

## Earliest Memories of North Muskham

by Jane Agg (*née Kent*)



Jane lived in North Muskham from 1949 to 1967 but visited regularly for many years after that while her parents and grandparents still lived there.

I have a vague recollection of Lodge Cottage, my first home in the village.



Pen and ink sketch 1987

I remember it being very scary to walk there from the village through the grounds of the Grange with the trees all around and the gloomy light. The Grange itself was a

mysterious place, seemingly off-limits although I have no idea why. One other memory from those early days is being terrified of going to school. A big girl used to escort me, as I was dragged in tears to school. Was it one of the Pape girls, or Jane or Judy Swannack? Or even Elizabeth or Jane Chadd? Wouldn't it be wonderful if one of them remembered?



Lodge Cottage for sale in 1998



Our home for many years: The Warren

# North Muskham *capturing memories*

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My Dad, Peter Kent, bought a corner of an empty field in the village for a pound from my Grandpa Bourne (the farmer, Billy Bourne). Dad with his architectural skills designed our new house and along with Cecil Clipsham and others, helped to build it. Locals called it The Warren because Mum and Dad produced three children in 4 years, I'm the eldest Jane, then my sister Patricia (Pat), and then my other sister Diana (Ginge). For years Dad thought he had the house facing the wrong way and it should have overlooked the Trent. I wonder what Linda (nee Smalley) and her husband Tony Glitheroe the present owners would say.

Over the years the rest of the field was developed, with my Gran and Grandpa Kent (Olga and Harold Kent) and Uncle Hugh buying one of the bungalows nearest to the Warren, and then next door to them around 1960 Jean and Eddie Agg and their son Michael who became my husband. We married in St Wilfrid's Church in 1972, where my parents had also married in 1948, three of my aunts, and then my sisters in 1977 and 1984.

Does the River Trent still flood? We used to mark the level of the water as it crept up the entrance to Mackley's Lane, although we never had a flood at our house. The water stretched all the way over to the village of Holme.

## North Muskham School

Grandpa Bourne, my Mum and her sisters June, Anne, and Janet all went to the village school although Auntie June didn't last long as she was unhappy there. Grandpa Bourne paid for her to attend school in Newark. Pat, Diana and I all went there. My teachers were Miss King and then Mrs Billyard. I was so pleased that Mr King retired just as I was about to go into his class. He had a very scary reputation. Mrs Billyard was much more gentle—we seemed to spend a lot of time identifying wild flowers and having tests on them every Friday. We also had singing lessons over the radio, and PE consisted of throwing bean bags around. I don't remember any academic work but I suppose there must have been.

Other memories of North Muskham School: using individual small blackboards and chalk instead of notebooks; drinking 1/3 pint of milk a day from small glass bottles; being scared to go into the big kids'

playground; outdoor non-flush toilets; lots of country dancing.



Our first car

## Sundays

Every Sunday my sisters and I attended Sunday School at the church run by Miss Peggy Grainger. Afterwards we would walk up to Gran Kent's house (called Grasmere) up by the Lord Nelson pub where Stan Cockerel was publican. Because the by-pass hadn't been built, my parents forbade my sisters and me to cross the busy North Road (A1) unless Gran was there. We had to shout across the road until she noticed us and came out to check the crossing was clear. Sometimes it seemed to take ages—I suppose on a Sunday afternoon she had a nap like so many.

## Village cricket

Further down the road past her house and over the level crossing was where my Uncle Hugh and Grandpa Bourne played cricket...and Michael Agg who became my husband a few years later. There was a small building where the teams assembled and had their tea, cucumber or fish paste sandwiches as I recall. We took blankets and sat on the grass to watch the men.

My Grandpa Bourne owned the field where the cricket pitch was located. One year he was so angry that no-one would volunteer to mow the grass or paint the wicket that



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he ploughed up the whole field. I remember there being a big row at the time but I don't know if that was the end of cricket in North Muskham.

## **Women's Institute**

My Mum and two Grans, as well as Jean Agg who became my mother-in-law were all very active members of the WI or Women's Institute.



**The WI Pantomime**

There were many events, competitions, shows, musicals etc. Everyone enjoyed the yearly pantomime shown in the photo: my Gran Bourne in dark dress on right making announcements and Gran Kent with a moustache dressed as a wizard. Villagers will recognize Hilda Thomas and Barbara Swannack among others.

Dad who was a pilot with BOAC (later became British Airways) had access to exotic places. One year he brought back with him some branches from banana plants to decorate the stage for a South Sea Islands performance. Imagine doing that today when you're not even allowed to carry a bottle of water through Customs. He was a fine craftsman and gardener, and built much of what is still standing at the Warren like the shed and the fence round the garden. He even built us a swimming

pool which attracted many of the village kids to our place.

## **Village shops**

There were a couple of shops in the village, the main one being the Post Office run by Marian Dye (the family still lives in the old PO in the village). John Dye was our post man for many years and rode around on his bike to deliver letters. The second shop was on the river bank and sold sweets. It was run by two dwarf ladies, the Misses Wood. You knocked on the door and they would let you in to walk past the boxes of sweets laid out on the floor. Because of their diminutive size we were always a little frightened of them.

## **Mischief**

A regular date in the village was Mischief night on November 4th, made more important because it was also my birthday. One year a small gang of us went out with a handful of bangers and placed a couple in the drainage pipes under the bridge over the old North Road. The ensuing explosion was huge. We were so thankful that there was no damage. Like all kids we had our moments of stupidity.

## **Dating**

Mick/Mike (he goes by either name) and I started going out in high school—yes we go back some 60 years! We are both now 73. I remember catching the Friday bus with him at 6:10 pm and the one around 9 pm to get home. This meant that we had to see the second half of the film first and then watch the beginning. Imagine!

## **River Trent**

We used to walk alongside the Trent to my grandparents' farm, Lodge Farm, through the clapper gates that were installed just past Jepps' farm. My Mum was furious that the gates cut off access to footpaths north that extended all the way to Cromwell Locks. I know villagers spent many years to get this situation reversed, and now there is a public right of way along the River.

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My uncle Hugh Kent was an avid fisherman for years, and villagers will remember him as an almost permanent fixture along the river in front of the Warren.

## Summer jobs

I and my sisters had a variety of summer jobs, including at Milnes petrol station on the main road, mostly on farms including picking potatoes and stacking hay bales for my Grandpa Bourne.



**Photo of people who worked on the farm: Hugh Kent, Derek, Peter Kent, Alan Faisey**

Michael, my husband, has a lovely memory of Tom Charles who owned a farm in the village. Mr Charles needed people to do sugar beet singling on his fields. He invited Mike to talk to him about the job.

The conversation went like this:

Tom Charles: "You go to the grammar school so you must be a bright lad. Decline the Latin verb Amare."

Mike: "Amo, amas, amat...."

Tom: "that's enough. You get the job".

## Smog/fog

I have vivid memories of the dreadful fog that descended on the A1 at times every winter. We kids had to walk in front of the car wielding torches so that our parents could see the sides of the road. It seemed to be worst along by the sugar beet factory. I suppose the pollution was caused by the coal fires for heating that everyone had in those days.

## Update

For those of you who remember Mike and me, a quick update.

We left the UK in 1973 to live in Zambia for 5 years. Our elder daughter was born there. Then we emigrated to Canada, had our second daughter, and we now live in Vancouver, British Columbia. Our children and four grandchildren live in Nelson, a 9-hour drive from Vancouver.

If anyone wishes to get in touch my email address is [janeagg@me.com](mailto:janeagg@me.com).



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