



Bob Shearer

Memories of the 1960s and 1970s



I was born on March 4 1954 and my parents were Jim and Rene Shearer who lived at the time with my Granddad, William and my Grandmother, Mary Key. Three months after I was born my Dad went to London and purchased a prefab bungalow for £80 as they were being taken down having been used as emergency housing after WW2. A local builder did a base and the prefab was erected on land on main street with an inside bathroom and toilet. Next door lived my Uncle Jack, Auntie Ethel, and Cousins Richard and Stephen. Some laughed at our "tin shack" but it was warm and dry although in the harsh winter of 1963 ice did form on the inside of the window. In 1969 we moved to "Roseacre" on Vicarage Lane and my widowed grandmother moved in for about a further 10 years.

In 1975, I moved to Nottingham when I married for the first time. I was working at a bank in that city. Numerous moves took me around the north of England and I finished up living just outside Wigan. I was then made redundant at 40 and then worked for Group 4 Court services looking after and

transporting criminals. I sat on some of the court cases you may have read about in the newspapers which were interesting. I did that for 23 years. Recently, although approaching 66 years old I drive a mini bus part time for a special needs school, which helps provide for my numerous holidays abroad. My favourite area is the Canary Islands and for those who look at Trip advisor you will find me under the name ashtonian1954".

I will start my memory of North Muskham with a reference to the excellent book by Trevor Frecknall which shows photo's of the celebrations at the Newcastle Arms (now The Ferry) and my mum and sister Jean are in a couple of them. I was merely a twinkle in my father's eye on that day but 39 weeks and 2 days later I was born in the end upstairs bedroom at my grandmother's house at Trent Lodge. I wonder if romance followed the celebrations but that is something I will never know.

My dad Jim was from Ashington in Northumberland and volunteered to join the R.A.F in 1943. He was stationed at Winthorpe as a rear gunner in a Lancaster when he met my mum. He only talked about funny things that happened in the R.A.F but having recently seen documentaries on bombing raids I dread to think what it was like sat in mid air with the enemy shooting at him. Many of the people with whom he trained died within two weeks of qualifying and before their twentieth birthday.

My father worked on the railway but later worked for my mother's godfather Tom Charles and shortly before Tom's death in 1969 took over Old Hall Farm as it was rented. He paid for the stock in instalments. An early memory when I was about 4 was helping to move pig manure but I finished up full length in it and being washed in the kitchen sink by my mother. I loved harvest time when Cousin Stephen and I would stack the bales in piles before collection. As Stephen says in his post the final bit was riding in the "hidey hole" on top and hoping a policeman would not see us as in those days villagers got fined for riding a bike with no lights.

In 1960 I started at North Muskham primary and remember crying because I did not like it. In those days Mrs Florence Billyard was Head Teacher and she had a fearsome look that deterred most bad behaviour. However, she was good hearted and, when children left to go to secondary school, 11 plus passes were high and everyone could read, write and



do basic arithmetic. My grandmother was caretaker and she always had a good fire going. I remember being cheeky to her as we leaned against the fireguard and the slap around my head made my eyeballs rotate. My mother followed in her footsteps so I could never get away with anything. In 1963 the village street was deep in snow with a groove down the middle made by the snowplough. Despite being in short trousers and walking to school this was no excuse to miss a day off school. When the river flooded there was a lake left on the marsh in front of the church which froze solid giving us a safe ice rink. In those days the river flooding meant solid water from the Ferry all the way across to Holme.



Bob, mum and sister Jean

My school mates at the time were David Duddles, Sally Chadd, Diane Kent and Susan Jackson among others. For the last 6 weeks of primary school life we all moved to the new school to be joined by Andy Simpson but Susan moved to Lincolnshire before we all left for "big school". I believe Sally went to university early as she was so bright. Life and more importantly play was centred around playing football on our lawn which graduated to a half size pitch in the orchard with nets. It was a regular occurrence for 12 or more boys and adults having a kick around but in summer it was cricket.

A young lady called Di Di (Diane) from Southampton used to visit her grandmother in the village in the school holidays and was a regular player with us and she was actually very good and could hold her own against the boys. Cycle rides were a common way of spending our time and one day me

and Cousin Stephen went out as far as Eakring and we calculated we did 34 miles in total. I was about 10 and our mothers had no idea we had even gone riding but never worried where we were. Fishing was an obvious way to spend my time but I never caught much.

I used to play often with Andrew Dye, sometimes playing cricket in the field - his mother Marion was quite good with a bat, or we climbed the trees bordering Mr De Vos garden. Andrew's Father, John Dye, was a real character but he was also the postman we would all wish we had. News travelled around the village with him and when it was my mother's birthday I remember him handing her the cards and giving her a kiss on the cheek. I once watched him trying to free straw from a jammed baler with a pipe in his mouth that was emitting a shower of sparks which could easily have set the whole field alight.

When the bypass was being built I made a few bob collecting empty pop bottles that were discarded. I returned them to shops for 3d each one. Also I spent hours just watching the earthmovers and often ran errands for the drivers in return for the odd sixpence. One day, I got to sit on the driver's knee and steer the "scraper" from Mill lane to the Nelson roundabout and back. What would a health and safety officer say about that? I attended the Methodist chapel Sunday school with Jack Needham until I was ten. Sadly, it did not put me on the path to goodness despite Jack's efforts, although I still enjoy a good traditional carol service.

Moving to secondary school in 1965 was fairly easy. David Duddles, Andy Simpson and I went to Newark Magnus GS where we played rugby and Andy went on to play for England along with Dusty Hare who was a couple of years older and who at one time held a world point scoring record. Another name was Norman Pace of Hale and Pace, who was a successful TV actor. The headmaster was Dr Clayton who could quieten a hall of 500 boys with a just a look. Discipline was firm but we soon learned what line not to cross. The highlight of the day was coming home on the school bus, as we also collected the girls from the Lilley & Stone.

My early teens were like many others with dreams of the future as the swinging sixties were in full throttle. For a village the size of North Muskham there was often a large

North Muskham *capturing memories*

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group of young people. Roger Milnes (Ossie), Neil Joyce, David Duddles, Andy Wilson, Andrew Dye, my cousin Stephen Guy, Michael Moore, Michael Wykes and the girls being Lindsay Talbot, Diane Kent and a girl called Samantha from South Muskham who was Jimmy Pratt's girlfriend for a time. In Bathley, there was David Handley and Robert Baker along with the Ellison brothers from South Muskham. About 1969 a boy called Hedley Green from my class moved in to Mackleys lane and recently I found him on face book. He is in a high powered job in Palm Springs California with a wife that looks as if she comes from Baywatch. I hope the others have done as well although sadly two of these are no longer with us. Nigel Webb and his cousin Bev visited at weekends and were known as the Omo boys because they always wore white (see the advert). Every Sunday night at 6.00 p.m., many of us sat in the bus shelter near Ferry Lane listening to Pick of the Pops with Alan Freeman awaiting the news of who was number one. Jack (chairman of Parish Council) and Marjorie Mitchell did not appreciate us sat there but who needs a bus shelter on a Sunday evening as the bus service was not that good, even in those days?

A popular past time in September was scrumping which was crazy as I had access to a whole orchard. I remember one night with some I will not name almost getting caught in South Muskham and having a long walk around the countryside to escape. Like many others I did a stint on the evening paper round and for some reason the 3 Alsations always wanted to bite me.

Michael Moore's dad was Colonel Moore (Dinty) who always sounded posh with his booming military voice. One evening he said to Ossie Milnes "I say Oz, are you coming to supper tonight"? We all found it funny because we all simply had tea. Another time a lorry loaded with army soldiers stopped on Ferry lane corner whilst Dinty was mowing his lawn; "Excuse me, sir, but could you direct us to the river?" Dinty replied 'with both barrels' which roughly translated was "where are your map reading skills"? I remember Michael showing off at Walter Bower's gravel pit when the TV people came to film, he was doing fancy dives in to the water. I cannot remember Ian Harrison who says the cameraman had to fish me out of the water. My recollection is that I was told to get out as it was obvious that my swimming skills were not good and the cameraman was more interested in Diane Kent sunbathing in her bikini.



The Newcastle Arms was run by Frank and Florrie Neath with their distinctive Yorkshire accents. There was and still is a landing stage where boats pulled in but if we stepped on to it Frank would be out yelling; "Get off of there". It was not unusual that Frank and Florrie would argue behind the bar with everyone carrying on drinking as if they were deaf. Their Granddaughter Janet from Dronfield would visit in the summer holidays and hang out with us. In later years I went out with her for about 3 months. Even when I left the village I would drop in for a pint with David Thurston and have a game of darts. One evening a guy asked to join in who I later realised was the part writer and performer of a seventies one off number one hit " Billy, Don't be a Hero" by Paper Lace. Next door to The Ferry, until her death, lived Miss Wood who had a small shop where we sat by the river drinking small bottles of pop.

I left the village at the end of 1975 but returned regularly to visit my parents. Even after my parents left the village, I still called at North Muskham with my wife Wendy and children to see the changes as I headed for Grantham to see my father. My kids would groan as we turned off the A1 and I pointed out my old school, my new school and where I used to play. Even now if my wife and I are in the area we go for a meal at The Ferry.

Nothing stays the same for ever but those times were happy times and I hope that the current residents have similar happy memories

Bob Shearer

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