

The Village of Carlton Leicestershire

by

Nora Alcock

circa 1920

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The Village of Carlton Leicestershire

I, Nora Alcock, was born on May 17th 1909, the seventh child of Frederick George Alcock and Rosa Oldacres. We lived in the village of Carlton, Leicestershire. It was such a nice old fashioned village. Then let me try and tell you something about it. Beginning at the top and carrying on down. Turning right down Bosworth Road was a nice farm belonging to the family Wykes. On the corner where the road forked left and right there was an old thatched cottage belonging to the Proudman's. He was a miner, I believe, and they had a son, Fred, who went to school with us. Continuing to the left on the right hand side of the road stood The Gate Inn. It was a nice red brick building and is still there. Over the front door hung a sign in the shape of a gate, on one side it said:

This Gate hangs well,
And hinders none
Refresh and pay and travel on.
On the other side it said:
Call at The Gate and taste of the tap
Drink and be merry but keep of the strap.

I like it and many travellers called there because they could tie up their horses at the back, there was plenty of room and the miners liked to go there spending their hard earned money. Passing by The Gate you come to a fork in the road - the left one going to Barton in the Beans and the right one going to Nailstone and Barlestone. In the fork stood good stone cottages: Ludlow, Smith and then my Uncle Walter. Uncle Walter Oldacres was the village tailor. All I can remember is that he used to sew smart cream knee breeches for the hunting gentlemen and farmers round about. His workshop was built into the side of the cottage. It was built of wood and you used to go up some steps on the outside to get to it. There was a big window all along one side. Under this window was a big wooden table which was used for his sewing materials. He, himself, would often sit crossed legged on top of the table sewing, that's the way he liked to sew, and he could see better. I can't remember anything about a sewing machine but I think he must have had one. He was a handsome man and worked hard but sometimes he worried Aunt Sally and made her cry because when he'd earned a good bit of money he wanted to spend it and get merry. So off he'd go to The Gate and get drunk. These were bouts that lasted a few days then he wouldn't drink again for weeks. One day I found Aunt Sally crying because he was at The Gate again so I went to the pub where all the men were sitting in the Tap Room and I said "Uncle Walter you're coming home with me and I'm staying here till you do" I think he was bit ashamed for he took my hand and we went home and he sobered down again. I liked him in spite of his drinking bouts. He'd come down to our shop to fetch some groceries and I always remember how he used to stand in front of the fire in the kitchen with his back to it, legs outstretched, his thumbs stuck into the armpits of one of his nice waistcoats, and he talked and laughed and was happy. Aunt Sally I don't know if she was. She was quite a lady in her way, hair dressed on top of her head and when she went out anywhere she wore big hats and nice dresses. She was a Southam and I think she thought she'd married below her station (stand). In the house she had a big black cat which she loved very much, they had no children.

Let's go down the village now. Proudman's, on the corner, were miners and poor. That old cottage has been pulled down long ago. The lane leading to the village we called Butt Lane. It's the Main Street now, on the left hand side there was a stile across the corner of the field that cut off the corner so you could reach Market Bosworth road quicker. Continuing down the road on the right side you had some trees and we called this 'The Spinney' and further down on the left standing back in a field were some more trees and this we called 'The Rookery', because the crows and rooks nested there and made an awful lot of noise, it was so nice to hear them and they were so busy feeding their young and flying backwards and forwards. Now further down on the left side you came to Beck's smallholding. He was a miner but he had one or two fields and a pond on the left side of the house where ducks swam and squarked. I expect he had a pig or two, fowls and a cow. That's how all these poor people lived in those days, providing most of their own food. Joining onto his house on the right side were four tiled cottages with their backs to the front of the road. No doors or windows on the road side, only a little pantry window or so. The doors and windows were on the garden side which made them much nicer, well built poor peoples, houses, still standing but improved now. Jarvis' lived in the first one and right in the corner Miss Tebbbett. She was a nice little old lady, well dressed but all alone. She would say to me "Come and fetch me on Sunday evening and we'll go to church together". So off we'd go, the little old lady walking with her stick and holding fast to my arm on the other side. She'd say "a little child shall lead them". I liked going to the old church because of the singing, not preaching or the praying but the singing.

On the opposite side of the road, right hand side were seven cottages four thatched and three tiled. Wrights' in the first one, then Miss Goddard, Perrys and Farrens. In the tiled ones, Partners, Goddards and Oldacres. Herbert Oldacres was Uncle Walter's brother, but I do not know anything about him for we never had anything to do with them or his four children. I think it was his wife's fault. On the same side a bit further down was a farm Jessops lived there and on the opposite side a cottage standing apart. I spent many days of my young life there. Next to it was the church, old like most old English churches, with four bells in the belfry which anyone rang when needed. We loved going to Church in those days for there were no television sets and we loved to sing. A bit further down was Stone House Farm, still there for it was well built. On the opposite side was Mr Hollis' house standing nicely with a garden all round it, with a nice front door and big windows. He was a castrator. He had three children with whom we played. Joining his garden were two tiled cottages in one lived Bessie Fun and the other Towers'. Then joining these two thatched cottages, a little one where both our Granny's lived and died, joining on our house. This was much bigger with a causeway leading up to the front door and a walled garden on each side. On the outside of the left hand garden, not on the road, stood the village pump. We kept the village shop and Post Office, sold anything from pins and needles and stamps to bundles of wood to light fires and paraffin and carbide. My mother lost more on that shop than she gained, but we had regular wages for the Post Office and sold milk eggs and butter, homemade. From the dairy joining the shop we sold homemade butter, milk and eggs. The baker came round most days so there was bread and buns etc. and anything going, in those days. People were poor and didn't pay promptly so it was not a prosperous business.

Next, the blacksmiths shop and carpenters next door. Here the blacksmith shod the horses of the farmers who called. He had built up a fire in there with bellows on the side and we kids often used to help him with the bellows, pulling the handle up and

down to make the fire burn quickly if he was busy shoeing horses. The horseshoes had to be hot when being nailed to the horses' feet. How he managed it I can't remember. The carpenters mended farmers' carts and made iron rims for the cart wheels with the help of the blacksmith. Built at the back of the workshops on an open space on the ground was a ring of bricks with, in the middle, an iron spike. When the cart wheel was mended, they would place the middle of it on the iron spike in the middle then the blacksmith who had made the outer iron rim in his workshop would come out with the red hot iron rim and place it on the wooden wheel. This had to be done quickly or the wheel would have caught fire, there were buckets of water standing ready and whilst the blacksmith was hammering the iron rim into place, so that it fitted properly, the other men poured cold water on the iron and kept turning the wheel around. I've often watched them doing this, I liked to see the steam come up as the wheel turned round and the water made a hissing sound. The men did this all so quickly the wheel never caught fire. Now comes The Malt Shovel Inn, as it was called. Same wide causeway leading to the front, as by ours and gardens on each side, not walled like ours, but with wooden railings round. This was a small pub and the taproom as they called it was on the right side as you entered. It was square and had benches all round it. These benches were built with wooden backs there were one or two tables in the middle where the men could put their mugs of beer. There was a bigger room at the back, mostly used in the summer. The rest of the house was used by the family Oldacres who owned the pub. My Dad used to go and drink there sometimes and my mother would get very cross and mad with him. Throwing his money away she said. Next was another little cottage and there lived two old men George Preston and Sammy Townsend. A bit further up three tiled cottages in a row. The first occupied by Tites, then Billy Dowell and Sammy Townsend. On the opposite side, a very big ash tree and back again to the other side a cottage, standing apart and there was a long path leading up to the front door, a good well-kept garden on both sides, here lived Mary Ann and Jim Oldacres. A pump was in front of the house and then came our smallholding. Sheds for four cows and a horse also two pig sties, a shed for two carts and the hens roosted anywhere, ducks and geese also. There was quite a nice piece of ground round it and also an orchard, with apple, pear, and plum and damson trees in it. Standing back a bit further was Harry Oldacres small holding, something like ours, and on the same line a bit further on, a farm belonging to Ortons. There was a nice piece of ground surrounding this and railed off in front of it, the village green, this joined our little school where children of all ages were taught under one teacher. At the left hand side of the school was a pond where my Dad took our cows to drink in the winter time. This road is a cull de sac. Becks smallholding was near to Ortons' farm on the left of Becks was another farm Carlton House Farm, the Shepherds lived there and I spent many happy hours there, playing with Mary, who was my friend, and the rest of the family. By their gate was a small farm labourers cottage and to the left of that Perry's smallholding, they are all still there although changed and improved a lot, made more modern looking. Back now to the school and there, follow the road to the right and just around the corner on the right hand side, you see a big white gate, open this and you see a long drive up to a big well-built house of red bricks and porch over the front door. In front of this was an oval lawn with a big monkey puzzle tree in the middle. This is Carlton Rectory, I always thought it was a lovely old house and wished I could have lived in it. Most clergymen are poor but I don't think the Reverend Townsend was. He kept a gardener and the grounds were well looked after. The drive up to the house had, on both sides, fir trees of different sorts, tall and short and handsome. There were all sorts of flowering bushes in between laurels etc. Also here and there round beds with flowers planted in them, such as primroses, pansies and violets etc. and the

gardener changed them with the passing of the seasons. In front of the house on the left was a well-kept tennis lawn where you could also play croquet, which was very popular in those days. This was surrounded by flowering shrubs and lots of daffodils in the spring time. Round the house under the windows were beds of all sorts and it looked beautiful, round the corner to the right were a group of big old trees and on one of these was a swing. I envied the children and visitors who played on that. We used to peep through the railings in Beck's field but we were never allowed in. Back of the house were stables for horses and a coach house in which were kept two traps. One was an open landau the other a closed carriage. The Rev. Townsend kept a groom and leading to the kitchen door there were one or two small sheds used for coal, wood or garden tools etc. Between the kitchen door and the side entrance to the house, a wall was built so that you could not look over and this made it nice and private. Many were the garden parties and tennis and croquet were played. The ladies and gents all dressed up beautifully were driven up to the house by grooms in open or closed carriages, the weather deciding. The Rev. Townsend used to drive, with his ladies, down the village. The groom driving the horses sitting high up in front. In the 1914-1918 war, his only son was killed. It broke his heart, his son looked so handsome in his khaki officer's uniform. The Rev. never got over it. He closed down the Rectory and moved away. The Rectory has never been the same since he left. It changed hands many times and one after the other they seemed to get poorer, rectors who had no money to keep the place up, so it's wild now and there, I do believe. It's still there a nice red brick building, but who lives there I don't know, the glory's gone and the drive's full of weeds and many of the lovely fir trees have gone also.

Passing by the Rectory you go down a small hill. This is called Allotment Hill because on the left side there's a field with allotments in it. Anyone in the village could hire one. I know my Dad had two and grew mangles and all sorts of things. Joining this ground are four fields and we rented or bought them, I don't know. On the right side of the Allotment Hill were hawthorn trees and bushes alongside the road. In the springtime it was beautiful to look at them, their white flowers cascading blossoms everywhere, the trees and bushes full of flowers, in these modern times they've all been pulled out. Carrying on the right is a stream running alongside the road till we get to the railway bridge, for this crosses the road and the stream passes through a tunnel under the railway. As children we used to go down there and watch the trains go puffing by, waving and shouting to the drivers and stokers. Big white daisies grew up the bank and lots of burgundy and other flowers. When the trains had passed by, we used to sneak up and gather them. Carrying on you come to a fork in the road going right and left. Turning left you go up a little slope passing a bridge over a stream and you are on top of the canal bridge. In my days the canal was used frequently by barges of all sorts, carrying coal etc. They were painted in gay colours and often the washing, that the women had done, would be flying in the blowy breeze. Lots of men in the village fished there for there was plenty of fish. Looking to the right down from the bridge you could see alongside the road leading to a path which took you to a big farm standing way back in the fields, this was the biggest one of Carlton and Carlton ended somewhere about there I think. When it was mushroom time we'd get up just before it as light and go and pick baskets full of mushrooms out of his fields, and if he saw us he would shout and curse but we'd be back before milking time and have fried mushrooms for breakfast. They were delicious and coming back again to the fork in the road you turned right on the way to Congerstone.

Carrying on round two corners you came to a rather nice farmhouse standing in a garden. This was called 'The Linnage' and Jacksons lived there. Mr Jackson was a horse breaker, meaning he taught young horses to be put in harness, ready for pulling any sort of wagon or trap etc. and then tried them out. The cart he used was a strong one it had four wheels, over the front two, the seat for two men was built high up over the frame and over the back wheels was fitted a plank where two or more men could sit, if needed. Sometimes when the horse was broken in, he would come riding down the village with it alone and we kids would run after him and spring on the back planks, if we were quick enough, and he didn't seem to mind and called out 'mind you don't fall off'. He let us ride right to the Linage with him, the only thing was that we had to walk all the way back home but we didn't care and he was never angry with us. The road past his house led to Congerstone.

Our school

Our school was one big room with fireplaces at each end. This made it nice and warm and cosy in the wintertime with coal and logs burning in them. All the children of the village went to it of all ages. We had one teacher and she took all classes from the infants to the eldest ones. How she managed I don't know but we did learn a bit. Most of all she liked to teach us dancing and plays. The first day of May was wonderful for us, for we had a lovely Maypole with all coloured ribbons on it. We all had to come to school, if possible, dressed in white with wreaths of flowers in our hair and the boys with button holes. Then the Maypole was placed in the middle of the village green and every boy and girl danced round it. You all held a coloured ribbon in your hand and by the way you danced you made patterns at the top of the pole, each girl giving the boy a hand as he passed, then you did the dance the other way round and the pattern at the top starting again with another sort of dance and the pattern was weaved into another design. But also we had poles and after gathering lots of wild flowers we tied them on the top of the pole and went from door to door in the village singing (Maypole Day the first of May, a rig and a rag or beautiful bag it's Maypole Day. If your money be large or small we have a purse that will hold it all for it's Maypole Day) Sometimes we got a penny or a halfpenny and some folks shouted at us. The money we collected we bought sweets with and shared them amongst ourselves. It was a bit of fun. The last time I saw that Raymond was with the children we had made him a Maypole.

Miss Platt was a nice little old fashioned lady with her hair done up in a bun on top of her head. For nature lessons she took us down the road and in the fields looking for flowers and birds nests. Then we had to know the names of the flowers and the birds who laid the eggs. We all liked that. She taught us plays etc. and we gave concerts at the school. Snowwhite and the Babes in the Wood etc. Once she dressed me up as a gypsy and I had to sing and dance with a tambourine and I remember it still - it went so: 'A little gypsy wanderer they call me pretty starlight Nel. I live by singing sweet love songs and selling flower wreaths as well... tra la tra la etc.' Miss Platt had two rooms in Beck's at the top house. She also kept a donkey in one of their sheds and had a little tub round cart which fitted him nicely. She liked to go out riding with him after school hours. If we were very good children she would pick one or two of us to ride with her. It was great fun and we laughed our hats off. Often we had to push or pull the donkey to make it go, then it would stand and Hee Haw. She always had some carrots with her and one of us had to run in front of the donkey till he started going eating the carrot then we'd run back and get in her little tub cart. I think she enjoyed it too for she didn't have many pleasures in her life but most of all

she loved to teach us folk dancing. We were happy with her till my Dad got mad and took us away from Carlton school and we had to walk four miles every day backwards and forwards, in all weathers, to Market Bosworth. I hadn't learnt much so it's a good job he did.

The Church

It's a nice old yellow brick building like most churches in England, crumbling with age. It had four bells in the belfry which rang out merrily, the old year out and the new year in. Anyone rang them then. We kids liked to hang onto the thick ropes with woolly cushions on them and the bells would ring so hard that they swung us off our feet and brought us down again. On a clear night on New Year's Eve you would go outside and you could hear the church bells from other villages all around ringing gaily. Market Bosworth had five bells and Ibstock seven. It was a joyous sound.

Saturday night in the kitchen at home my mother would get the fire burning brightly to make plenty of hot water then she'd bring the hip bath in and put it in front of the fire. Hot soap suds went into it and one after the other we'd be scrubbed and shampooed. The girls hair was put into rag curlers so that when we went to church or chapel, Sunday, we'd all have nice ringlets. Then we all got basins of bread and milk and off to bed we'd go. Clean and warm. The rug in front of the fire was made of rag strips cut from old coats and trousers etc. That's how we made rugs in those days, upstairs and down and it was made on ____ The church bells rang out on Sunday mornings and off we'd go to church, Sunday school in the afternoon and church again at night. There were no television or radios in those days so the church was nearly always full and we liked singing. The Sunday School was nice because we sang mostly childrens hymns and did actions to them. In winter it was nicest, for the oil lamps on the walls and down the aisle were lighted and all the candles on the altar were burning also two candles on the organ and a lamp by the pulpit. On the right hand near to the wall stood a very big round iron hot cockle. It was stoked with coal and was red hot when burning at its best. We liked to sit in the pews near to it because it was the warmest there. The Rector sang the prayers and you answered them singing, didn't bother much about him reading the bible or preaching, we all liked to sing at the top of our voices. The church was nearly always full so it sounded good. You sang 'Onward Christian Soldiers' as if you were going to war and 'Abide with me' softly and the last verse was very quietly sung with expression. There were some good hymns and we loved to sing them. That's why I enjoyed going to church most it was for the singing. Harvest Festival time was nice and it looked lovely. Everybody bought something to the church and it looked lovely. Everyone brought something to the church which was grown in his garden find which was grown in his own garden and it was the best he could find. As you went up the church steps and through the heavy big doors there stood a big old font with two steps round it and the bell ropes hung down there also. Four persons would be pulling them as you entered the church. There were heavy red curtains hanging up where you entered the church and when the service began these were closed and it made it more cosy. Round the font at Harvest Festival there were the best bunches of carrots all washed and tied up and a beautiful orange colour, there were parsnips, cabbage, beans and peas, strawberries and raspberries potatoes anything out of their gardens but always the best that they could bring. Every windowsill was decorated just the same apples and pears and damsons were on these also. Lovely big juicy pears they were too. The rail in front of the altar where you bent down was decorated with sheaves of corn and in between red poppies if we could get some. The reading pew was also decorated

like this and the altar had sheaves of corn with grapes hanging in between, somebody had bought these of course. My Dad always brought the best of his apples and pears out of the orchard it was a big basket, which he placed on top of the stove. He also rubbed and polished up the apples till they shone beautifully placing their red cheeks on the outside so that everyone could see them, and the biggest pear would be on top in the middle. In the springtime my Dad grew marrows and whilst they were little he took a very fine needle and wrote on them 'God is love' or 'God Bless you' and as the marrows grew, the words grew too. He grew some beautiful big ones yellow and green and these he took to the church and placed them where everyone could read the words he was very proud with them. We children went round the countryside searching for rose hips, going home with them and threading long chains. These we hung up in the church from lamp to lamp down the aisle. It looked so cheerful because of their bright colours of orange, red and yellow. Sunday evening everyone went to church and sang 'We plough the fields and scatter', as hard as they could and other harvest hymns also. Monday after school we children had to go and carry everything out of the church down to the school and place it at one end of the school, leaving the rest of the space open for people, who came, to be able to sit and stand. Then between seven and eight the school would be full of people. My Dad would dress himself up and go down to act as auctioneer. There he stood holding up a bunch of carrots or anything else and cried out - How much - threepence, shilling and so on. Then when the bidding stopped he would bang his table with his hammer and cry out 'Sold', of course the bunches of grapes made the most for we didn't hardly see them or bananas. The money from the sale was sent to Leicester Royal Infirmary. In those days you were always doing things for charity. I know that once a year we had a Egg Sunday and all the children took as many eggs as their mum could spare to the church and the children walked down the aisle singing. My mum always picked out the lovely brown ones. Whist drives were held too for the L R I, also for the Red Cross. They were always begging for help. People were poor in those days. We used to climb up the iron ladder to the belfry and look at the bells, not when they were ringing. The church was the centre of the village and our only place of entertainment.

Our House

Our house was very very old and thatched, the family had lived in it for a hundred years and more. My father was a farmer who never wanted to be one. He passed from one farm to another until he landed in this house where my mother was born. I don't know how it happened I only remember that my mother's mother lived in the little cottage next door. I don't remember her, only one thing I remember, I was sitting on the low wall beside the front door in the sunshine when my mother came running out of the cottage crying. I said 'what's the matter' and she said 'your Granny is dead'. My dad was always ill when I was little, he had asthma very bad. Sometimes he stayed up all night sitting in a chair because he couldn't breathe lying down. It was a leather high chair by the fireside. Always the doctor was coming and giving him morphine injections. The parson would come too and then we should all have to kneel down and pray that he'd get better, if we were there. At night often Ena and I were in bed in the Dark Room and we could smell my Dad burning saltpetre - this was powder that he put in a little heap on an enamel plate and then set fire to it by putting a match to the top of it. He inhaled the fumes and that helped him to breathe better. He was always ill when I was young but in later years he grew out of it and only had this trouble when he caught a cold, but it was hard on my Mum for she had to do lots of his jobs and eight children to look after and feed as well. To

get to the front door you'd have to walk up the causeway, the walls by the door were lower and when the sun shone we liked to sit on them. The door was dark oak with a door knocker on it. To the left you had a door that led into the shop and Post Office. There we sold everything imaginable from pins and needles, bread and cakes, tobacco tea and even petroleum and carbide. Medicines as well. Anything that was going. There was not much profit in it for if someone came and hadn't the money then my mother and later Dolly, who took to looking after the shop, would write it down saying you can pay later but some of them never did. The next door on the same side led to the dairy. There we kept the milk and butter which my mother churned in a big old churn outside, then made it up into half lb pats. She had special wooden round ----- with roses and leaves on them and when the butter was made up so the flowers would be printed in them and it looked so nice everyone liked to buy our homemade butter. Great low pans of milk stood on the long table and there she skimmed the cream off the top with a special skimmer. When we had rhubarb for dinner Sundays and there was some over, after church we'd go into the dairy and take dish of rhubarb and ----- a lot of cream on it. It was delicious. Another thing we liked to do was fetch the freshly cooked young potatoes cold and put a lot of butter on them and then go out walks eating them. Our walks took us down lotment Hill over the canal bridge by Bosworth Station up the hill and through Bosworth down Bosworth hill to Carlton. Sometimes we'd take the other road through Barton in the Beans to Shackerstone on through Congerstone then home to Carlton. Often we took the footpaths through the fields and that was nice. Under the tables in the dairy my mother had big brown earthenware pansions standing in these she brewed wine and herb beer she had a barrel in the little cellar and you could tap it off when wanted and that was a grand drink for the harvesters - they liked Rosa's beer. Tell you more about that later now more about the dairy. There was a great big grey stone slab thrall with four holes in the corners. It was a big heavy thing but just right for my Dad to kill a big pig and salt it himself. There they brought one of the best pigs up onto the back I used to stop my ears when I heard it squeel. It was soon dead but I didn't look, I was too frightened. In the outside shed where we did the washing there was a copper with boiling hot water. (The copper was always used to do the washing in). The hot water was poured over the pig and they scraped all the skin off with old candlesticks or dull knives for they didn't have to cut the flesh underneath and it was very clean when that was finished my Dad cut the pig up there, sides of bacon and four big hams, cutlets and pork. My mother made marvelous pork pies and to this day I'll never forget how they tasted. My Dad took all the sides of bacon and the four hams put them on the thrall in the dairy and salted and prepared them to perfection. His hams were the best I've ever tasted. There were giblets and _____ and all sorts of good food. So in the winter we didn't go hungry. We had fowls and ducks also turkeys and geese so though poor we managed to eat well. By the field were sheds for four cows and poor old Tommy the horse and the orchard was full of apples and pears and plums. If the harvest there was good my Dad would take buckets full and share them out with the school children playing on the green. The kids didn't dare to steal them for we had two geese who flew after them and frightened them away. We children had always plates of porridge before we went to school and if we wanted more food Dad's bacon had been fried and we could dip toast into the fat that was good to. We took sandwiches to school and of course milk. At night bedtime we had basins of bread, with hot milk, poured over it and sugar for taste after all everything was good, and we slept well, nice and warm in our feather beds with cushions made of down. At Christmas time years later and we brought or friends with us a whole ham came to the table beautifully cooked we could eat as much as we liked and my Dad kept carving, it was delicious. Two ducks or fowls at dinnertime and homemade

cakes for tea not forgetting later mince pies and plum pudding. We always had good things to eat because we provided our own food. We children always played outside when the weather was good. Such as Fox and Hounds, that was two running away first, running through fields and spinneys climbing fences and jumping over hedges and gates, climbing fences and jumping over hedges and gates. Shouting 'Tally Ho' and hiding away until someone of the group caught us. They were the huntsmen and hounds then another two would set off and we'd have to catch them if we could. It was good fun and we played it till dark. Another game was catch me if you can. One or two would try to get past a chain of children who were stretched across the road, caught they had to join the chain and so on. Of course there were rounders, skipping and running about with iron hoops and lots of other games. The fields in the springtime were full of flowers of all sorts, lady's mock, kingcups, cowslips, dandelions, buttercups and daisies. In the osier beds the mayblobs were blooming and meadow sweet by the hedges and brooks, kirk or ladies lace as some people call it was everywhere. My mother loved us to take home a bunch of kirks and buttercups then at tea time she'd put a vaseful on the table, they looked lovely. Everything seemed to flower at once. After the blackthorn had gone, out came the may blossom, wild crab, apples trees and chestnuts, lime trees smelling grand and big dog daisies along the railway banks, you felt as if you were in fairyland with all those hedges covered in white flowers, branches almost touching the ground with the weight of those flowers, cascading like giant brides bouquets. The brooks were full of little yellow flowers and in the canal the water lilies grew. Later my Mother sent us out to gather the cowslips, bunches and baskets full of them. We also had to gather the bright yellow heads of the dandelions and the brown burgundy or burnet (I believe that is what it is called). These we took home. We sat out on the backyard and in the sunshine and worked on them. The dandelion heads were put on big trays in the sunshine to dry. Then we sat and pipped the cowslips. That means we pulled the yellow flowers out of their holders and also laid these in the sunshine to dry the burgundy too. In our garden there was a sweet smelling herb, balm. These were all, when ready, put into the copper and boiled. In the dairy under the tables were big brown pansions (earthenware) and when she had strained all the herbs my Mum put the liquid into the pansions. She then sliced oranges and lemons into them adding yeast to make the mixture work. I'm wrong she didn't strain them before putting them into the pansions but after. This was home made beer and tasted great. She also made cowslip wine and in the autumn when the elderberries were ripe she made wine from them. Autumn was fun also, blackberrying to make jam mixed with apples. The wild crab and the acorns were ripe so we collected them anywhere we could find them and took them down to the shed and threw them on the field for the pigs to gobble them up. The farmer across the road from our house let us go into his spinneys and woods to pick up all the dead wood from branches and trees, this was great for making our fires at home burn. In the spinney my brother, Bert, once found a foxes hole with four little cubs playing around it. He also shot, by mistake, a mother owl and was very sorry about it. He brought the little baby owls home put them in a cage and although we did our best to keep them alive and tried feeding them with raw meat they died. They were lovely little birds all eyes it was a shame they died. Another thing we did when the trains were not coming was collecting coal off the railway line because when the stokers were building up the fires, coal fell off onto the track or beside it. If a train came when were doing it we'd roll down the railway bank and lie still until it had gone by, but I don't think the driver or stoker minded for they waved and laughed at us, and we had plenty of coal to take home. Going to school was fun too, for after we'd eaten our porridge and dressed, we'd set off for Market Bosworth that was about two and a half miles away along the road, cutting off a bit by

going over two stiles in the field at the top of the village which was a short cut to Bosworth Road. Alongside the road were telegraph poles standing all at the same distance apart. Well we walked from one to the next and then ran two, puffing and panting we'd get to school just as the other children, we standing two by two to march neatly into school. Sometimes we were late then the schoolmaster would shout at us and say 'Here come the Carlton louts, late again.' If we were naughty he'd put us in the corner or behind the blackboard. If I was talking too much he'd send me to sit in the infants class all morning and yet I liked that it didn't matter if he gave you a tick with the cane it did you good and made you listen. He could recite poetry and made your blood curdle, you could imagine what he was saying clearly. The Brook by Tennyson, The Charge of the Light Brigade Wordsworth's lovely nature poems and especially The Ancient Mariner etc. That was in bad weather, rain, hail, snow or sunshine we had to walk to school. Summertime and spring it was lovely going to school taking the footpath across the fields and was the shortest way. We'd climb over the churchyard stile and then follow the footpath which came out at the bottom of Bosworth hill. On the way we crossed the bridge over the mill dam and we'd stand and watch the big wheel turning as the miller ground the corn. By most stiles was a gate and I used to hate to see the bodies of skinned moles hanging on the barbed wire, this the mole catcher did so that the farmer he was working for would know how many he had caught, the furs he took home with him. It was lovely walking along the footpath through fields of corn, all ripe and golden rustling in the breeze much higher than we were, you couldn't see our heads bobbing up and down. We'd sing and skip along to school through fields of flowers and over streams loving it. but in winter when we had to go along the road in stormy weather and snowstorms or freezing cold we didn't like it but we ran to keep ourselves warm and we'd get there. Old Parson Herbert was very angry because there was a footpath across the churchyard and when his wife died he had her buried across it but he couldn't stop it for all footpaths are free and everybody just went round the grave.

Ena and I had to take the milk round to the village before we went to school. It was all put ready in cans. Pints, half pints and quarts just what the people wanted. Sometimes in the evenings we had to take the groceries that Aunt Sally had ordered also milk up to her house at the top of the village, and if my Dad was late milking it would be getting dusk. When we came back it was nearly dark. We were both frightened to pass by the spinney and rookery in the Butt Lane for the lads had told us there were bogey men in there. We held hands tightly and Ena would shut her eyes and we would run as quick as we could past not daring to look around. We were always glad when we got near the houses. Sometimes if the lads knew we were going the lads would get behind the churchyard wall. Hide until we came by then they would suddenly spring up groaning and screaming, waving white paper or rags and pretend they were ghosts. It frightened us about to death and we ran harder than ever, until we dashed up the causeway home and slammed the door shut. I loved the springtime most of all, gathering wild violets and those smelt lovely. Under the hedges bunches and bunches of them sometimes we sent a box full of them to friends of my Mum's in London. We'd take flowers home until all the vases were full and we had to use jam pots. When the grass was cut we had to go haymaking. A friendly farmer cut my Dad's three fields, then we'd all go with wooden rakes when the grass was dry and turn it over row by row, until it was ready. Then the grass (hay) was put into little round stacks then the men who were helping stacked it into an extended cart with forks. We often had a ride home on top of the hay cart. A stack was made by the shed to keep for the cows in winter time. It was nice we picnicked under the big elm tree by the gate at lunchtime. My Mum sent

down a big basket filled with sandwiches tarts and cakes, all homemade, but what we liked most of all was the homemade beer, this was carried down in big earthenware jugs (stone I believe you call it) and we drank it out of mugs. Time to go home and we kids were hauled up onto the top of the hay wagon and would lie still there in case we slipped off, singing and shouting until we got to the shed where the hayrick was made. Plenty of food for the cows in the winter that was. When the cows were milked we had to drive them along the road down to our fields when the grass had grown. We'd shut the gate by the elm tree and leave them. This happened every day except in winter. Fetching them up and taking them back again. Often in holiday time we'd go tending them. This means that you let them eat off the grass alongside the roads it is free for anyone and the grass is fresh and good but you have to keep the cattle off the roads. In the winter they were only let out to go and drink at the horse pit that's the name of the little pond behind the school, or out of a trough filled with water in the field by the fencing. I used to let them out sometimes and I was frightened that when they turned round they'd stick their horns in me, so I let the chain that fastened them round their necks fall on the floor and they would turn and come out. The second one was easier because it had more room to turn and I just stood back. There were four in the shed and they stood two by two, a boarding in between. Then we had Old Tommy our horse. We had two traps, one was a tub (round) and the other was a high cart in this one we fetched the meal and flour that was ground at Help-out Mill Shackerstone. Dolly, who was lame having infantile paralysis when she was young liked to do the driving. She never grumbled about her leg, she used to stand in the middle of the road, hop round on her good leg and swing the bad one round. In later years she had a fitted boot with a higher heel and straps to the knee. It was a pity for I'm sure she was the best of the family and later ran the Post Office and shop. She'd hobble up and down the passage into the shop or dairy and back again to the kitchen, she could cook too, made lovely cakes and puddings. Helped into the cart, she liked to drive to the mill and the miller would load sacks of meal for her. Often she took some of us with her she'd say get in and come for a ride and we did do. When we came back after being loaded we sat on the top of the sacks. There were lots of flowers growing by the roadside so she stopped old Tommy and said 'Go and pick them' which we willingly did. Whilst we were busy and not noticing she'd whip Tommy and say 'Home lad' then start going and we had to run after her shouting and screaming afraid we'd be left behind. Eventually she stopped. She couldn't run herself so she let us, to show us how it felt to be left behind. Dolly was a dear good soul. Summer holidays were nice too fishing or paddling in the Stoney Brook. We spent most of the day there. Mr Tebbett didn't mind us playing in his field as long as we shut the gates after us. The brook was nice, the water was so clear you could see the bottom and all the pebbles and little fishes, lovely deep blue forget me nots grew alongside on the banks, much bigger and brighter blue than those that grew in the fields. At the end of the field were two walls dipping into the stream standing apart \ so. Then the farmer and his men made a dam and this soon filled up the two walls, it was a sort of passage. Then the sheep were driven to the entrance. One by one they had to pass through to get to the other side. Some men were standing in the water and washed them clean. They made an awful lot of noise. Baaing and bleating but were soon alright, drying themselves in the sunshine and warm weather, on the other side of the brook. This is called sheep dipping. They have to be clean before the shearing begins or the wool is too dirty. Happy happy hours in spring and summer time.

Luckily we had another parson down at the Rectory. His name was Parson Herbert, he had been a missionary somewhere India way, I think. He was a big man with a

beard, getting on in years I think. They sent him to Carlton to pass his last years there. He was poor and had no money to keep the gardens up. What was done he did himself, but he was kind to us children and let us run wild at the Rectory. He put up a good swing for us where he could see us swinging from his library. He had two boy refugees staying with him and his family. I believe they came from Romania. Anyway they liked to play with us and taught us how to build a house with old planks and boards up in the trees. It was great fun and we were always there. We took old curtains with us and dressed up, pretending to be fairies or brides. You can just imagine it in between all those lovely flowering bushes. The boys climbed up the monkey puzzle tree and then jumped down frightening us to death. Mr Herbert had a nice daughter she was sweet and kind and she also taught us plays, nearly always about poor people in foreign lands. Once we girls were all dressed in sarongs in all lovely colours. We had to sit crossed legged on the floor with our hands in front of us as if we were praying and call out mournfully 'Paamie Paamie' it sounded like that. I think it meant water, water. Anyway she was always teaching us something and was always kind.

Back to our house. We had no back way when I was young. Everything had to be carried up the causeway, through the passage and out the back door. The coal would be tipped out of the cart at the front of the house near the wall. Then with barrows and buckets we'd have to bring it through the house and tip it under a shed on the back yard and that's how everything got round the back.

We had no water in the house. On the backyard stood three or four wooden tubs connected to the roof with rain pipes so that when it rained the tubs soon filled up with water. This you could not drink, we called it soft water and washed ourselves and our clothes in it. Also we had swill.

The backyard which was paved and stoned with it and when the coal had been brought through the house the passage was dirty and that had to be swilled too. We got our brooms, starting by the back door tipping out buckets of water going down the passage out of the front door, down the causeway onto the road where there was a grating where we brushed the water into. Then it was all mopped dry and nice and clean again. We had wellingtons on and this way it was much easier than scrubbing. My mother had a pair of pattens these were wooden soles shaped to your feet with leather straps on them to fasten them onto your shoes, underneath was an iron ring which raised you from the ground and kept your shoes dry and out of the water when swilling. Those old pattens Ena still has for we always used wellingtons and Mum did something else. Drinking water we had to fetch from the village pump which luckily stood near to our garden wall on the right hand side as we come out of the door. It was a rotten old pump and hard to pump, by the time you had pumped two buckets full you would feel about done in. Then you had to carry these through the house into the living kitchen. This water was used for drinking, making tea, washing vegetables and cooking on the sink under the window on the left hand side of it was a raised wall on which stood a pippen anyway that's what we called it. It's a straight up earthenware pot and it held just one bucket of water and we had to keep it filled up all the time for we needed a lot of water. Someone or another was always going to the pump for water. The kitchen was made cosiest because it was boarded off from the back door and there was a door into it. On both sides of the sink were raised walls with red tiles on top. My mum liked to have hanging flowering plants in the three sections of the window. The fireplace was a grate with on the left hand side an oven and on the right hand side a boiler where we could get the water hot to wash

up with. We always washed ourselves with the water out of the rain tubs outside because that was nice and soft. In wintertime we had coal and logs in the fireplace backed up to the chimney and it was nice and warm in the kitchen. Miss Tebbett from up the road lived alone and she would come pottering down come into the kitchen and she would say 'Rosa shall I make the toast for you'. She'd take off her bonnet and cape go and sit by the fire put her feet on the fender take a long fork specially made for toasting for the fireplace had bars and all the glowing red hot coals fell down there and that was the nicest toast you ever tasted. My Mum would keep on slicing up the loaves and we enjoyed the eating, spreading the hot toast with dripping or lard. Nothing could be cosier, with strong hot tea with milk and sugar to swill it down. Once a week in the winter a man came through the village selling pikelets and muffins. You toast them and then spread them with thick butter. Delicious!! He came from Hinckley. Rang a bell loudly and shouted 'Anything today ladies'. He'd come up to our front door, knock the knocker loudly crying 'Anything today Mrs.' and his poor old horse who pulled his little cart waited for him patiently. He had a big basket he carried and a nice clean cloth in it. We looked forward to his coming. Also to another man who visited the village. He pulled a cart on wheels from village to village. We liked to see his cart it was all decorated with balloons and children's windmills which turned round gaily in the wind. He shouted out as loud as he could, 'Rags, bones and rabbit skins.' My Dad saved the rabbit skins and bones for us and Mum gave us some rags. Then we would fly out the house and run to him and he would give us a balloon or windmill and we thought these were wonderful. His low cart was on two wheels and on the back on a seat he sat and peddled from place to place. Other people who came through the village were the gypsies. A whole group of them came in covered wagons. They were interesting and camped out on the side of the road outside the village. Their horses could feed off the grass alongside the road for that is free. They mended chairs, sold baskets and all sorts of things. Most of the women wore bonnets. They were happy free people and there was another man I must tell you about whom we called Peg Leg. He had been a sailor and had lost one leg somehow or other. He had built himself a hut in Shackerstone woods which was nice in the summer but cold in the winter. He was a nice man and used to tell us tales of the sea and when he came to the village to buy tea, coffee or anything he wanted. I think he poached and sold the game. He lived there happy and free until someone found him dead.

Our house had a front room or some people would call it a parlour, and every Sunday in the winter there would be a nice big fire burning there and a nice thick rag rug in front of the fireplace, my mother came and sat in a low round backed antique chair and read stories to us - Hansel & Gretel etc. or recited poems for us. She recited with such feeling and softness that we were all in tears by the end of the poem. The poems were Little Jim, Lucy Gray, We are Seven and The Night before Christmas etc. She never went to church but when she spoke about God it was with great reverence. When the people came out of church, Uncle Jim and Aunt Mary Ann Oldacres would call and spend the rest of the evening with us, drinking a glass of homemade wine and eating a pasty. Then someone would play the piano and we would sing hymns. Those who didn't want to stayed in the kitchen and played games for it was warm there too. Uncle Jim and Aunt Mary Ann were no relation of ours but we called them that. Saturdays we didn't have a warm meal in the middle of the day because my mother had to rush off to Nuneaton carrying a big basket of eggs. She took the short way to Bosworth Station going along the path alongside the canal if it wasn't too muddy, always in a hurry walking and running. Mostly nearly tumbling down the steps to the platform as the train came in. Poor Mother! Sometimes she

took one of us with her and we liked that and when we came into the Station before we got to Nuneaton we'd shout 'Higham on the Hill, where Devil made his will', and next station 'Stoke Golding where the Devil kissed the girls without holding', when we got to Nuneaton and an express train was just passing I'd hold on tight to a lantern pole because I was afraid the train would suck me under. It was hard work for my Mother she took the fresh eggs to the Maypole (Danish Bacon Company shop) leaving some over for the tobacconist. She would exchange them for Danish smoked bacon, butter and cheese - what she needed for the old shop and paid the rest. Then she would go to the tobacconist and pick up the order she had left there for tobacco and cigarettes selling the man the eggs and paying the rest, then dashing off to the market where she went round the secondhand stalls to see if she could buy a pair of secondhand shoes for one or the other of us. She had to fly around or she wouldn't catch the train home and it was a long walk from Market Bosworth Station to Carlton but she managed it somehow, she had plenty of pluck. She often brought bananas back with her and we thought them a real treat. A man stood on the market with cases full of them and he would shout his head off calling out 'cheap cheap' and he soon sold out. Once she missed the last train home so she walked from Nuneaton to Carlton carrying all her baggage with her, poor soul, how tired she was - we children (the little ones) sat round the table crying because we didn't know what had happened to her but she stuck it and eventually came home. In those days there were no cars to get a lift from. I remember one evening it was getting dark our lamps were lighted and we kids were fighting and making such a noise that Mum said 'Now I'll go and leave you' and out the back door she went so we yelled and cried all the more because Dolly and Gerty said 'She's gone off with a black man', but eventually she came back she'd only gone to sit with her mother next door. Our house was lit by oil lamps there was one in the shop one in the dairy and a hanging one over the kitchen table, to go to bed we had candlesticks with candles. The oil lamps had to be filled every day and the candlesticks cleaned once a week. Down at the shed, my Dad had one or two storm lamps hanging up. Irons for ironing the clothes were hung up onto the bars of the fireplace where the red hot coals heated them. On the backyard stood what we called a swill tub into this we threw all the old bread, left off things from meals and all the washing up water for we were never allowed to use soap so it was greasy and good for the pigs. Round the tub stood the pig buckets by the back door hung two pairs of wooden yokes with chains on them. When the buckets were nearly full, they were mixed with meal. Then my Dad would put a yoke across his shoulders, hook two buckets on the chains and start off down to the shed to feed the pigs, this is a very easy way to carrying full buckets. Then he'd have the clean milk buckets down at the shed and bring the milk up the same way. The buckets swing one on each side of you and you do not feel the weight. All the little potatoes were washed clean in baths on the yard and put in the copper in the washhouse to cook. When they were ready we fetched them out. On top of the swill tubs was a wooden thing like a box so: V with two rollers with spikes or nails on and there was a handle where we could turn them round like rollers. When you put the potatoes in they smashed them up and these fell into the swill tub, good food for the pigs but often we kids picked out a nice clean one peeled it and ate it ourselves, they were lovely. Everything was kept very clean on the back yard for Saturdays we swilled it all round, fetching two buckets of water at a time from that rotten hard-working pump. The kitchen shop and dairy we scrubbed on our knees. All the tables in the dairy had to be scrubbed too. Often when Ena and I went to bed in the dark room (we called it the dark room because there was no window on the outside of it but only one window into the front room which gave a bit of light). The door to the stairs was open and we could see a light shining downstairs. I'd get out and go and

look what it was, open the door to the kitchen and there was Mother treading away at the old Singer sewing machine, patching our clothes or often darning our socks. I'd say 'come to bed Mum' and she would say 'Go back to bed, I'm coming in a minute.' She worked very hard but in later days my older sisters looked after her and she had a comfortable old age dying just before her ninetieth birthday. She was humorous too. She had her bed downstairs in the kitchen. Radios were about at that time and she had one beside her bed on the sideboard. She'd sit up drinking her tea and eating her toast and we'd be having our breakfast round the table when suddenly she'd turn the radio on so hard as she could till we couldn't hear ourselves speak. We'd shout 'Mum put the thing out' but she'd sit and laugh, she liked to plague us. Once when we were young we were all playing down at the shed, my Mother was there too feeding the fowls and pigs, my Dad must have been ill again. In the wooden shed by the gate we kept the two carts and under the front one was a well with a lid on it, but that day the front cart was outside. We were playing hide and seek Victor's little brother ran over the lid and it tipped and he fell in. We screamed 'Mum come quick Victor's in the well'. She ran as fast as she could lay on her tummy on the rim of the well. Lucky the well was fairly full she could just reach him as he was going down for the third time and pulled him out with his hair and ears. Then she ran all the way home with him in her arms, and we ran after her not knowing what to do. She put him in a warm bath and wrapped him in a blanket took him in her arms and went and sat on the low chair in the fireplace and there she sat and cried and cried, tears streaming down her face. I shall never forget it, how glad she was that Victor was still alive. Bessie then came in when she heard the news and she said 'It's alright Rosa he'll get better now.'

My Dad liked to go out and even if he hadn't got anything to sell a pig or something which a kindly farmer took to sell for him. He made a practice of going to the cattle sale at Market Bosworth. He got the cows milked and fed then he'd clean his best leather leggings and shoes till they shone (He wore knee breeches so he needed leather leggings). Wash himself well and brushed his hair. Then he'd put on a clean shirt and tie, fetch out his best coat and off he'd go, sometimes getting a lift from a passing farmer or walking all the way, and didn't he enjoy himself. He'd walk round the cattle market, it didn't matter if he'd got nothing to sell or no money to buy, this was what he liked. Then he'd pop into the Dixie Arms or the Red Lion or the other pub and he'd sit there talking and drinking beer until it was time to go home. Often he drank too much and my Mum got angry with him saying 'You could find better ways to spend your money'. But you couldn't stop Fred, Oh no! Off he'd go! He never wanted to be a farmer and never made a success of it but his Mother's will was met, he'd sooner have been an engineer. He was born at Cadeby Manor, a beautiful big place and he died at the little cottage at Carlton coming down all the time. Maybe his life would have turned out different if he'd had another chance and beside he was always ill with asthma when he was young but in later years he grew out of it and only had attacks when he caught a cold and then never so bad. He liked to go to The Malt Shovel next door sometimes but my Mother never liked it she needed all the money to keep us all going. Later my Grandmother left my Dad a little money in a Bosworth bank so he was able to draw a bit out when he went to the market and was able to drink with his own money which pleased him. I don't think it was much, I never heard. He'd feel himself the gentleman farmer which he really ought to have been, like his mother and the rest of the Thompson family. They never really accepted my mother and looked down on her but she was better than all of them and worked and slaved hard all her life for my dad and all of us. Being alone my Grandmother Freeman came to live in the little cottage next door to us from

Market Bosworth. Our kitchen window looked out on her back door. She'd come and tap on the window and call "Rosa, my brother and family are coming for tea bring round the tray and cakes.' So my mother had the trays ready, nice white crocheted tray cloths on, plates of cakes and sandwiches and the best polished teapot with the best tea service. She'd take them round all ready for the visitors but she was never invited to join them. My grandad had lots of lovely antique things and I am sure she gave them lots of pieces, more's the pity. Luckily there were some nice things left when she died.

The old village people were interesting too. Mary Ann and Jim Oldacres lived in the cottage next to our smallholding. We called them uncle and aunt but they were not relations. When Uncle Jim died Aunt Mary Ann lived alone and she was a real brewer making all sorts of concoctions, ought to have been an apothecary. Well, one day she brewed her best wine and I shall never forget it, for it was very strong. When she strained it she threw all the bits and bobs, raisins and sultanas etc. over the railings into our field. Now the ducks and hens soon gobbled everything up and what was the result - they were drunken. Well we laughed and laughed, the ducks flopped and flipped all over the field, they rolled on their backs and spread their wings and couldn't walk straight and the fowls were about the same when it was worked out they were alright but we said, 'Oh Aunt Mary Ann don't do it again.' Hot summer days she'd say 'Now children go down to the railway line and fetch the melting pitch for me' she gave us tins to fetch it in and we found plenty. I think she used this to make pills rolled them up into little balls and covered them with brown powder. Anyway if any of us were ill or feverish she'd say 'Give them a couple of these Rosa, they'll help, better than Beechams.' I saw them in a tin but can't remember if it helped, they really looked like Beechams Pills. She liked to make tea of dandelion leaves and stinging nettles. My Mother nearly always sent her down her Sunday dinner. Specially if we had fowls or ducks there was everything on that plate just as we had it. A leg of chicken, stuffing, apple sauce, greens and potatoes, lovely thick gravy and Mary Ann enjoyed it. Sometimes we had soup and she'd get a pan of that also or anything that was really nice.

Bessie Fun and Jim Crack lived two houses away from us on the left. I think Jim was Bessie's lodger. He swept the roads in the village, keeping it tidy, picking up the paper and litter also, and the grass he trimmed so that it didn't come over the road making it nice and straight and overhanging branches from the hedges he chopped off. All this he took somewhere in his barrow. I don't know where. One day our Bert and Johnny Price took his barrow and hung it up in one of the trees at the bottom of the Rectory drive. You couldn't see it very well because they were big chestnut trees with plenty of leaves on them. Jim Crack was mad and swore he'd get the young devils if he knew them. Eventually he found his barrow and went on happily working but he didn't find the two naughty lads. Bessie Fun liked to stand outside the front of her house in the sunshine with her arms folded over her bonnie chest and talk to everyone who happened to be passing by. All these old folks I'm writing about had a 10 shilling a week pension. How they managed I don't know and one thing they grew their own vegetables.

Grandma Freeman was better off because her husband had left her a little money. I don't know how much, but she managed on it wonderfully well. She always wore a little cap on her head. Someone made them for her of lace trimmed with pearls or ribbon bows. She loved the flowers in her little front garden and when she couldn't walk around them she'd creep making her skirts dirty. She particularly liked fuchsias.

I liked to pop the buds when the flowers were coming out. She lived in the little house next door to us coming there from Market Bosworth.

The blacksmith's shop was on our right. His name was Selby and he came from Fenny Drayton every day, how I don't know. Ralph Oldacres kept the carpenter's shop next door. I think they worked together a bit. We liked the blacksmith best because if he was busy he let us blow the bellows till the coals glowed and the iron was red hot ready to hammer into shape. Ralph Oldacres and Lucy, his wife, kept the Malt Shovel Inn, that was the pub next in the row. It was small and the taproom had benches on the walls and there were tables in front where they could play cards etc. It was nice and cosy because a good fire was always burning, the men had nothing else to do on cold winter nights. They'd drink beer and when they were turned out at 10 o'clock they'd go and pee it out against the wall. My Dad used to go sometimes but my mother didn't like that. The last in the row was a very small cottage two men lived in that. George Preston and Sammy Townsend, trying to make ends meet for they also were very poor.

There was always excitement when we read in the local newspaper that the hounds were going to meet on Carlton village green. Then when the day came we'd all turn out to watch if we could. The gentry would come in their cars and the grooms brought the horses in horse boxes. The dogs were brought also in a van and when they were let out they barked and made an awful noise but the Master of the hounds, smartly dressed in white knee trousers, red coat, black cap, boots and leggings knew all their names and quickly called them to order and they did what he said. Then the men got out of their cars and mounted their horses. Of course the farmers etc. came on their own horses to the Meet. But there was one lady I admired most of all she was brought to the Meet by her chauffeur in a big black car. I believe it was a Rolls Royce. She looked marvellous all dressed in black and white. Long skirt, top hat which she held in place with a spotted voile scarf tied over it and under her chin, this was very flattering and her long grey hair was done in a knot at the back of her neck. This was Mrs Inge and she lived in a big house somewhere Atherstone way and these hounds were the Atherstone Pack. She was getting on in years, round about seventy, they told me. Her chauffeur helped her out of the car and took her to where her horse was waiting, gave her a leg up and there she sat, riding side saddle, it's not done much these days, only by the Queen, I believe, but Mrs Inge, if she was alright went to every meeting of the hounds, I'm told. It didn't matter where they met. From the bedroom windows of our house we looked over the sloping land towards Market Bosworth and on the right towards Atherstone. Often we saw the hounds and huntsmen coming towards us over the fields jumping hedges and ditches or opening gates. We heard the tally-ho of the Master's horn and the dogs yelping. Mostly they came through the stockyard of the farmer opposite our house. The farmer didn't mind as long as they shut the gates after themselves. Leicestershire is good hunting country.

Once there was pandemonium in our house. Someone was driving cows through the village when one of them ran up the causeway, came through the open front door into the passage and didn't know where to go, everyone was shouting, frightened the poor thing to death. It turned round to get away and banging its head on the wooden paneling that divides the front room from the passage, cracked it. Luckily it didn't fall down and the poor old cow managed to get out of the front door again down the causeway, onto the road where she joined the other cows.

Dad brought home once a lovely little lamb, it's mother wouldn't have it so Ena brought it up feeding it with a bottle and followed Ena everywhere in and out of the house and down the road. It grew up very quickly and soon fed itself. Ena didn't like it when Dad sold it because she couldn't keep it any longer. Dad had its skin cured and brought it back to Ena as a mat, at first she didn't like that but she kept it and now she's old she's still got it.

Lovely, lovely spring days with May blossom, everywhere the trees and hedges were beautiful with garlands of thousands of tiny white flowers, looking as if the fairies would come and play amongst them. It never smelt nice but that didn't matter, later there was the chestnut, laburnum and lilac and kirks growing alongside the roads, mixed with buttercups and daisies and then followed the wild roses and elderflowers. Always beautiful in the countryside and we made daisy chains and dressed ourselves up with them.

It was summer now and the corn was golden brown and ripe. As we walked on the footpath through the fields the ears knocked together and made a rustling sound. Here and there grew wild poppies and their bright red colour, it made a lovely picture. Near by were the barley fields and they switched in the wind quite different to the wheat. The ears of wheat were golden brown and then the old farmers would say 'When ye have heard the church bells ring thrice it's time to cut and carry.' So then the corn was cut and the sheaves were stacked in rows in the field. The farmer across from our house extended his wagon and with the help from other workers the sheaves were brought home and stacked under the big Dutch barn at the end looking towards our house. When the harvest was finished and all was carried home then it was time for the thrashing machine to come. How excited we kids were, as soon as we heard it coming we ran to meet it. I can't exactly remember how it was made but I know it was painted black and bright red. It had two big iron wheels and maybe two smaller ones. Smoke came out of the chimney at the front and it clattered and banged as it came towards Stone House Farm, drove through the open gate and pulled up beside the big Dutch barn where the corn was stacked ready for thrashing. There are always men and there was one woman who follow the thrashing machine wherever it goes from farm to farm. In the early morning we could hear the machine start up, the workers were under the barn on the wheat stack, with forks they threw the sheaves onto the machine. How it exactly worked I've forgotten but it shook and rattled and the wheat separated and ran into two sacks fastened on the back of the machine. Some men stood on the machine and those under the barn forked the sheaves up to them. It was a very busy time and I remember the big woman always shouting and swearing but working hard. The lower the stack became nearly to the ground, the men made haste to tie up their trouser legs with thacking string. This was because of the rats. The rats were everywhere in all sizes coming from under the straw. The dogs came round and barked and bit them dead and we stood and tried to KEEP hit them but they got away quickly. The men were afraid that they would go up their trouser legs and bite them, which some did. The woman she laughed and laughed. When all was finished away they would go to another farm. I think that old steam engine was worked on coal because smoke came out the chimney when it worked or rode.

Things have changed in Carlton. If you go back now it is not the same place where I lived when young. Gone the old houses, cottages with thatched roofs. The Stone House Farm has been made into two houses and all the cow sheds and out buildings are bungalows now. I don't suppose that you can go that way down to the brook like

we used to do, running through the stack yard and down the fields to the brook. Farmers these days have a farm with house then they buy another house with all the farm lands. The house they set with someone who would like to live there, then the land they use themselves, take all the hedges out and burn most of the trees, this means that they have open spaces of ground and can use big machines. No farm labourers required. The farmer and his son can work all the ground alone small farmers are gone. No flowering maythorn trees or blackberries. Where the birds go I don't know.

Typed as written.

Comments on Nora's memoirs

I was born in Carlton in 1945, and lived at "Northfields" until 1952. I then moved into Carlton rectory (it was no longer the rectory) with my parents, grandparents and brother and sister. We, as a family, remained there until 1970 at which time I married and my parents and grandparents moved into "Midway" in the village.

I read with great interest Nora's memoirs and it brought back memories of Carlton in the 1950s. I will run through the memoirs and comment about the differences and similarities. Her memoirs cover quite a few years but if it is totally her memoirs it must start about the end of WW1 or a bit later. I will also make comments about what I have learnt or confirmed about Carlton from our research.

Proudman's house was on the roadside between Main Street and Barton road. My mother said originally there were two cottages later turned into one. Nora said "Proudman's house" implying by then it was one house, I suspect from reports of the house, the conversion may even have just been two houses used by one family. I think it was demolished about 1947 as people still living can remember entering the house. I was told after it was converted to one residence only the lower floor was linked and the upper rooms had to be accessed from the original two staircases.

The cottages she mentioned at the top of the village were brick, not stone (possibly the Dutch language could account for that). The 3 houses were - a cottage adjacent to Mill House (Bosworth side), Mill house, and Northfields. Northfields was demolished in 2015 and the other cottage was demolished in 1970.

The tailors shop was a brick construction with a wooden staircase inside. If it ever was a wooden building her uncle must have had it re-built. My grandad moved in after her uncle and he did not alter it.

When she referred to Becks' house that is now known as "Pen wood", Nora said Hall Terrace was tiled by this stage; it was originally thatched. I think the roof was tiled in 1931 following a change in ownership.

Her information regarding occupants was information I did not know.

Charles Yates, the son of Charles Yates was about the same age as Nora and they probably played together at Church Cottage.

When referring to the attendance at the Church being good, she said there was no television etc. so that section must have been written at the earliest about 1955 when televisions were common place.

She said Oldacres owned the Malt Shovel ; they only rented it, for many years it was owned by Mr J Hollier then a Burton Brewery.

Nora confirmed the Perry family lived in the Croft before the war, and Herbert Oldacres family lived in the cottage next to Orton's farm (Stud Farm).

The "big white Gate" was still at the bottom of the drive when we left the rectory in 1970, but it had seen better days.

When she said they looked through the railings from Perry's towards the rectory it must have been from what is now the rectory field . It is the only adjoining land with railings and Perry's must have rented it.

Nora's description of the rectory gardens and exterior was very accurate and I am sure it was from her own experiences and not "hear say". The reference to the vicar's lifestyle and finances is more appropriate to be Rev Townson (not Townsend) but she has mixed up the Vicar's names. The reverend Townson left the rectory in 1904 and had died by 1906. He was followed for a short period by his nephew John Henry Townson. By 1910 Rev. John Anderson Dougherty was resident at the rectory and he did have a son who was killed in the war. His life style could have been similar to that of Rev. Townson as he did afford two "live-in" servants in 1911.

Nora mentioned a monkey puzzle tree on the oval lawn: it had been removed when I lived there but the roots were still under the grass, and people could remember the tree.

Nora mentioned the farmer at Westfield but unfortunately did not give him a name. We also used to go mushrooming in that field but with the farmers consent.

Nora commented on only one teacher for all ages that still applied in the 1950s and through until the school closed in 1968. I have read the school report books and there was a constant complaint that only one teacher was not sufficient. At some periods an assistant teachers was employed. However may I point out in the earlier days the children's ages were four to fourteen and generally more children within the catchment area due to larger families.

I can remember the open fires in the school, but they were replaced by cast iron stoves during my period attending the school.

When we were children we went house to house with a May Pole, as she described. However we did not dance round the May pole by the 1950s. Her reference to making a Maypole for Raymond was much later. Raymond was her son and was born circa 1945, so it would be the early 1950s. Our May Poles were a series of flowers tied to a piece of wood.

Miss Platt lived at Becks (Penwood) half way up the village, and not at the small holding near the school. She did not specify which Beck.

I noted Nora's father did not like Miss Platt's teaching methods and moved his children; generally children went to the village school full stop.

My Grandmother made rugs similar to Mrs Alcock into the 1950s.

I can remember the Church stove, and electricity was not installed at least until the late 1950s. The church records stated that a quotation was obtained in 1938 to install electricity. However the church authorities would not allow the installation as an underground cable was required (costing £15) so the installation was shelved for approximately 20 years.

At the church harvest festival in the 1950s it was similar to Nora's description but with more purchased items than in Nora's time. Still into the 1950s, the Alcock family always made up a wicker basket of fruit and it took pride of place in the Church. The produce was auctioned off at the school on the following Monday evening, with the children leading the bidding as Nora also said. I cannot remember where the money was donated, and again there were regular whist drives to raise money.

I cannot remember the church bells being rung at the new year, but by then there was only one bell in use and that was rung for services by Mr Morris of Carlton House farm or Mrs Ella Price.

Nora mentioned "going to Church or Chapel". "The Old Chapel" was not in use by then, so it would probably have to be at Bosworth or Barton (that had a strong following). The Carlton chapel was used as an implement store before 1920.

Rosa was originally an Oldacres so if she was born at the shop, Oldacres must have been there at the turn of the century. A grave stone in the churchyard says they kept the shop for nearly 100 years but that must have included Rosa before she was married.

Nora mentioned the death of her grandmother, when she was a child, that would be Emma Ann Oldacres her mother's mother. Her death was in 1917.

The shop in the 1950 was as Nora described it but no longer sold homemade butter but did sell milk for a period. The shop floor was brick or tile but was worn down in the middle caused by years of people walking over it. In the 1950s the room to the right of the passage was also used as a sales area. Sissy sold a large range of non-food household goods including toys from there, and I suspect she had her own business. I remember a glass domed display unit with several stuffed birds in it and a set of cupboards on the left hand side of the room. In the centre of the room was a large table covered in goods on display for sale. Prior to 5th November the shop sold fireworks each year.

When Nora spoke about "their farm yard" it was the sheds on the right hand side of the drive to Home Farm. They have now been converted to a residence.

The details about summer days paddling in the Stony Brook still continued into the 1950s but it may have been the local outbreak of polio that prevented it continuing. The sheep dipping facility was still there.

I was not aware of the India connection with the rev Herbert, but my mother wrote about going to play in the rectory grounds when he was there. Also I think there was mention of the Rumanian children in the school records. The Rev Herbert was at Carlton rectory by 1918 when Nora was only 10.

Nora said there was no access to the back of their house. In the 1950s there was a passage running along the side of the shop immediately to the left of it. In an old photograph there was a building positioned immediately to the left of the shop garden wall in front of that entrance. That and the rest of the workshops could not have been owned by the Alcock

family or they would have had access. I think the Malt Shovel owners also owned the workshops during the earlier period.

I cannot remember the Village pump near the shop garden wall. When mains water was laid under the road in the early 1950s, the contractors removed the pump but replaced it by a stand pipe leaving the facility there for residents who did not have mains water connected to their houses. The contractors stole some of the lead pipe from the pump. The well was filled in in 1963 when the mains sewer was installed.

The person she called Peg Leg was also known as Sailor and in later years lived in a tin shack at the side of the canal in Congerstone. There were several articles in the papers about him but he died some years ago.

When Nora mentioned the yoke it reminded me of his son Bert who carried on the tradition of using the yoke. There is a pre-war photograph taken outside the Malt Shovel which includes man using a Yoke, probably her father.

When I was young we occasionally went into the kitchen at the shop to see Rosa (Nora's mother) she was a very old lady but very mild mannered. At that time she always slept on a settee in the kitchen.

Nora's reference to Uncle Jim and Mary Ann at Gulston House referred to James Oldacres born 1853 the brother of Mary Ann. He was a carpenter and moved to Aston in Birmingham and then to Paddington in London. His last known whereabouts in London was in Paddington in 1906 when he was registered on the electoral roll. I could not trace him in 1911 but in 1920 until 1933 when he died, he was at Gulston House. His sister Mary Ann was a "live in" servant at Carlton rectory. When she retired she moved to Gulston House first with her mother and later with James. She died in 1946. They were related as were all the Oldacres in Carlton.

Nora's reference to their ancestors and the Thompsons was a little complicated. Her father was born at Cadeby manor where his father farmed 200 acres of land. He married Mary Thompson but his father George died when Fred was only 3, and his mother was left to bring him up alone. However she married Joseph Freeman in 1884. He was farming at Carlton House Farm. He died a few years later in 1890. She remained in the farm for some time but by 1901 she was living in Bosworth and again in 1911 she was in Bosworth described as "living by private means". So I think the resentment stemmed from the Thompson's not thinking the Oldacres were of the same class as them.

I cannot identify Bessie Fun, and suspect it is a nick name. However I have heard a story about Jim Crack, again I think it is a nick name. My grandad told me a story concerning Jim Crack. He was mixing mortar on one occasion with some school boys watching him. They commented that the mortar was too dry so he kept adding more water, still they continued with the same comments until it was very wet. He then turned over his shovel and banged it into the wet mortar and covered the boys in "mud". Hence his name, as the shovel went crack in the mortar. In the back of my mind I think it was at the Dixie Grammar school, but that could be incorrect.

There were a few buildings that Nora did not mention. The semidetached houses numbers 91 and 93 would have been built before the 1920s. There was a forge opposite "Penwood" which was only demolished in the 1970s which could have still been in use. The cottage in the farm yard of Stud farm was still in use for some years after her memoirs, and a disused Primitive Methodist chapel stood on the bend between Shackerstone Walk and the Rectory drive. It had been built in 1852 but was virtually redundant by 1880 and was used as a farm implements store. Also she did not mention Carlton Hall which is reputed to have stood behind Hall Terrace. There was definitely a build there but since it was not mentioned one could assume it was disused.

Richard Liddington

13th November 2015

Revised 26th February 2016

Revised and expanded March 2020

The Village of Lorton Leicestershire.

I Nora Alcock was born on May 14th 1909 the seventh child of Frederick George Alcock and Rosa Alcock. We lived in the village of Lorton Leicestershire. It was such a nice old fashioned village, when let me try to tell you something about it. Beginning at the top and carrying on down. Turning right down Roswell Road was a nice farm belonging to the family Wylsons. On the corner where the road forked left & right there was an old thatched cottage belonging to the Groundmans. There was a mine I believe and they a son Fred who went to school with us, continuing to the left on the right hand side of the road stood the Gate Farm. It was a nice red brick building & is still there, over the front door being a sign in the shape of a gate, on one side it said (This gate hangs well, and hinders none. Refresh and pay and travel on) on the other side it said (Call at the Gate. And taste of the tap. Drink and be merry, but keep off the staff.) It liked it and many travelers called there because they could tie up their horses at the back, there was plenty of room and the mine liked to go there spending their hard earned money. Passing by the Gate you come to a fork in the road the left one going to Barton in the Beans and the right one going to Nailston & Weston, In the Gate stood good stone Cottages - Jackson Smith's and then my Uncle Walter. Uncle Walter Alcock was the village Taylor. All I can remember is that he used to send small cream tins round for the hunting, gardeners and farmers round about, this workshop was built onto the side of the cottage. It was built of wood and you used to go up some steps on the outside to get to it, there was a big window all along one side.

• Dear Ena.

Sending this to you. I wrote it when I was a little girl at Carlton School. It's no good but it will remind you of Carlton how it used to be & who lived there. I just remembered them all when I was talking to her. I couldn't remember Bessie's name but I just remembered them all. & old Jim Chad was used to call him, but I forgot to ask her who used to live in those three cottages before Browns etc came. I've just remembered Mrs Tebbett because I often used to go and fetch her to go to church. She lived in the last cottage & she couldn't walk very well. In the other houses I've been lots of times. Don't you remember how we used to take the milk up there?

Love
Nora