

STEPHEN GUY

Although I went to the Old Woolhouse School, I was actually born in a house that was on the old Balderton airfield. At that time, my Dad worked on the land for the “War Ag” and needed to move where there was work. They first met due to Mum being a member of the Land Army Girls; she was from Mansfield Woodhouse.

Mum and Dad were usually living in ‘Tithe cottages’, allocated by the farmer concerned. For a while, Mum and Dad had lived in rooms at The Old Hall after my older brother Richard was born.

We moved back to North Muskhams in 1953 or 1954 to live in Burridge cottages on Crab Lane, dad got a job for Winter Knight at Burridge Farm (I say ‘back’ because my Dad was born in Crab Lane in 1918 and lived in Muskhams all his life except for a few years). The picture below shows Dad in Crab Lane

1956 was the year I started school, which I did not like at all. My Mum used to collect me every day, but I always beat her home as I ran so fast. I also refused to stop at school for school dinners and so rushed home each day - but Mum found a way round this! She became dinner lady, so I had no choice, but to stay. I think the HT was Mr King when I started then Mrs Billyard became the HT, but I can remember little else about lessons or activities.



Jack Guy at 6 years old

In 1957/58, we moved to the cottage on Main Street, where I live now. This actually comprised two attached cottages - front room, kitchen, stairs to one bedroom that had a low sloping roof and a main bedroom. The WC was a wooden seat and bucket in a outbuilding up the garden, water was a stand pipe in the garden but this was soon changed so that it was positioned in our kitchen, with the Guys at one end and the Spaffords at the other. In the prefab next door lived Auntie Rene and Uncle Jimmy with children Jean and Robert, up the lane was Grandma’s (part of what is



Stephen and his wife Linda

now Trent Lodge). I can remember that if we went upstairs in Grandma’s we could come down in Tom Charles’ as there was only a curtain on the corridor to separate the rooms. Tom Charles used to stand us near the fireplace and measure how tall we were growing.

As you can see in the picture below, Grandma moved to the prefab in the sixties. This is now St Wilfird’s Close.



The Guy's Cottage on Main Street

During my primary school years my strongest memories are of playing in the village. I used to play football on the ‘marsh’ with other boys from the village and some from Bathley. On one occasion, the ball was kicked into the river by my brother and, in order to retrieve it, we travelled by car through Newark, up to Holme and fished it out of the

other side of the river by fishing net (16 mile round trip). A football was an expensive item. When the leather become wet it was heavy to kick and didn't go very far and the lace hurt when you headed it!

We cycled everywhere to play with friends in Bathley, Caunton and South Muskham. However, in the summer cricket was played at Uncle Jimmy's/Grandma's (next to our current home on Main Street). Ron Newbold, a neighbour, would never miss the opportunity of bowling an over or two at the boys, before heading for The Newcastle Arms or the Nelson. Ron lived in the Old Police House on Main Street and worked at Simpson's in Newark. We knew when Ron was going home, because he would often make the sound of a hunting horn, as he passed our house. Dad used to tell the story of times when Ron's imitation Hunting Horn even confused the hounds on the local Hunt. Cricket did come to an abrupt halt one night when a crowd of us were playing along with parents when someone hit the ball through Auntie Rene's glass back door.

There was more to leisure time than just sport, however. In the orchard was an old chicken shed with no roof, we used this as a fort to play 'Cowboys and Indians.' We used to make 'wooden trolleys' from old pram wheels and raced up and down the main street, when the river had flooded and subsided in the Winter and Spring. We used the trolleys to collect logs from along the river banks along the 'marsh' and store them for fuel.

In the summer, we would always work on getting the harvest in at the Old Hall Farm. It was illegal to travel on the tractors pulling the bales, so we used to leave space in the middle of the bales to hide in. This would prevent the 'Village Bobby' from spotting us - PC Wallace, who lived in a Police House at South Muskham.

However, one important job we had was to help Dad with the sugar beet harvest for Mr Tom Charles, who rented Old Hall Farm from Mr Footit along with fields in Bathley and Muskham Wood. The task my brother and I did was helping dad with what was known locally as 'Chopping out and singling' which entailed tying sack bagging around our knees then crawling up the rows singling behind dad who was chopping out, (we did 3 acres each year).

I can remember that next door to us in the field were caravans that were used by fishermen and families at weekends (this is now Eastfield). On our lane we had a large tree which we used to climb and build a tree house until my brother fell out, then dad cut it down. Next to the Newcastle Arms was a teashop where we could also buy sweets. Along the Trent bank, up to the house called The Warren was the sailing club Retford Argonauts. Weekends were busy with sailing boats up and down the river, people came to watch and there would be cars parked up to the clapper gates and people having picnics.

In July 1962, Newark bypass was started. The opening in July 1964. Some of my school friends' houses were demolished and the field that we could play football on in Vicarage lane disappeared under the carriageways. The field opposite Stainiforth's Farm (The Willows) was being developed (Trent Close). The owners of Manor Farm erected a metal fence which stopped us playing/walking along the river bank near the pits/lakes which were formed by extracting the gravel for the A1 development. With the construction of the new river bridge we could now walk along the river bank up and over the bridge and back along the other bank to Winthorpe lakes and climb on the concrete barges.



September 1962 was time for secondary school - at Hercules Clay Secondary Modern School, which later became Magdalene Middle School. This took some getting used to as it was huge compared to my small village school. Getting to school entailed catching a bus at the corner of Ferry Lane to Newark 8.20am, 4 buses came through the village (some would be full and did not stop). The bus arrived

on castle gate at 8.40am; then, we walked up the alley between Castlegate and Middlegate, through the "covered in market", across the market square, up Bridge Street, then Barnbygate all the way to the top just past Newton Street (approx 1mile). School began at 9 am (you had to run or be late - and receive a black mark !!!) There was always the possibility of blaming the buses for being late.

Sometimes, as we passed Randalls shop that had recessed windows, we would stop and do a "Harry Worth" impression. Harry was a popular television comedian whose show began with him making a double or split image of himself in a shop window.

On leaving school at 3.45pm we had 20 minutes to get back to the bus station at The Robin Hood Hotel or Beast Market Hill. If you missed the bus, you had to wait for an hour or decide to walk home. On Fridays, I used to meet Mum (who met up with her Land Army friends in the restaurant which was upstairs of The Savoy Cinema) and I would help her carry the shopping bags home on the 5 o'clock bus.

However, when I was 15, I remember buying a 15 gear racing bike from my brother's friend (who was joining the RAF) so I then cycled to school and back most days of the week.

During my time at this school I can remember certain staff; form teachers Mrs Randall, Mr Wilson, Mr Muir, Mr Williams and head teacher Mr Bell. I used to enjoy maths, metalwork, techdrawing, woodwork, pe-games, geography, history and science, but not RE and English. I played football, cricket and sometimes rugby for the school teams. I left school in June 1967 with 7CSE's.

During my time at secondary school, I used to play with friends in and around the village, and I also started fishing. Weekends, and some evenings, were spent helping with feeding at Old Hall Farm. The pig squealing was ear piercing until the trough was full then...silence reigned. I would help with mucking out, mixing meal and maize, for both cows and pigs, chopping out sugar beet and singling. In the summer, it was harvest time, particularly the sugar beet harvest at October half term. When I helped to feed the cows, Tom Charles used to drive the old, blue Fordson Major tractor with trailer to the field then position it to cross diagonally. He sat me on the seat to keep hold of the steering wheel, putting it in low gear and setting the accelerator lever; he would jump on to the trailer and throw off all the hay before we reached the far corner of the field. This picture was taken in Chapel Field during a break from work. In the background is Main Street.



Tom Charles, Ted Guy and Fred Charles

In 1966 my brother got an apprenticeship with Furze in Nottingham and he moved there later that year as it was easier than travelling daily. So, I finally had my own bedroom instead of sharing with Mum & Dad! This is also the year I took over the evening paper round delivering the Nottingham Evening Post in the village. I had to meet the 5 o'clock bus from Newark, outside The Crown pub, sort out and deliver papers around the village and up Vicarage Lane. Then, it was back to the flyover and down the new path to The Nelson and Bathley Lane (no fence or stile then). Friday night took longer, as I had to collect money, and on Saturday morning I took it into The Evening Post

office on Kirkgate and collected my wages - yes!!! In 1966 Dad finally took the plunge and bought a second hand motor car which was a light blue Vauxhall Viva and our family's first car.

On leaving school, I worked during the summer months for Mr David Burnett at Burrige Farm. I was then successful in obtaining a 4 yr apprenticeship with EMEB and based in Newark (now Smiths Timber & builders merchant yard).

1968 was the year I passed my driving test. I also played football for Muskham in the Newark and District Leagues. Often, on a Friday evening there would be knock at the back door and the local policeman would be stood there. Dad would be joking that I had done something wrong, but the police only wanted to ask if I would be available for Saturday's game! I still have a trophy from 69/70 season.

1969 Tom Charles died and Trent View (now Trent Lodge) was sold. That was also the end of an era, as pigs were no longer kept in the pig sheds in Trent View garden. The pig sheds are still there but now used for storage.

During 1970/71 the two cottages were developed into one three bed house with extensions to the rear to lift the original low roof line. Finally we had an inside flushing toilet and bathroom, this saved me from going next door to Grandma's after football on Saturdays. This meant farewell to the old tin bath, water copper and tub toilet up the yard !!!!!

The seventies saw the disappearance of the caravan field next door to our house (which is now Eastfield) and Grandma's land was sold in order to build St Wilfrids Close. In 1975, I married Linda and relocated to Bingham. We returned to Muskham in 1982 to The Park. Our 3 children thoroughly enjoyed growing up in the village and have their own memories about their childhood in Muskham. In 1996 we purchased my parents' house, moved into it and we've been here ever since now the third generation of Guys to occupy this property. My parents didn't move far..... just around the corner to a bungalow in St. Wilfred's Close - which of course, was where my Grandma used to live.

1989 The year the "then new village hall" (second hand from Mapperly hospital site) was being erected. I carried out the whole of the Electrical installation in the evenings and weekends. Jack Brown procured all the plaster board required for the project from the company he used to work for before he retired. Along with Jack Brown, Doug Harrison, Chris Carr and I carried out the installation.

There have been many changes in Muskham since I was a child and the village continues to change and grow.

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