

North Muskham Memories 1919

A Poem by Violetta Dobbs (née Jackson)

Violetta lived her entire life in North Muskham (1910-1992). She attended Woolhouse Hall School, from 1920 - 1925.

Her younger days were spent at Holly Cottage on Main Street, before she moved to The Cottage (latterly called George's Cottage). This poem, which was written in 1986, describes village life as she remembers it in 1919.

Violetta dedicated the poem to 'her best friend', Sue Hill.

The Old Windmill and the Bakery with newly-baked bread every day, delivered to each household in the good old fashioned way; in a horse-drawn covered wagon, by the two brothers who baked the bread.

For the Cobbler who repaired our shoes, which he mended while we waited; in his little tumble-down shed.

The Village Carpenter in his workshops with a bench full of tools, always ready to do a job, be it large or small, for rich or poor, he would do his best to please them all. A really good craftsmen was he.

There was a wood yard in the centre of the village with workshops with plenty of work for all the local men, and many more who came from afar - but it had to close down when along came war.

The village Blacksmith alongside the street where the children ran to watch the Smithy put new shoes on the horses feet.



May Day Celebrations. Violetta is aged 11 and is on the back row fourth from the right.



The two Village Butchers delivered fresh meat twice a week - no need to go to market, there was always plenty to eat.

Four sweet shops on the way to school with toffees in tall glass jars, no danger from the traffic - no buses, no cars.

The Village Postman on his track with heavy mail bag on his back, as he walked from door-to-door, safe and early delivery of post - you can be sure.

The Milk Man with his pony and float, fresh milk in great big churns. As he measured and delivered each pint, he would let children hold the pony's reins in turns.

The Village Bobby on his bike, doing his daily round, looking for robbers and vandals - not so many to be found.

The Carrier's Cart went into Newark on Market Day, sometimes twice on a Saturday. Cosy inside, but with a hard wooden seat, to sit with the driver was quite a treat. The horse called Prince trotted along the empty road - he didn't seem to mind if he had a heavy load.

The Village Feast in mid-September, with coconut shies, roundabouts and swings. Fun time for the children but a chance for us all to give thanks for our village harvest of all things good.

The Muskham Mummers and their concerts were great fun - with songs, plays and comic sketches - all good clean entertainment enjoyed by everyone.

On Christmas Eve, all the Village Children sang carols at every front door, then down to the bakery for a treat they all knew was in store.

While the children were singing, came the sound of church bells ringing over the clear night air.

Each child was given one small bag of goodies, containing crisp, newly-baked gingerbread biscuits; the same number for each, so all was fair and square. Then homeward bound and on their way - all ready for the joys of Christmas Day.

Best of all, the big, old, Grange, with stables and horses galore. A welcome retreat for Servicemen and their families during the War.

The lovely green park with squirrels in the trees, the little shooting Lodge in the corner, just right for afternoon teas.

The village pond near the little old school where opportunities to skate were there in Winter. But, it was never a swimming pool.

The Old Toll Bar House and the little pub by the green - both disappeared no more to be seen.

Just the old River Trent still flows silently by, past the Ferry Boat Inn and the church nearby.

To cross the river it was two pence each way, if only for one hour or even a day. When ready to return, we would shout for the boat and stand 'neath the sycamore tree. The Ferryman would row across and have us back home, all safely in time for tea.

Now everything has changed: new houses, new faces, new names for old places. No time to stop and stare at the beauty of the countryside that has always been there.

By Violetta Dobbs

(circa 1986)