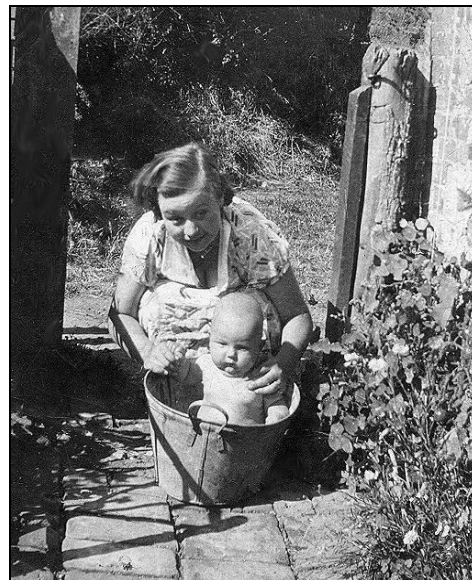
Grandparents' wedding in 1914

Grandfather retired from the Army as 4239 Corporal George Tyrrell and became a porter at the Royal Hotel in Norwich. They settled in Railway Street and produced five more children, Donald, George, my mother ALICE MAY, who was born on 13th April 1916, Ivy and Phyllis.

When my grandfather left the Royal Hotel and finally retired, shortly before I was born, he, my grandmother Alice and Phyllis left Norwich and went to live in a 400 years-old flint and thatch cottage on land rented from the Lovewells, a farming family, at Stubbs Green, Shotesham. Phyllis used to attend the village school and later cycled into Norwich each day to work. They raised 2s 6d a week by sub-letting a field and so were able to pay the rent on the cottage. Later they moved to a larger, brick built house not far away and the old thatched cottage was demolished some time in the 1960s.



My grandparents' first cottage



With my parents and grandparents at Stubbs Green in 1935

From time to time we would take the No.18 bus from Surrey Street, Norwich just five or six miles to Shotesham, to visit my grandparents at the ancient little cottage. Grandfather did casual work for the Lovewell farming family and was always self sufficient in many respects. He kept chickens, grew a huge variety of vegetables, had access to orchards, and was an accomplished woodsman and poacher. Their cottage was located in

a remote spot, accessible only along a muddy farm track and across a meadow, and had no running water, gas or electricity. It was lit by paraffin oil lamps, and cooking was done on a wood burning stove and open fire. Water was drawn from a well with a bucket and a roller turned by a large cast iron hand-wheel and from a large hand-pump with a long, shiny steel handle. The only neighbours were a family called the Blacks who lived in an adjacent red brick house. To me as a child Stubb's Green seemed a very long way from the centre of Shotesham village with its shop run by Mrs Lawes, its post office located in a front room of a thatched house overlooking the common, Seppings' butchery and The Globe public house. We had no means of transport so we always walked from the bus stop to the cottage, a distance of about a mile, quite a long way on short legs!

At the end of the front garden was a wooden gate which led on to a narrow plank bridge across a deep ditch which was usually totally overgrown with stinging nettles. It is a fact that throughout his life my brother Colin has always been a little accident-prone and it was at this spot that I remember him, as a very young toddler, having one of his first incidents, falling off the bridge and rolling, very painfully, into the bed of nettles. My grandmother's solution was to smother his skin in a bright blue substance, probably Reckitt's Blue from the dolly bag, which did nothing to placate the poor little chap.

My uncle Walter was the most prosperous member of the family, had no children of his own, and was the only one of my relations at the time to be able to afford a motor car. He owned a Morris 8 saloon in which we very seldom rode but which he used to collect his supplies for his Whitlingham shop from the wholesaler. Periodically he would deliver a supply of groceries to people at Shotesham and I remember on one such occasion when I was allowed the great treat of travelling with him in the front seat of the car all the way from Norwich. Loaded on the seats of the car at the same time were his supplies from the wholesaler, boxes of food and chocolates, and many great jars of sweets. I made the entire journey equally fascinated by the motion and the driving of the car and these jars of goodies, but my uncle Walter, true to form, did not offer me so much as a single aniseed ball!

Near the beginning of the war my grandparents moved from the tiny cottage to a larger brick and tile built house, equally remote from the village, and just across the meadow but also on Stubb's Green. It too had no access road and could only be reached across green meadows and lanes or along a rough, flooded, overgrown and sunken track called Wash Lane, or along a footpath which followed the lane from close to Malthouse Farm, over a stile, across a water meadow and a narrow footbridge.



My 1952 sketch of the house on Stubb's Green



The house, which still stands today, as it was in 1979

With the war declared and my father called up to join the Army, my mother found the prospect of living in our fairly remote bungalow at Thorpe St. Andrew, far removed from the rest of the family, far too daunting, and we went to live for a while with my grandparents at Shotesham. This was a disruptive and traumatic time for my parents but it is of this period of my young life that I have my happiest and most vivid memories and I suppose it is understandable that I became very closely attached to my grandparents, especially my grandfather, who was my daily guardian, companion, mentor and hero. Later, when we moved back to Norwich, we still had prolonged and frequent visits to Shotesham and I acquired over a period of some years a deep and abiding love for the Norfolk countryside and the idyllic life which, at the time, I imagined my grandparents lived. The innocence and preoccupations of childhood clearly hid a great deal of unsavoury life and privation from my eyes



Grandfather George with his dog Jack, as many villagers would have seen him

My principal memories of life at the house at Shotesham are centred around the main living room which was the kitchen and dining room rolled into one. It had a large open fireplace and a big black leaded stove on which stood saucepans and a large, fire blackened kettle, seemingly forever on the boil. In the corner of the room was a brick oven set in the wall, with a black door with brass handles, and from which the smells of newly baked bread and cakes emanated, merging with the smells of woodsmoke, oil lamps and grandfather's pipe. Next to the kitchen was a cool, clean, walk-in pantry with a floor of bare red bricks and stone. At the front of the house was the 'best' room, the parlour, which was used mostly on special occasions and when visitors came, and contained the best furniture and smelt of polish and Brasso. The front door opened from this room on to a tiny porch and a small patch of front garden straight on to a meadow on which cattle grazed. Access to the first floor was through a small washroom off the parlour. Upstairs there were three, perhaps four bedrooms. As with the previous house my grandparents occupied it had no running water, gas or electricity. Wood was burned in the kitchen for hot water and cooking, but the firegrate in the parlour was seldom used. The house had no bathroom and the toilet was a brick built privy with a draughty wooden door, known as 'The Petty' halfway down the path into the large back garden. Grandfather would empty the toilet bucket into the trenches in his rich vegetable garden and, not surprisingly, his produce was always of prize-winning quality! There were two sources of water supply. A rainwater butt collected soft water from the roof for washing and bathing, and next to the house was a natural clearwater spring which produced a year-round supply of pure, cold water. Let into the source in the ground was a large bottomless wooden barrel, which was covered by a wooden lid to keep out leaves and debris from the overhanging trees, but it was not unknown for frogs to be found swimming there. A special white enamel pail was dipped into the springwater and was kept in the pantry cool and ready for cooking and drinking.

Having lived for much of his life in the country and in the Army my grandfather was a tough, outdoor character and to me always seemed to be impervious to bad weather and the cold. At the side of the house was an open ditch which often contained a trickle of running water. He would sit astride this ditch on a wooden plank and have his daily wash and shave at most times of the year.

While he was around the house, the garden and the nearby meadows and woods I was his constant companion and he would involve me with everything he did. Because of our dependence on wood he would spend a lot of time bringing in trees and branches from the nearby woods and hedgerows, sawing and chopping. I would 'help' him by holding one end of his huge cross-cut saw, but my main job was to carry and stack the wood once it was cut. Together with his faithful black and white dog Jack he would take me up into the Great Wood at the top of the meadow behind the house, show me the snares he had set for wild rabbits and pheasants, point out the wildlife, the owls, the squirrels, and in the right season we would gather wild strawberries, blackberries and wild flowers. We would be out in the fields early to gather huge wild mushrooms which would be taken home and cooked for breakfast, adding another delicious smell to the warmth of the kitchen. By the wood was a large, deep pond, partly surrounded by hawthorn thickets, reeds and marsh grass and alive with noisy frogs and huge dragonflies. Moorhens lived on the pond and in the nesting season he would take a very long thin pole, perhaps nearly 20 feet long, and lash a tablespoon to the end of it with a length of string. He would venture into the marshy surrounds of the pond, carefully reach into the nest with the outstretched pole, gently scoop up a single egg, and gingerly bring it back across the water where I would collect it and place it in his cap. These rich little eggs would be taken home and cooked for breakfast.

Indoors he would relax in his chair in the corner, puffing away on one of his pipes from the rack by the fireside. The tobacco had made him very chesty over the years and he would often be racked by a bronchial cough and would spit lustily into the fire, much to the disgust of my grandmother who would call him a "dirty old bugger". Being rather too young to understand this term I didn't know what she meant, and he would reply "Shut up, Mother Bumps", laughing as he did so. Sometimes he would tease me and chide me for some of the things I did. On one occasion, when I was only about three or four years old and feeling very unhappy about something he had done or said to me, I called him a "Dirty old budda", which obviously brought the house down since it was the first time in my life I had ever used bad language!

Next to the house was an ancient orchard, strictly speaking the property of the Lovewells but who seldom used much of the fruit it produced. Grandfather was the unofficial custodian and chief beneficiary of this wholesome treasure trove and we were, it seems, never without a generous supply of wonderful fresh fruit, apples, pears, greengages, plums and damsons, and grandmother would bottle it and make jam and make excellent pies to keep the family going for much of the year. Grandfather always called me 'Mac' or 'MacDougall'. When my uncle Walter (Gaul) was around he would exclaim time and time again "MacDougall and the Gaul". A shout of "Plum

time, Mac !" was the signal for us to down tools mid morning and make for the orchard. A supply of ripe plums kept in the woodshed was an attraction for wasps, and it was also an attraction for my young brother Colin who was found in there one day eating them, and wasps, to his heart's content, and threatening to wash them down with a mouthful of paraffin from the tin in the corner - almost a second serious accident, which might have called for another application of Reckitt's Blue!

I took few of my toys to Shotesham but grandfather compensated for this by providing me with my own assortment of junior gardening tools and one rather special toy which he had made for me. This consisted of a single pram wheel, which he may well have found on one of his regular inspections of the contents of a rubbish tip along Market Lane, through the hub of which he had passed one end of a long length of very heavy wire. The other end of the wire was bent into a handle. This became, in my imagination, every conceivable type of vehicle and was, without doubt, one of the best toys I ever had and was 'driven' wherever I went.

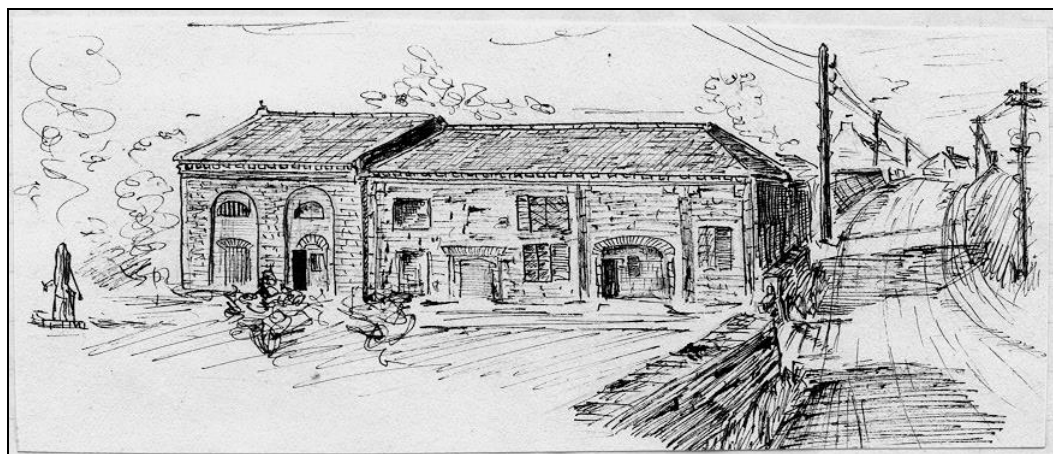
He was well known in the village, a keen cricketer in his younger days, and captain of the village bowls team until he became too infirm to take part. In these pre combine-harvester days he was often busy on the farms and one of his jobs, working with a huge scythe and whetstone, was cutting the broad strip around each field to make way for the mechanical reaper/binder. I can recall this machine with its operator sitting high on a metal seat being drawn by horses on the Emms' farmland and by a pre-war International tractor on Lovewell's extensive land. I would follow grandfather to the harvest fields, share his bottle of cold tea and cheese sandwiches sitting in the shade of a tree, and be ready with my stick with all the other men and boys to give chase to the rabbits which would make a sudden dash for cover as the reaper reached the final square of uncut wheat in the middle of the field. Needless to say I was never fast enough to catch one, but the possibility was compelling and the anticipation always infectious. As the reaper moved around the field casting out a sheaf every few yards the men would gather them up and stand them up on end in groups of six or eight to make 'stooks' in neat lines down the field. There they would stand drying for some days until they were collected on large horse-drawn carts and neatly stacked in the corner of the field or the stackyard to await threshing. Leading the great horses which hauled these carts was another of my grandfather's jobs and I sometimes found myself being hoisted on to the back of one of these gentle, elephant-size beasts, or riding in the empty, dusty, creaking wooden carts.

At the top of the valley above Stubb's Green at Littlewood Farm was another great attraction for me, Nicholson's yard, where heavy farm implements were made and steam traction engines maintained. These great engines would haul the belt-driven threshing machines, or 'drums' as they were known, and the long mobile straw elevators. Perhaps the noisiest, dirtiest and most strenuous operations of the harvest were feeding the sheaves into the drum hopper with its myriad of fast moving belts, spinning wheels and roaring mechanism and the constant throb of the traction engine, manhandling the heavy sacks of grain as they filled from the chutes on the side of the machine, and making a neat stack from the unending cascade of straw as it fell from the end of the elevator. Dust and chaff flew everywhere and it was hot, hard, uncomfortable and very dirty work and not a bit like the clinical way in which this activity is portrayed by scrubbed and cleanly-dressed actors in today's period films. Every now and then a shout would go up as a rat ran for cover.

I recall standing one day on the edge of a field in the shade of a tree at the end of the 'loke' (a broad grassy track which ran up the eastern side of Great Wood) quite a long way from the house, watching the harvesting and holding my brother's hand, who was still a toddler at the time, and heard what I thought was the repeated movement of a rabbit or a rat in the long grass close by. A twig fell nearby, then a small pebble hit me on the back, and it was some time before the source revealed itself. After a longish absence my father had come home on a short leave from the Army and had come out into the fields looking for us and had been hiding in the hedgerow watching us.

We lived long enough at Shotesham at the start of the war for me to attend the village school, a single classroom divided by a curtain catering for all ages from starters to about ten or eleven year olds. It was situated beside Shotesham All Saints Church about a mile from Stubb's Green so I had quite a journey each day and I walked or rode a tricycle. At first I was taken to school but such were the times that it wasn't long before I made the regular journey alone. There was much of interest and distraction along the way. From the house a grassy footpath led along a hedgerow, over a narrow slippery footbridge (which required considerable care and dexterity when Colin was in a pram) with a handrail on one side, then over a stile on to a gravel path along Wash Lane to a ford by Emms' Malthouse Farm. Mrs Emms was a friend of my grandmother and I can recall once, at the beginning of the war, being given a banana when we called at the farmhouse. A rare treat, and difficult to imagine where it came

from in those difficult times. The Emms' kept dairy cattle and it was always a tricky job keeping my shoes clean as I walked past the entrance to their stockyard.



My 1952 sketch of Emm's Malthouse Farm

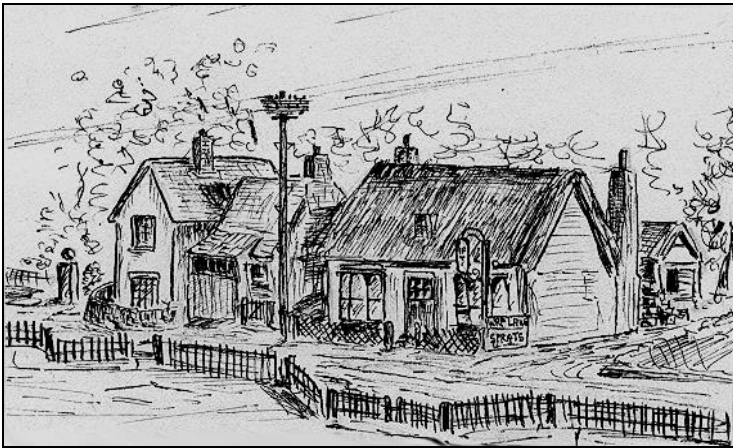
From there a footpath followed the road through the village but there were very few cars and just the occasional farm lorry, tractor or horse drawn cart. On the way it went by Lovewell's Grove Farm and its dairy where we would buy fresh milk and take it home in an enamel container with a tight fitting lid and wire handle. White coated Mrs Lovewell would be in there operating the churn and the cooler, making butter. Alongside the farmhouse was another large yard, full with wandering poultry, pigs in straw pens, and covered barns containing the carts and tractor. On a huge green pond dozens of ducks lived.



Lovewell's Grove Farm

Then on past a row of cottages. In one of them lived a family friend and it was there I would have my lunch break from school. An imposing gateway in a high brick wall marked the driveway to parkland and the Vicarage. An annual summer fête was held there and I can recall riding in the grounds in a very smart carriage pulled by a beautiful shiny black horse. A little further on along the road was a walnut tree where grandfather and I always checked for fallen nuts in the autumn, and just beyond that the smithy, which had actually closed in about 1930 but still had its anvil, horseshoes, huge metal tools, piles of iron, furnace and bellows, and was used as a workshop by a local engineer mostly for repairing machinery, carts and wheels. Once in a while one of the great farm horses would be shod and I would be amazed that it didn't mind in the least when a cloud of smoke came from its hoof and long nails were driven hard in. Beyond that were smelly pigsties, always noisy with squealing pigs. Slaughtering took place there and it always seemed an unpleasant place where I did not linger.

Then there was the village grocery shop, run by Mrs Lawes, and opposite the shop was my school. Everybody would run out into the playground during the morning break, down to the wooden fence by the roadside. On one occasion, leading the pack, I tripped and fell headlong, cutting the very top of my scalp on a sharp flint. I was stunned and blood ran everywhere. After I had been cleaned up, rested, and bandaged by the teacher I waited and received appropriate succour in the village shop until I was collected and taken home. Quite a serious wound which kept me off school for a while and left me with a scar, a tiny spot on which no hair grows, which I still have to this day. Other than this incident I recall very little about childhood illness but I do remember being very unwell with one of the standard complaints such as German measles and being confined to bed for several days in a cold and lonely upstairs room at the Stubb's Green house.



The village shop in 1952



The school and adjacent houses



The village shop in the 1970s. The white building in the distance under the trees is the former smithy.

Norwich began suffering rather badly from German night-time air raids while we lived at Shotesham and I can recall seeing the glow of the burning city and the beams of searchlights in the night sky to the north. Occasionally the drone of an aircraft could be heard above. Grandfather would 'stand guard' at the front of the house with his loaded shotgun at the ready in case of invasion or German parachutists. It was not unknown for him to let fly with both barrels into the night sky at the approach of an aircraft, hostile or not!

After one particular period of bombing in Norwich where the targets were buildings and factories near the city centre grandfather went missing for a day or two. He had apparently got wind of a serious raid on Caley's Chocolate Factory, dug amongst the ruins until he found the great vats full of scorched, solidified, un-sweetened raw chocolate and loaded about a hundredweight of the stuff in one huge lump on to his wheelbarrow, and pushed it the six miles back to Shotesham. There I remember seeing it in the woodshed, covered by sacking, where it was a source of chocolate flavouring for grandmother's cakes and puddings for the rest of the war!

My aunt Ivy's father-in-law had a milk delivery business in Norwich and, like so many others in those days, operated purely on a cash basis and did not entrust money to a bank. My grandfather knew that his business profits were kept in the form of large denomination silver coins, florins and half crowns, and hidden in different parts of his house, beneath floorboards, and in piles on the joists and timbers in the roof. He was soon on the spot to 'assist' when the house was destroyed in an air raid. Unknown, and unsuspected for quite a long time, he had filled a bag with coins, took them back to Shotesham, and hid them by the handful deep in rabbit burrows in a sandy bank beside the footpath along Wash Lane at Stubb's Green. On Saturday evenings when the family walked in single file along the path towards The Globe public house in the village for their regular drink grandfather would be last, ostensibly to lock the door of the house, tie up the dog and close the garden gate, and would linger, un-noticed by the others, by the rabbit warren long enough to retrieve a half crown to fund the evening's beer purchases. When there were no other adults left at the house I would go to the pub and have to hide under the table amongst everyone's legs in case the village constable appeared.



'The Globe' Public House by the Common

I can recall occasions when my aunt Phyllis, who was a teenager and unmarried at the time, would look after Colin and me at the house while the family went to The Globe. She would receive visits at the back door from a boyfriend when the family had gone and, in the absence of any goodies in the house, would make a mixture of grandmother's cocoa powder and sugar which we would eat dry with a spoon. Phyllis attended the village school at Shotesham before she went to work in Norwich and one of her friends there was Ivy Harmer, a daughter of the Shotesham farming family. Ivy eventually married an American airman and went to live in the United States and it was on a chance visit to my grandfather's grave at All Saints' Church that I met her and her husband in May 1997.

In 1940-41 I left Shotesham and went with my mother and brother to live in Norwich, but this was certainly not the end of contacts with the village and we continued to visit my grandparents there from time to time for 15 years or so. At first with one or both of my parents, and later on by myself, I would catch the bus from the Eastern Counties terminus at Surrey Street and alight at All Saints Church, Shotesham. I loved riding on that single-decker bus and whenever possible would stand all the way to Shotesham by the forward facing window behind the nearside front wing. In those days the buses had a small single cab for the driver and to his left was a roofed-over half bonnet, large wing and headlamp, and standing behind the window I could imagine myself driving the bus. If that space was taken I would stand by the window behind the driver and watch everything he did. I got to know every turn and undulation over the entire route, the signal for arrival at Shotesham being the distinct hump of the culvert over Willow Brook on the edge of the Common. The hump, though less pronounced, is still there today!

On one particular return trip from Shotesham on a Sunday, and I couldn't have been more than about 5 or 6 years old at the time, I fell in love for the first time! As the bus arrived from the direction of Saxlingham and we climbed aboard there was already a family occupying the front seats and standing where I normally stood was the prettiest little girl I had ever seen, in a lovely blue dress. My mother suggested I went to stand beside her to look out of the front window as usual, but I was much too shy to do so but I watched her, totally captivated, all the way to Norwich. We got off the bus and I never saw her again!

As part of my familiar errand-running rôle as a young lad I was invariably given the job of taking grocery items to the village, and bringing back fruit and vegetables. There being no electricity at the house one item regularly needed by my grandfather was a recharged accumulator to power his wireless set. I would pick up a newly charged one from Pank's in Norwich and carry the rather heavy lead/acid battery carefully to avoid spillage all the way to the bus and then along the mile walk to the house. Another item which, during the years of food rationing during the war, used to find its way to grandfather was as much of our cheese ration as could be spared. He was passionately fond of the stuff, and my father disliked it, and we would gladly sacrifice our ration for the supplies of chickens, rabbits and garden produce which we received in return. He always kept a run full of great fat hens to supply eggs and once in a while would slaughter the chickens, tying a line of them upside down on the fence, cutting their throats, and then he and grandmother would set to and pluck them out in the back garden. As well as strong cheese he was also very fond of mustard, a habit he is said to have acquired when, having dulled his taste buds through a surfeit of powerful curries during his years in India, he returned to this country with its relatively bland, un-spiced food.

Periodically during the war my grandmother would receive a letter from her son, my uncle Walter, who was serving with the RAF in Gibraltar. I was fascinated by the stamps on his letters, pictorials showing the Rock, and I would deliver her replies to the post office in the village. She would read the news about Gibraltar and my grandfather would be reminded of the time when he too was based there for a while, perhaps on his way to and from South Africa and India, and would regale the family with tales of his life in foreign places and come out with various Indian phrases and military expletives. Though I could not imagine what it was he was talking about I began to understand, nevertheless, that there was a very big, fascinating world out there somewhere and an interest in foreign places was kindled in me even then, young as I was. Looking back I am sure that these events and conversations did in fact represent the very first milestone in my interest in foreign places and in travel, perhaps therefore beginning the foundation of my future surveying career. It was only a few years after that when my grandmother Alice took me to a bookshop in Norwich to buy me a birthday present and I chose a world atlas. My very first maps, each of them worth a thousand words, and at quite a young age I knew many of the countries of the world as well as other children knew the characters in fairy tales, and I had a fairly good idea of how big the world was too.

In later years, as they grew older, life in the isolated cottage on Stubbs Green became more difficult for my grandparents and as an ex-serviceman my grandfather was allocated one of the attractive and comfortable almshouses at Trinity Cottages opposite Grove Farm.

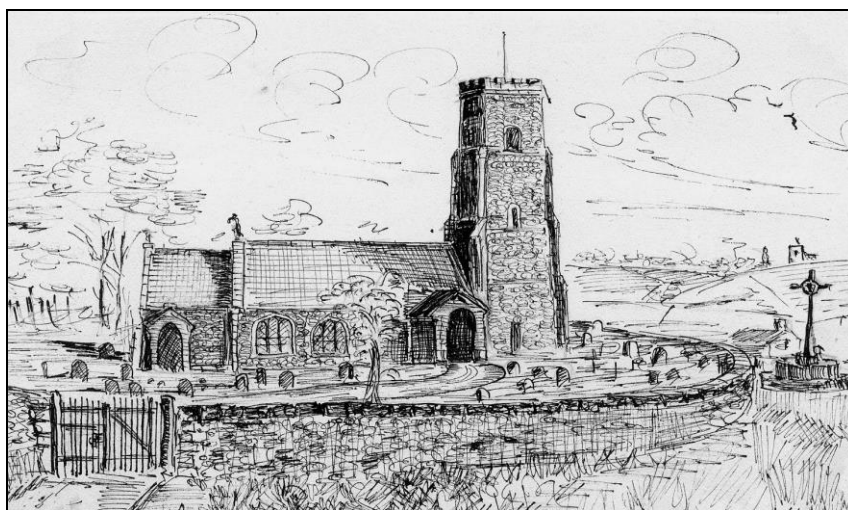


Trinity Cottages



Grandfather in his shed at Trinity Cottages with his saucy seaside postcards!

1957 was a key year in my life but it began on a very sad note. Death in the family was not something that had ever touched me so it was with considerable heartache that I learnt that my beloved grandfather George, my country idol, hero and champion in the days of my earliest vivid memories, had passed away at Shotesham on 25th January. It was very important to me that I attend his funeral at All Saints Church.



The loss of someone to whom I had been so attached as a child, was the first very significant family bereavement that I had borne. I was very moved by the sight of his coffin, draped with the Union Flag, and will always remember that dull January afternoon and the cold wind and rain. It was as if the Shotesham countryside itself was weeping for the loss of one who had tended its fields and gardens; a friend of the community who had always had a cheery greeting for everyone, relations, friends and strangers alike. For me he had been a source of sound and simple inspiration and I can remember, as if it were yesterday, the moment a bugler from his old Regiment, the Royal Norfolks, sounded the Last Post which echoed across the damp green meadows around All Saints graveyard, a fitting tribute to a fine old gentleman, come to his final resting place amongst the trees and hedgerows of the land he loved so much.

After his death my grandmother returned to Norwich and took a flat close to my parents' home at the time in Glenmore Gardens where she died at the age of 79 on 21st January 1962 and is buried at Norwich Cemetery.

For me Shotesham remains a place of nostalgia and occasional pilgrimage.

Malcolm Anderson
May 2018