

Dear Mrs Lloyd (I hope I have got it right)

It was a pleasure meeting you again.

I have a lot of pleasant memories of Church Farm

Thanks for the Apples & Pears, and I hope you had a nice Harvest Festival.

Enclosed is a copy of my story "The 156 - Martin"
& I hope you find it interesting.

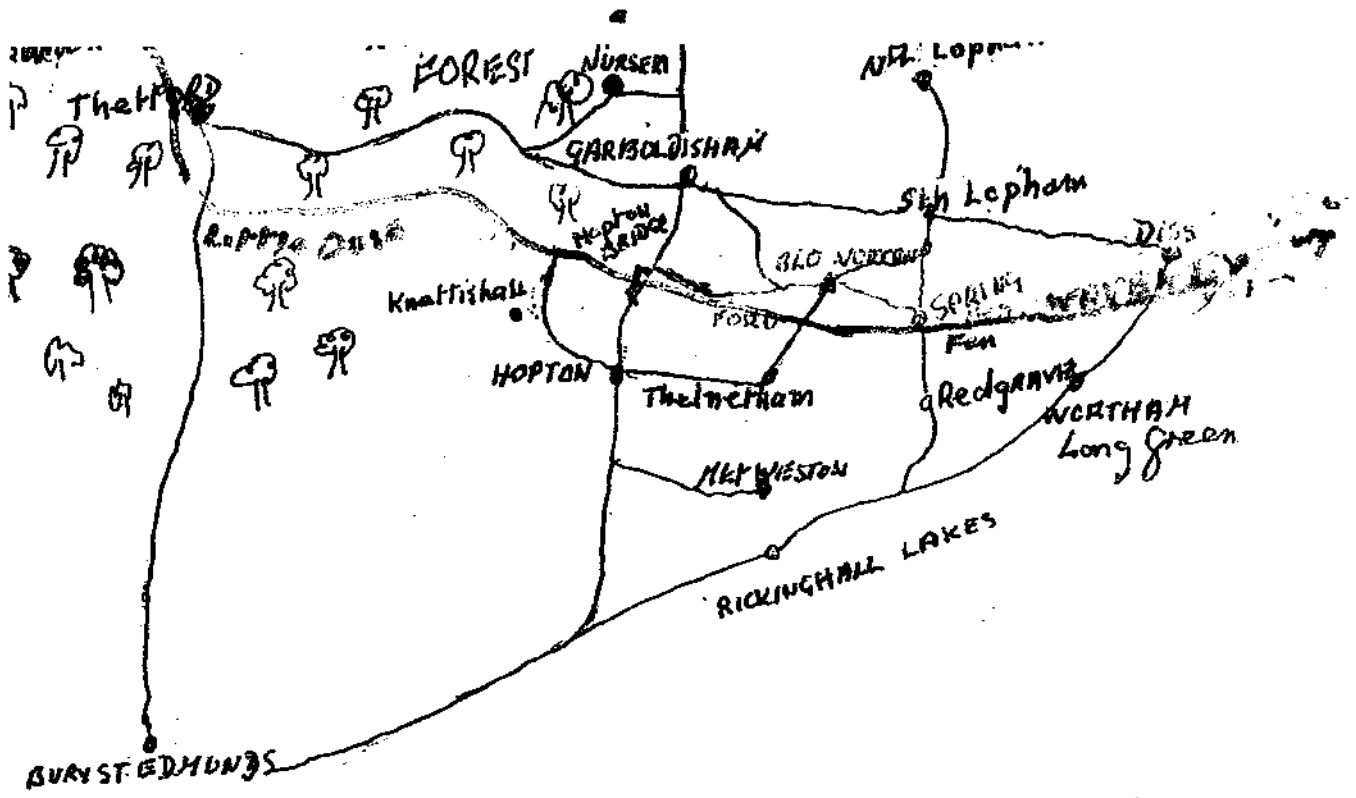
Kind regards,
from the Evacuee of 1939

Bill Barrell.

Hi Mike,

Here is a copy of Mr Barrell's
memoirs. I've spoken to him
+ he is happy for us to have
them. I have his tel. no.
+ email address if you want to
contact him.

Please let me know ~~if~~ that
you have received this
so I can then return original
to Mrs Lloyd Richards Esq.



In September 1939 our School was evacuated from South Hackney London, to Blo Norton, a Village near Diss in Norfolk, and a few Days later the Second World War began. We were billeted all over the village, my three Brothers my Sister, and our Mother who had volunteered as a helper. The Village School only had two Rooms and the influx of Evacuees meant that it was very full. One of our Teachers, Mr Frost was in charge of us, but the School was run by the head Teacher who ran the infant Classes and our teacher ran the older childrens classes



. The cottage at Thelnetham

We soon settled into our new life, it was a bit like a Holiday, and got on well with the Village Children. I was thirteen Years old, and stayed on in School until I was Fifteen, by which time there was nothing much to do with schooling, so I left and got a job with the Farmer where I had been billeted, together with my Brother John, as by this time our Mother had found a cottage in the next Village, so that we could all be together again. The Cottage was built of Weatherboard and Clay lump with a thatched Roof, a Kitchen built on the side and a Wash-house, an outside Toilet and a Well, the rent was Three Shillings per Week, it also had a small Garden and a large Outhouse for storing things like cycles and was very cosy. The outside Toilet was a small Shed with a bucket, that had too be regularly emptied

into a Pit that was dug in the garden, and the contents covered with Earth. The Well was not very deep and was fed by a spring. Before we moved in, I drained the Well, put a Ladder down, brushed the Walls and scraped the bottom, so that it was very clean, and then let the Well refill itself. The Water was very sweet and clear, and the Well never ever ran dry, and in the wet weather it would fill up almost to the top so that you could dip a Pail into it and did not have to put the Bucket onto the Chain. We had a Paraffin Cooker in the Kitchen which had an Oven, and worked very well. The Wash house had a Copper for washing Clothes, and we also had a Tin Bath in there which we could fill up with hot Water when we wanted to have a Bath. With the open Fire in the main Room it was very cosy and warm even in winter.

We kept Chickens in the Garden, and Rabbits in the Outhouse. I bought a 12 Bore Shotgun from one of the Village Boys and was able to Shoot Rabbits which were in great abundance. The River which was about half a Mile away was also good for wild Ducks, and Fish. The River was The Little Ouse which was the Boundary between Norfolk and Suffolk, and started in a Corner of the Village in an Area of rough Pasture. Here was a Spring and the Area was very flat, and as the water came out of the Spring it flowed in two directions, in Blo Norton it was the Little Ouse, and in the other direction it was called the Waveney which entered the Sea at Great Yarmouth, the little Ouse flowed into the Great Ouse and entered the Sea at Kings Lynn. So despite Food being rationed, we did not do too badly.



CHURCH FARM



STABLES



CHURCH FARM



STABLES



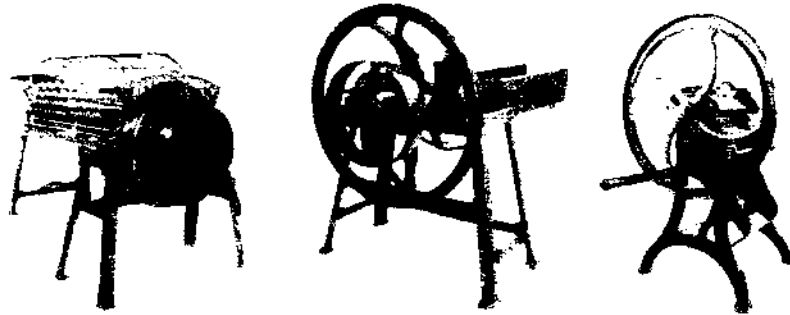
The Farm where I worked was called Church Farm and every Morning we all crowded into the Stables and would be given our orders for the Day. My first Day was carting Straw into the various Yards. I climbed into the Tumbrel and Reggie (one of the Workers) climbed onto the Straw stack and told me to stand with my back to the end of the Tumbrel. He threw down a Fork full of Straw, which I had to place on my left Side in the corner of the Tumbrel and hold it in place with my left Foot. The next Fork full was placed in front of the Straw under my left Foot to bind it, the same procedure for the other side, and then a Fork full for the middle. Now the whole was bound in. The same procedure for the front of the Cart, and then the middle was filled in. This was carried on in Layers until the Load was as big as was required. Over a period of Time I became quite an Expert at loading Hay and Straw and could keep two Men Pitching too me without getting overwhelmed. At Haymaking Time ,or as later carting Straw with a Tractor and Trailer I built enormous loads which because of their size and distance to be carried were roped over, but I never liked to ride on Top of a Load, but my School friend Ronny when we both worked together was always happy to ride on top

The Farmer always bought around 20 in calf Heifers, and the calving occurred around October Time when Dairy Farmers would be short of Milk, and the Heifers would tide them over until their own Cows

calved. There was only one House Cow at Church Farm, and the Farmer milked it himself. I always found it amusing, that when he had finished milking, he went off with the bucket of Milk first too his Ferrets, then to the Dogs and Cats, and the rest to his Housekeeper, and if she wanted some Cream she poured the Milk into shallow Trays in the Dairy, and when it had settled she would skim the Cream off the surface

The Straw that we carted into the Yards was Barley Straw and it would have a lot of Clover mixed in with it .The four rotation method of Farming was still practiced on mixed Farms(they are Farms that have Animals as well as growing Crops).A Hay crop would be sown in between a growing Barley crop, and when the Barley was harvested the Clover would be several inches high, and as the Binder cut the Barley there would be several inches of Clover in the bottom of the Sheaves, and after the Barley had been threshed the Clover would be mixed in with the Straw and made nice Feed for the Animals. The Straw would be piled up around the walls of the Yards and after the Animals had eaten what they wanted this Straw would be spread around the yards as bedding and over a period of time would build up to several feet deep and made excellent Manure ,to be removed at the next Muck spreading time. It was one of my jobs too feed the

Heifers with a Mixture of Chaff chopped Cattle Beet and chopped Cattle Cake. The Cake came in long Slabs and the Heifers loved it.



Beet cutter.

Chaff cutter.

Cake grinder.

The Cake was very often made from ground Nuts, and I happily used to eat a piece which was like eating a mouthful of Peanuts .Paul's of Ipswich made the cattle Cake, and the other Feed was called Kossitos which was flaked Maize (yes you are right, Corn Flakes).Animal feed was very tight during the War and was supplemented with dross Corn ground at the local Millers. I used to make regular trips to the Mill with a Cart loaded with Sacks of Field Peas and Beans and Oats. The Peas and Beans were ground into Meal. The Oats were rolled for the Horses. The Horses at the Farm were a Picture, all Suffolk Punches around 4 Years old. They were lovingly cared for, but like everything at Church Farm had to work hard every working Day, which meant five full Days and half a Day on Saturdays. They were groomed every Morning before they set out for work ,and washed down and groomed when they came back in the Evening When I was promoted to junior Horseman ,grooming among other things was one of my jobs and I loved it. I cannot think of anything nicer than walking behind Horses when they are at work, be it Ploughing, harrowing, rolling, drilling, raking, hoeing or carting. The only thing you had too look out for was that the Horses never bolted. They were never given a Nosebag at lunchtime being fed in the morning before they set out for work and again in the Evening plus Hay in the

Yard when they were turned out. During the better weather they were turned out into the Meadows, I have spent many a half hour Lunch break standing with the Reins in my hand because I did not trust them. They were well broken in, but because they were so young they were easily frightened. Daisy was the oldest Mare in the Yard, and her last Foal was called Tommy. She was 20 years old and the Farmers favourite .She only did light work and was a great character. The crushed Oats were kept in a wooden bin in the Stable but Daisy given half a chance new exactly how to open the Bin Lid and stuff herself with Oats. Another trick of hers was too snatch a bite of Hay as you passed her in the Stable on your way to the Horse Yard, and many is the time she has taken my Cap off my Head with her mouthful of Hay

One of the jobs I did not like was helping to break the young Horses in; it was not so much the job, but the walking round and round in a circle, sometimes I got so dizzy I could hardly stand. It is surprising how quickly with patience and kindness the young Horses soon learnt what it was all about .They always got fidgety and bucked about when they first got the Harness on, but soon got used to it. Once they were in Harness they would be hitched up to a large Log, which they pulled around the Meadow, you had to be very careful you kept the Traces away from their legs.

The Farmer always kept a Flock of Sheep. He would go to Market and buy 12 Ewes here and 20 there until he ha built up a Herd of over a hundred, plus two Rams, locally known as Tupps. This became another job for me to do. The Sheep dog was pretty useless, and was inclined to chase the Sheep away instead of rounding them up. The Sheep were kept in Pens in the Fields, Rams had a good helping of yellow Ochre painted around their John Thomas's, and if they covered a Yew they left their yellow trade mark so that you could see

which Ewe would have Lambs. The Pens were Wire Netting on each side divided off with wooden Hurdles.

During the Summer Months the sheep would be pestered by Flies. I always carried a Bottle full of diluted Carbolic with me, and if I noticed a Sheep twitching its Tail, I would catch hold of it and have a look. Invariably it would have a sore place and the flies would lay their Eggs on this place. I would pour the diluted Carbolic over the sore place, and standing astride the Sheep facing its rear, I would run my Fingers backwards and forwards over the sore place and the Maggots would fly out in all directions. If the Sheep was a bit dirty between its back Legs, I would trim off the Wool. As I was a quick learner, it was not long before the Farmer left me in sole charge. So, what with looking after the Cattle in the Yards, including the Pigs as well as the Sheep, it would take me to Lunch time to get all the Chores done. I would be told what else must be done to fill out the time, and at 4 o'clock it would be time to start feeding and watering all the Animals again.

I remember one foggy Morning as I was working in the Yards; I heard a loud clatter coming from the Road. I went outside to have a look and was just in time to catch two Horses dragging a Plough behind them. The Horses were very frightened by the noise of the Plough banging behind them. I unhooked them from the Plough, and got them into the Stable, quietened them down took off the Harness and gave them something to eat. I carefully looked them over but could not see that they had damaged themselves, and the Plough was also O, K. After some time the Ploughman came staggering into the Yard looking for the Horses, he was an elderly Man and as he opened his Mouth to speak no sound came out, his false Teeth were jumping up and down. He was quite shocked and shaken and said something had startled the Horses in the Fog and they had taken off, and he then



Spring source of Little Ouse and Waveney Rivers. Little Ouse ran left
and Waveney ran right

decided to go Home. When the Farmer came back into the Yard late afternoon, I told him what had happened. He looked the Horses over, and as they seemed alright did not seem too bothered about what had happened

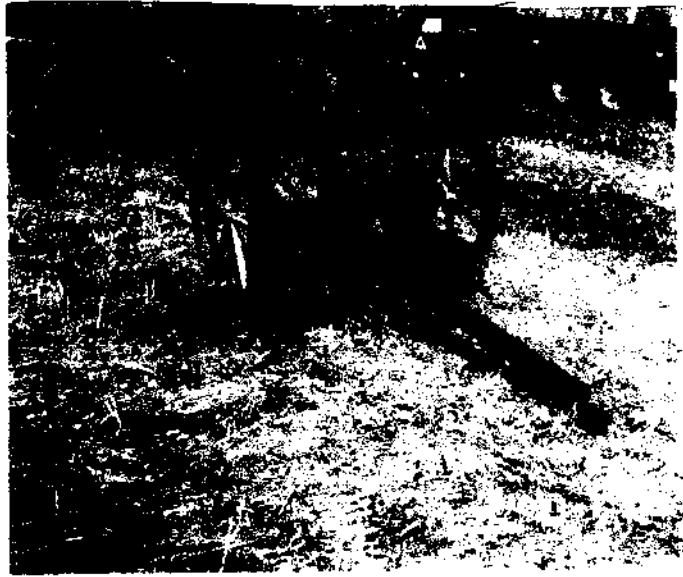
When things were a bit quiet during the winter the Farmer liked to go ferreting. He would not feed the Ferrets for a Day or so before he was ready to go to make them hungry and sharp. We would load up his Gig with two Ferrets and a Stave which is a Pole about 4 Feet long with a Steel Hook at one end and a Trowel at the other. I always had to accompany him on these Trips, and we went to the Thrift, a large area of rough grassland where the source of the Little Ouse River was. The Ferrets had a little Collar around their necks and a line was attached to the Collar with a knot tied every Yard so that you could see by counting the Knots how far down the Rabbit Hole the Ferret was. The Farmer inspected each Rabbit Hole ,and if there were Cobwebs there he would say "No one at Home, the Curtains are drawn" .If a Hole looked interesting the Ferret was put down with the Farmer playing out the Line and counting the Knots. The Line was held fairly tight and you could feel when the Ferret struck. The expertise was to get to the Rabbit before the Ferret damaged it. (Remember it was hungry).The Farmer would look down the Hole,



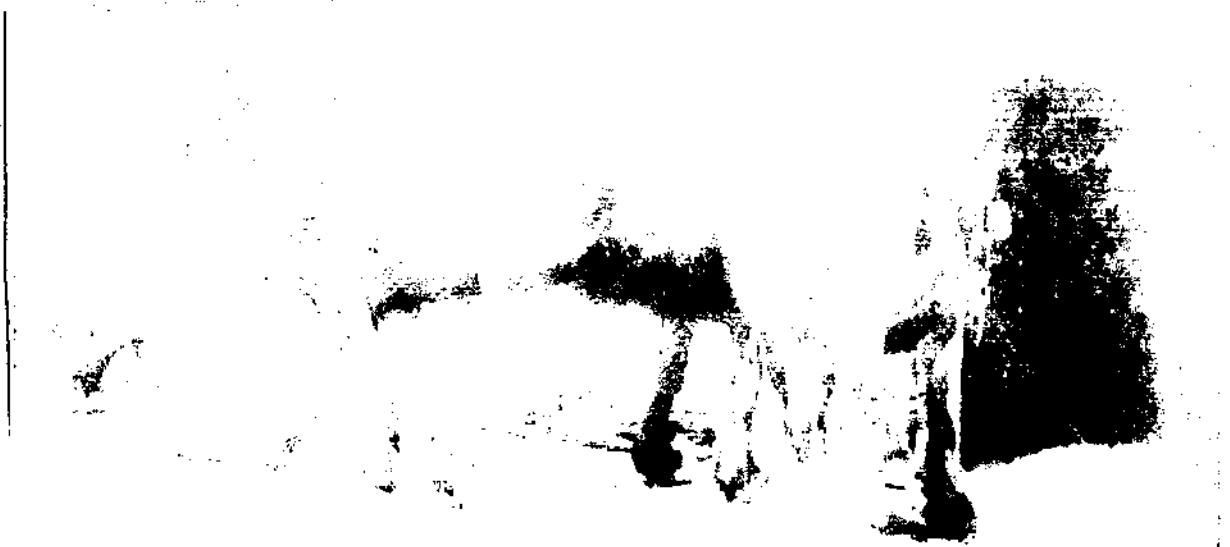
Noting the direction of the Line and told me where to dig. This was Quickly done with the Trowel end of the Stave, and when it broke through into the Burrow I fished the Line

out with the hooked end of the Stave, and this would continue until we found the Ferret and the Rabbit. Time wise it took only a few Minutes and off we went to the next hole. We would usually get 30 to 40 Rabbits in a few Hours, and the Farmer would sell them to the local Butcher, and always gave me one to take home. One day as we were ferreting the Farmer accidentally caught me on the Nose with the Stave, and although it swelled up and made my Eyes water I did not think it had done any damage. However some 20 Years later I had to go to Hospital as I was having problems with my breathing and the Surgeon asked me if I had suffered a blow on the Nose I told him what had happened and he said the blow had bent the Bone and one side of my Nose was blocked. I had to go into Hospital for a few Days, the Nose was operated on and the Bone chipped out to make a clear passage for my left Nostril. I should have sued him. At Harvest time the usual setup was the Farmer, the old Chap who lost the Horses and me in the Stack yard, two Men in the Fields and the Farmers Father taking the Wagons backwards and forwards. The Farmer built the Corn stack .We lay wooden Faggots on the ground and covered these with Straw to keep the Sheaves dry, and as the loaded wagon of Sheaves arrived we took it in turns to unload it as the Farmer built the Stack.

We had some excitement one Day, when a Villager built a Bonfire in his back Garden, and as we were working in the Stack Yard we could see that the Fire had gone through the Hedge and set fire to a Stubble Field The Farmer told me to grab a Scythe and we both ran over to a Field next to the Stubble Field which had a Wheat Crop on it, and at one end a Thatched Cottage. By the time we reached the Wheat Field it was alight and we tried to cut a break with the Scythes ,but the Flames were so fierce and travelled so fast we only managed to cut a break just before the Flames reached the Cottage ,and beat



Grass Cutter, used at Haymaking time



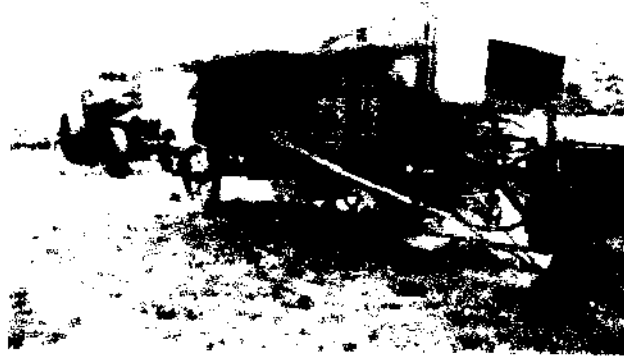
Shoeing Horses outside Blacksmiths Shop

them out. It was a close shave. This completely disrupted the harvesting and as we finally got back to the Stack Yard all the other Workers were there wondering where we had got to. We had half an Hour break and then started off again, with the Harvest, working until we could hardly see the Gateway out of the Field. The Farmer was a hard Boss, but he was fair, and when we worked Overtime I got the same rate as the Men. We worked all Day ,from eight in the Morning until dark, with only two half Hour breaks every day of the Week if the Weather held to get the Harvest in. All the other jobs around the Farm still had to be done, Stock had to be fed, and everyone had to muck in.

After Harvest the Farmer always had around half an Acre of Stubble ploughed up and sown with Mustard Seed which grew very quickly and made a nice cover for the Pheasants. Later it would be ploughed in as green Manure.

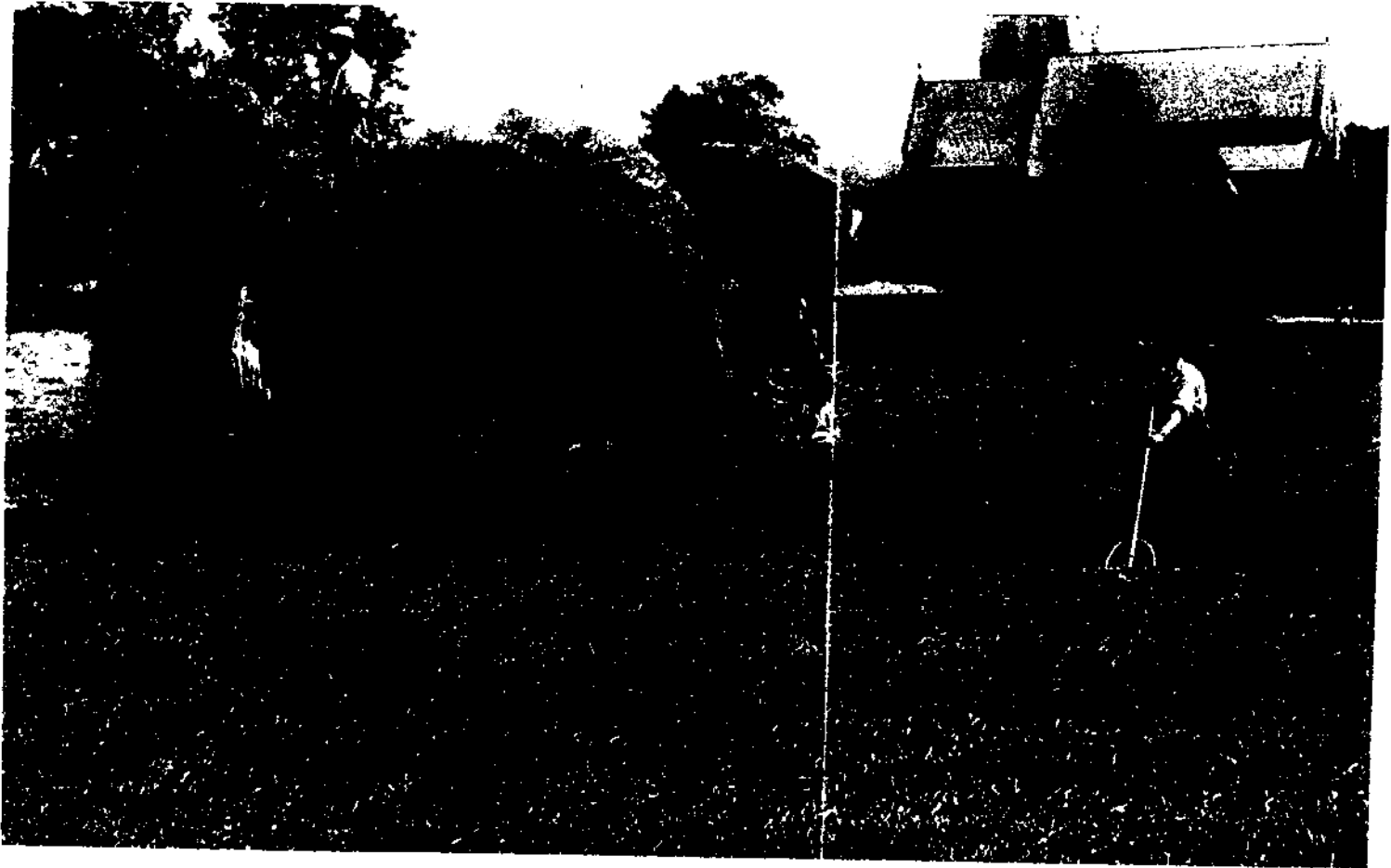
The Crops grown at Church Farm were Barley, Oats, Wheat, Field Beans and Peas, Sugar Beet and Cattle Beet, and of course a Hay Crop .One Year we grew a crop of Linseed.

By the way, there is an Art in loading a two Wheel Tumbrel so that it balances. Too far forward and the weight is on the Horses back, too far back and the Girth cuts into the Horses Stomach and tries to lift it off the ground. When the Threshing Tackle arrived at the Farm,



There was always a lot of heaving, pushing and shoving to get the Threshing Drum in the right Place, and also level .The Farmer always built the Corn Stacks so that the Threshing Drum went in between two Stacks, and after they had been threshed, the Straw from both Corn Stacks was built into one Hugh Straw Stack. I worked either on the Corn Stack feeding the Threshing Drum, or on the Straw Stack with one other Farm Worker who would build the Straw Stack. As the Elevator carried the Straw from the Drum onto the Straw Stack, it sometimes came up too fast and overwhelmed us putting us under pressure, I would grab hold of one of the Elevator Tines, and this would cause the driving Belt to come off, and the whole operation had to stop until the belt was put back on again, and this gave us time to sort things out, after all with only two men on the Straw Stack it was hard going. The Steam Engine and the Threshing Tackle belonged to what was known as the Federation. This was a collection of Farmers who all had Shares in the Equipment, and also first call when they needed it .It was also hired out to other Farmers who were not in the Federation.

By this time the Framer had taken on another Lad, and I was promoted to become a Horseman, a job that I loved. The Lad took over my Yard duties, but the Farmer would not let him near the



Four Men and a Boy carting Hay, today you would see one man, and a Tractor

Sheep, and did this job himself. So there I was caring for Horses, and was soon out Harrowing, Rolling, etc, but not yet ploughing. One Day the Farmer decided to send me off with a Duck Foot Harrow. This was a three Cornered Wooden Monster with long Teeth shaped like a Ducks Foot at the end. It was very heavy and took three Horses to pull it .One of the Farm workers tipped it up on its side and with one Horse hooked on to it slid it to the Field where I was going to work. I followed behind with the other two Horses. We arrived at the Field and I hitched the three Horses up and off we went .I had to Harrow the Field from North to South and from East to West. What a lovely feeling walking behind three Suffolk Punches .When I got to the end of the Field, I really had too hang on, and carefully turn the Horses round so that they did not step on the Traces. It took me two Days to Harrow the Field and then along came the Farm worker to slide the Harrow to the next Field. I don't know how he managed to up end the Harrow and slide it along, but he did. I remember one Day when the Farmer and one Worker were drilling Sugar Beet Seed. I was following them with a light set of Harrows, covering the Seed and kept catching them up, so that I had too stop otherwise I would have covered up their Markers, and as everything on this Farm had to be in straight lines, this would not do. The Farm worker was getting annoyed as he could not understand how I was always so close, and in the end asked me how? I told him it was simple all I did was follow where the Horse that was pulling the Drill had walked, and as my set of Harrows was the same width as the Drill I did not loose Ground by over lapping. The Farmer laughed, but the Worker was not amused.

WE used a Blacksmith Shop at South Lopham, The Blacksmith at Garboldisham was not rated very high and had a foul temper ,but as the Horses were never on the Roads they were never shod, only had

their Hooves tided up when necessary. The Blacksmith at South Lopham was a real Craftsman, I remember being sent down to him when one of the springs on the Binder broke. Off I went on my Cycle to see if he had a spare, but unfortunately he did not, and he decided to make one .He cut a piece of Steel from an old Cartwheel tyre, heated it and shaped it and finally tempered it. This took about half an Hour. I cycled back and told The Farmer what had happened, the spring was fitted back on the Binder, and off we went with the Harvest again.

One Day the Farmer went off to an Auction, he was interested in buying some Wagons. I and the new Lad were to Straw the Yards, and as there were a lot of odd heaps of Straw dotted around the Stack Yard I decided to tidy these up as well. When the Farmer arrived back he was in a filthy temper as he had not been able to buy the Wagons and told me off for clearing the Yard as he had not told me to do this. I got annoyed and told him he was always moaning about something or the other, and told him to stuff his Job and said I would not work for him any more, and gave him a Weeks notice that I was leaving. He did not say anything but walked off. On Saturday lunch Time as he gave me my Wages, I asked him for my Cards, which he took out of his Pocket, and I got on my Cycle and rode off. I later heard from the other Farm Workers that he did not want me to leave, but would not ask me to stay. When it got around the Village that I had left, I was inundated with offers from other Farmers who wanted me to work for them, but my Friend Ronny who worked for another Farmer had told him I was leaving, and he asked me to work for him, and this is what I did.

It was not all Work, we used to enjoy ourselves. Tuesday Evening on the Bus from Hopton to Thetford, something to eat in a Café, then to the Cinema, and afterwards a few Glasses of Bullard's Beer, was a

nice Evening out. On Saturdays to Hopton, to catch the Bus to Bury St Edmunds, Fish and Chips, Cinema and a few Glasses of Abbot Ale, A Pint of Beer cost 5 Pence. Sometimes we would Cycle to Diss to the Cinema and afterwards a few Beers in our local Village Pub. I remember on one occasion we went to Thetford to the Cinema and as usual afterwards into the Pub, I was a bit tipsy and as I got off the Bus at Hopton I climbed onto my Cycle and wobbled off home to Thelnetham, and as it was all downhill it was not too bad. Our Cottage stood back about 100 Yards from the Road. There was a fairly wide Ditch over which I had built a Bridge. As I turned off the Road onto the bridge my Cycle Chain came off, and there I was on the Bridge balancing on the Cycle, and slowly like an old Film I toppled off the Bike into the Ditch which was full of Water, with the Bike around my neck. I staggered out dragging the Bike, sloshed my way down the Path to the Cottage, and went into the Wash Room stripped off my sodden Clothes, tottered into the Cottage and upstairs to Bed, somehow without waking anyone. The next Morning I told my Mother that the Chain had broken on my Bike, and I had fallen into the Ditch (no mention of the Booze) and left her to wash my wet and muddy Clothes.

At this time I had a very useful arrangement with two Girl Friends, one lived in Hopton and I always met her on Tuesday Nights for the trip to Thetford. The other lived in Market Weston and I met her on Saturdays for the trip to Bury St. Edmunds, and this arrangement had been working beautifully for Months, until one Saturday Tuesdays Girl got on the Bury St .Edmunds Bus and promptly sat beside me. I was in a bit of a state and did not know what to do apart from hoping that Saturdays Girl did not turn up. No such luck, when we got to Market Weston there she was waiting for the Bus. She got into the Bus saw me sitting beside Tuesday Girl, did not say anything but

1941



He in Home Guard age 16

sat in the front of the Bus. When we got to Bury, I managed to loose Tuesdays Girl and ran around looking for Saturday's girl. I eventually found her, and she was not too pleased. I tried to talk my way out of it, but no good, and off she went. I had the usual few drinks and went off to the Cinema, The two Girls must have met up, because when I went to catch the Bus Home they were waiting for me, and I had my Fortune told by the Pair of them, and that was the end of the relationships.(hey ho).

Another thing we enjoyed doing was to go Rattng on a Sunday Morning. We would go to a Barn with two Ferrets ,climb up into the thatched Roof and put a Ferret in each end .I had a No 3 Garden Shotgun that had a very small Cartridge, just the right size for this job. We all had various Guns but nothing bigger than a .410.After a while as the Ferrets scampered in the Roof, the Rats would come out and run along the Beams, and we would pop them off taking care not to hit the Ferrets. It was nothing to shoot 20 or 30 Rats in a Morning, and as the Ministry was paying, one Shilling for each rats Tail we could earn quite a bit of Beer and Cigarette Money. The hardest job was recapturing the Ferrets.

The War was going very badly in 1941The Germans had driven us out of Europe, France had fallen and thousands of British Soldiers had been rescued from Dunkirk, and the possibility of an Invasion from the Germans was very real, so Volunteers were asked for to join the Home Guard .Air Raids were a regular occurrence, and we were surrounded by Airfields, we reckoned you could travel in any direction, and would find an Airfield every 3 Miles .My Friend Ronny and I were now 16 years old and were asked if we would join the Home Guard, and we both said yes. But they now decided that as I had moved over the River to Thelnetham which was in Suffolk I could not join The Blo Norton Platoon. Ronny said that if we could not stay

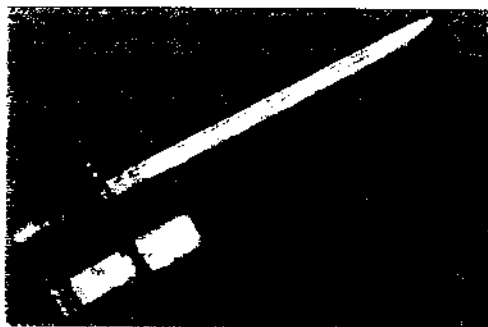


The Metham Mill looking towards the River. On the left is the Lane where we did our Hand Grenade throwing exercise



Ronny my school friend

together he would not join, and so they finally agreed. I was issued with a Uniform and a 303 American Winchester Rifle from first World War vintage, an 18 inch Bayonet, a Gas Mask and 50 rounds of



bayonet

Ammunition/We had Rifle training in a Pit in the Village and regularly went to the Rifle Range in Thetford (it is still there).My Rifle was an excellent Gun and very accurate, and I became a first class shot with



Lewis Gun

it. When we went to the Rifle Range in Thetford we always had bets who could score the most Bulls eyes ,and much to the annoyance our local Village Poacher I beat him every time. Later we were issued with Sten machine Guns, which I did not like.



Tommy Gun.



StenGun and Hand Grenade



We were always having manoeuvres with Platoons from other.



303 Lee Enfield by Winchester

Villages and competition was very fierce, we also had manoeuvres with the regular Army. The next Weapons we received were Hand Grenades, also of First World War Vintage. They were covered in thick Grease inside their Boxes and had to be cleaned very thoroughly. Unfortunately some were not cleaned as well as they should be. For practice, it was decided to use a Lane just past Thelnetham Mill which had a sunken piece just beyond a Cottage. Lookouts were posted a quarter of a Mile on each side of the Lane that we were going to use. None of us had ever thrown a Hand Grenade, but we knew we had to hold the spring down before we threw it. It would have been more sensible to have trained with dummy grenades first instead of live ones,. We each had to prime our Grenade with a four Second Fuse, which meant unscrewing the

base Plug and inserting the Fuse, then screwing the Plug back in. We took it in turns to throw our Grenade, but some of the Grenades were not thrown in an Arc and landed just on the Edge of the Field, and everyone had to duck down as when it went off you were covered in Earth. If a Grenade did not go off we had to stop, and the Sergeant had to climb into the Field, find the Grenade, put another live one next to it and make a rapid retreat back into the Lane. It was a wonder no one was killed. Whether both Grenades exploded was questionable as they would be covered in earth and all you could see was a hole in the ground. We had no way of knowing which was the right way of going about things, but we had more common sense than some of the Idiots who were in charge of us, who had had no proper training and did not seem bothered about getting some. We once went on a Weekend manoeuvre with the regular Army, and trained to use an anti Tank Gun called a Spigot Mortar. It took three Men to man it, a range finder, one to aim and fire it and a loader. Two men had to lie between the supporting Legs, and got an unpleasant surprise if they had a leg over the support as the Gun had a terrific backlash when it went off. It was also necessary for the Loaders safety that the firer kept his hands off the trigger otherwise the Gun would go off taking the Loaders Hands with it. The Mortar was quite accurate at about 200 yards range but the trajectory was so slow you could follow the Bomb from the time it left the Mortar until it hit the target.

., On another occasion we were on night Manoeuvres with the regular Army and posted by Hopton Bridge when we heard a noise like a Tank coming towards us. We hid under the Bridge and watched a Bren Gun Carrier roll by as if looking for someone. As the Bren Gun Carrier rolled in the direction of Garboldisham we nipped back into some Woods and found a sizeable piece of Wood about 15 feet long

and as the Carrier came slowly back to us we pushed the long piece of Wood out into the Road, It went between the Track and the wheels, the Track came off and the Carrier slewed off the Road, The shouting and cursing was intense and we quietly disappeared into the Wood. I don't know what happened to the Carrier, but nothing was ever said about what happened.

I was seconded to the signal section which was based in East Harling, and promoted to Lance Corporal. We were taught Morse code, Semaphore and two way Radio. The two way Radio was a dead duck as it was always going wrong. I had to cycle to East Harling every Wednesday Evening and again on Sunday Morning .The Army Sergeant who was training us was dead cunning, and as we got more proficient with Morse, and had to send and receive Messages, we must only write down what we received, but as words were coming through you could guess what the next word would be, the cunning so and so would slip in an odd word, so you could not take anything for granted. After Sunday Morning Session I used to stop off at the Fox Pub in Garboldisham for a Pint. It was now 1942 and the Americans were here with their Airplanes, and the Pubs were full. I only went into the Swan Pub once, and as I went through the Door I could see into the Room Where the Barrels of Beer were kept. I could hardly believe my Eyes. The Pub had no Pumps and the Beer was drawn from Taps fixed in the Barrels. They had placed Tin Baths under the Taps which were turned on and the Beer was running into the Baths, and because they were so busy serving the Yanks they were scooping the Beer out of the Baths with the pint Jugs. I never went in there again. Another time one Wednesday Evening I stopped in the Fox. There was a small Room on the right of the front Door with a narrow entrance and we were playing Pontoon. The place was full of Yanks when a punch up started, and as it got worse the Yanks

tried to come into our Room. One of the lads stood on a Table just inside the Door, but out of sight, with a substantial Brass Peg Board in his Hand. Like Horatio holding the Bridge we took it in turns to guard the Door, and if a Yank tried to come in, we moved slowly backwards throwing Punches all the time, and when he was through the Door he was belted over the Head with the Peg Board when he would back off, and then another would try, and got the same Medicine. Eventually the Military Police arrived, threw the Yanks into Lorries and carted them off. Most of the Yanks were O.K. but some were absolute rubbish.

The Sten gun was in my opinion a useless and dangerous Weapon when it was first introduced and could only have been made out of desperation. No way could you compare it to the German Spandau or Schneider Machine Gun from which it had been copied. The Block was heavy for the light spring and with no safety Catch if it had a Magazine on it the slightest tap on the Butt, and it would fire off. I saw this happen several times as Men climbed out of Lorries. The usual way was to hold the Sten in the Hand Butt down and jump down. But if you happened to knock the Butt as you jumped the spring would allow the Block to drop and off it would go. Later they made a safety catch by drilling a hole in the casing and pushing a pin in. What a load of rubbish, give me my Winchester every time. Another time we were given 9mm ammunition for the Sten that had been captured from the Italians I remember firing a few round at the lavatory Door from a distance of about three yards. It did not go through the Door and fell out onto the ground. The Sten was so inaccurate, that at a distance it was useless. No wonder it was dubbed the Woolworth Gun.

One of the perks of having Mr. Wally Bell of Blo Norton Hall in charge of the Home Guard Platoon was a Hare shoot every Boxing Day. It

OUR LOCAL PUB THE CASE IS ALTERED



THE CASE IS ALTERED?OUR LOCAL PUB

was a good Day out and I remember one Ancient with an even more ancient Gun sliding down a wide Ditch, and as he clambered up the other side must have filled the Gun Barrels with Earth and Snow. The next Shot that he took blew both Barrels of the Gun, and the Gun looked like a Sweeps Broom. Luckily no one was injured, and I managed to topple a Hare before the end of the Day.

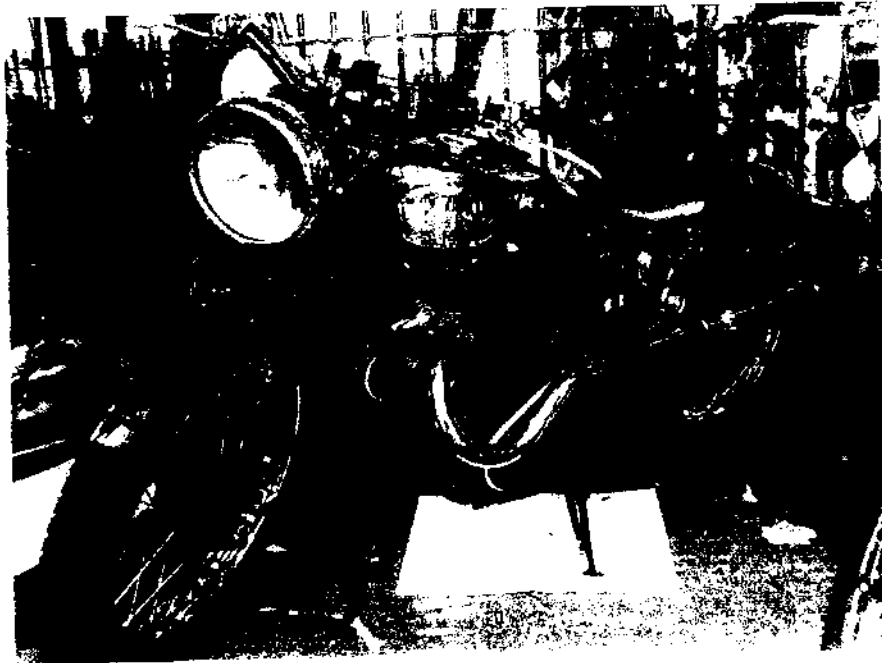
Once we had a Home Guard meeting in the School which had been recently fitted out with Fire Extinguishers. They looked like long dunces Hats, were filled with Foam, and to operate them they had to be turned upside down, and the Chemicals inside mixed and set them off. Some fool turned one upside down, and the next moment the Classroom was covered in Foam. Someone tried to stick a piece of wood into the Nozzle to stop it, but it just blew it out, and in the end we took it out into the Playground and left it to empty itself. Poor old Mr, Dean who was acting School Caretaker and was not in the Home Guard, had the unpleasant job of telling the Head Mistress the next Morning what had happened, and she was not very pleased. They had to get Cleaners in to clean up the mess, and I don't know who paid, probably Mr.Bell.



Blo Norton Hall

Mr.Bell got the push as commander of the Home Guard Platoon, and Lionel Smith who was a Cowman in the Village was promoted from

my favourite bike at the 2005 Calne Motorcycle Meet. It looks 1930's to me but I don't know what model it is. I w
wn it!



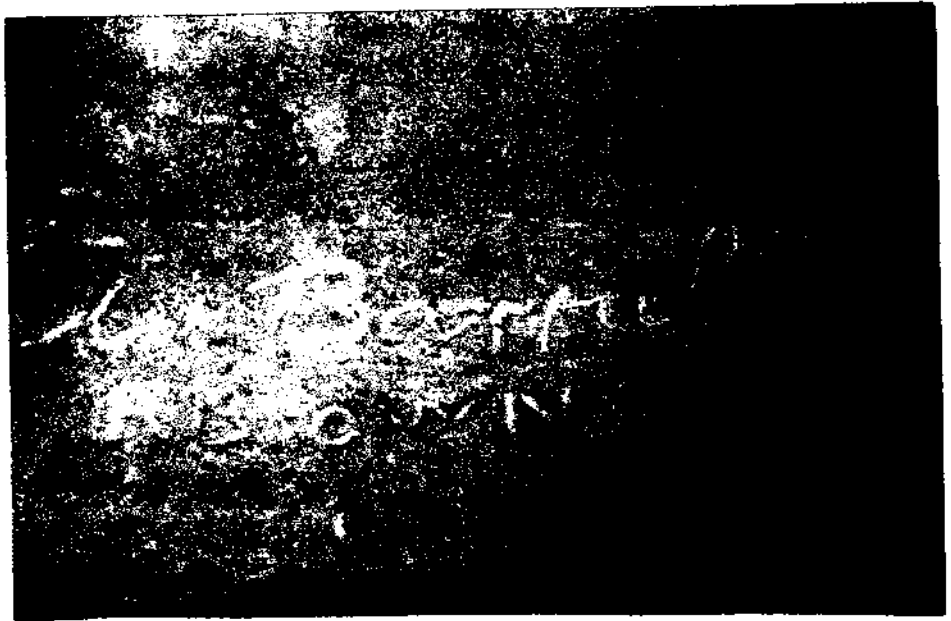
This is a restored Model of my Motorcycle in a Museum now
74 years old

Sergeant to second Lieutenant. He was so proud of his Pips; I think he milked the Cows in his Uniform. Mr. Bells Sister who lived in the Hall and Our Teacher who was also billeted there. She always called him Mr. Frawst, and I have seen them sitting in the Hall Gardens for Hours. Anyway after the demise of Mr. Bell we had a booze up in the Crown and Anchor, another Pub in the Village, and most of us got blotto, because some idiot was lacing the Beer with surgical Spirit., It was a wonder we were not all poisoned.

I had been looking to buy a 12 bore Shotgun for some time; I had a No 3 Garden Gun which was only of use at very close range. One of the lads had a 12 bore for sale, a very nice Gun and I bought it. Some time later the local Poacher approached me and said it had been his Gun and he wanted to buy it back. I told him it was not for sale, but he continued to pester me to sell it, and in the end I got annoyed and told him to lie off, and being a blustering bully he did just that. We were no longer the Evacuees; we had grown up and could take care of ourselves. I remember one winter the River flooded some low Meadows with about 6 inches of Water, and then it froze over making a wonderful Skating Rink. I bought a second hand pair of Ice Skates which had long pointed Noses, screwed these to a pair of Boots, and as I struck off, the point dug straight into the Ice and I landed flat on my face not having moved an inch. So back to the drawing board I cut off the points with a Hack Saw and filed them round, after which they worked perfectly, and we had a lot of fun on the Ice. The only thing you had to look out for was twigs sticking out of the Ice. I bought myself a second hand Motor cycle from a chap in South Lopham, an AJS 250 cc It was a bit neglected and after buying it I drove back home, but just as I reached Blo Norton I took a bend too fast and landed in the Hedge (lesson No 1) There were two Brothers in the Village who were Motor Cycle enthusiasts, and I got

them to give it the once over. They told me what needed replacing or repairing, and over a period of time I learnt a lot about Motor Cycles and could do my own maintenance and repairs. We set up a Club and Ronny bought a New Imperial, Another chap had a BSA, and another a Calthorpe. . We used to gather in the Garden Shed and help each other with repairs, and someone had to make a trip to Hopton to get The Fish and Chips. The Shop was very small, and the frying was done in an enormous Frying Pan. It took for ever to get served, but tasted OK. I once had a try on a Motor Cycle with a side Car, but could not get used too the idea that you had to steer it, with a Motor Cycle you just leaned over in the direction you wanted to go, and after about 100 yards I landed in the Ditch. The Motor Cycle opened up a new way of getting around, but petrol being rationed we only got enough to get us to and from work.

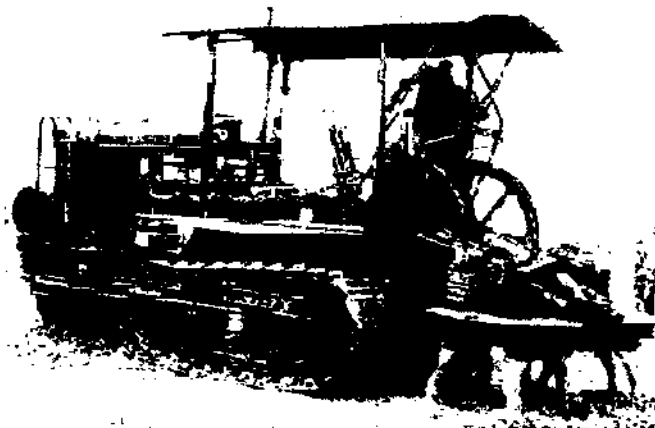
Sir Lancelot Smith lived in Garboldisham Hall. He was a Nephew of old Queen Mary, and a good Perk for us when we were still at School was a days beating when he had a shoot. WE got 10 Shillings per day and it was nothing to shoot several hundred Pheasants in a Day. The Game Cart pulled by a Pony followed the Guns around the Estate collecting the Game. Sir Lancelot had a new Butler, and when he first arrived at the Hall, the delivery Van bringing his belongings got stuck under the wrought Iron Gates, and could not be moved without damaging the Gates. The new Butler wandered down to see what was going on, and told the Driver to let some of the Air out of the Lorry Tyres until the Lorry was low enough to clear the Gates, and this lowered the Lorry so that it could scrape under the Gates. . We had a Storm one night, and in the Morning the Ferrets Cage Door at Church Farm had blown open and the Ferrets were gone. We searched the Yards but could not find them .Mrs. Smith who lived in the Village kept Poultry, during the Morning came down to the Farm



Our names scratched in Concrete after we had built a Concrete Path in the
Farmyard, and after all these years is still there

and said there was a Ferret in one of her Sheds, and it had killed all the Turkey Chicks. I went up with the Farmer, and in a Shed was a heap of dead Turkey Chicks heaped up in one corner. We found the Ferret and I popped it into a Sack. We had a look around the other Sheds, and behind one of them we found the Gobbler Turkey (Male). It was also dead, it had been bitten in the Head and I suppose it had seen the Ferret and put its Head down to have a close look, and the Ferret had jumped up and bitten it in the Head. The Farmer was not very happy as he had to pay for the damage, and moaning that the Turkey was too old and tough to eat.

On the Thelnetham side of the river, was a Hugh area of scrub land covered with bushes, there must have been between thirty and forty Acres. The Ministry of Agriculture decided that it must be cleared and used for Agriculture. A Hugh Gyro tiller arrived on the Site, and with its rotating Tillers cleared the whole area. The scrub was pushed into heaps and burnt, and when the whole area was cleared it was ploughed up and a Wheat crop planted. When I look over the area today it is hard to remember what it looked like before the Gyro tiller got to work.



Mr. Plum lived in a Cottage in the Village and worked for Mr. Bell at the Hall, and called himself the Game keeper, but he was really only the Handy man. Mr. Bell was having a Shoot, and Plum offered us 5

4

Shillings each for a days beating. We told him to get stuffed, and as no one would go he was forced to pay us 10 Shillings each the same as Sir Lancelot Smith. The cunning old so and so would have pocketed the difference if we had agreed to his offer of 5 Shillings. The set up with Mr. Bells shooting rights was a bit odd, he had the rights to the Game but not to the Coney's (Rabbits to you). I had been given permission by The Farmer to shoot a Rabbit any time I wanted one, and one Morning as I cycled to work I shot a Rabbit down by the River on a Meadow. I left my Gun and Cycle by the side of the Road and climbed through the Hedge to collect my Rabbit. As I started back through the Hedge there was a pair of Legs in the way. It was Mr. Plum. "I shall tell Mr. Bell you have been poaching" he said, I told him I had permission from the Farmer to shoot a Rabbit whenever I wanted one, but off he stalked. I told the Farmer what had happened, he told me not to worry about it, and he would speak to Plum. The Farmer had some Water Meadows down by Hopton Bridge, and we used to cut the Sedge like Grass and make Hay with it. It was very difficult to dry, so that when we stacked it we used to put a layer of Barley Straw down and then a layer of Sedge until the Stack was built. It used to heat up like mad and we had to watch it so that it did not catch fire. Cut into Chaff the Animals loved it. Anyway The Farmer was wandering around the Meadows, and caught Mr. Plum Ferreting for Rabbits over which Mr. Bell had no rights, and the Farmer told him so .Plum said he did not know he could not have the Rabbits.



Suffolk Punches Ploughing.

The Farmer told me what had happened, and every time I saw him in the Pub I pulled his Leg like mad, and asked him if he had been poaching? He was not a very happy man.

The Farmer where my friend Ronny lodged bought himself a second hand Tractor, and his brother in law who lived with him with his wife and Daughter drove it. He was always fiddling around with it, and would ask us to put it right, but as he continued to mess around with it we got fed up, and would not help him any more.

I was by now working together with Ronny on the other Farm and, the farmers Brother in law more or less ran the Farm. Ronny was not interested in the Horse work so I took it over. They only kept two Horses, but had two Tractors. The Brother in law showed me the rudiments of Horse Ploughing which I soon picked up, and was off on my own with two Horses pulling a Ransom Plough. The first thing was to mark out the Field putting out sight Sticks. The trick was that if you aimed the Plough at the far Stick you finished up with a Banana shaped Furrow. You had to line up the Sticks with intermediate Objects, re a Stone or a clod of Earth, and this way you got a straight Furrow. The first Furrow you cut was a shallow one (fleet) as the locals called it adjusting the wheels to cut about 4 Inches deep. On reaching the end of the Field you set the Plough to its normal cutting depth which was about 10 Inches and ploughed back the Furrow you

had just cut. Then you were off going up and down each side (gathering as the locals called it) until you were roughly halfway to the next Stick, and at the next Stick you did exactly as you had done at the first one, and when you were left with a Furrows width between the two strips of ploughed Land you again cut a shallow Furrow, if you did not do this you would not be able to control the Plough. Next a deep furrow to join the two pieces you had ploughed and off to the next Stick, and started all over again. You were expected to Plough an Acre in a Day and that is a lot of Walking. One Day the Farmers Brother in law got me to have a go at a Ploughing Match with a Tractor and a 2 Furrow Plough, and I came 3rd. just an half an Inch out of straight. I was very proud. ,and then he showed me how to Plough with a Tractor and a two Furrow Plough which again I learnt very quickly, and soon I was off doing contract work on other Farms. There was a Smallholder just down the Road from the Farm where I was now working and I was sent down to plough his Field. I marked out the Field as usual but slipped up when I was pacing it out, and as I was coming to the end of the ploughing realised one end was about a yard narrower as the other. So to put it right I started to drive up the Field so as to straighten it out. Some of the Men whom I had previously worked with were working in a Field opposite, and they were always watching what other workers were doing, and when I got into the Pub that Night they were pulling my Leg like mad." What a mess" they said .I was not too bothered, and later we got the Field ready and sowed a Wheat crop. When it came to Harvest Time and the crop was threshed it gave the biggest yield that anyone had heard of. This of course pleased me no end, and when I met the same Crowd in the Pub I took great delight in telling them about the record Crop, and told them they should try ploughing and make a mess of it as it obviously paid dividends. I

thoroughly enjoyed the contract work, as it meant I travelled all over the place mainly ploughing and cultivating after Harvest.

Ronny and I used to arrive at the Farm at 8 o'clock in the Morning, and the Farmer who was a late Riser would invariably be still in Bed, and as the Milk Lorry arrived pretty early we would start milking, no machines everything by hand and it was always a Photo finish that we would be finished before the Lorry arrived and had the Churns by the Farm gate.

The Farmer bought a small Mill that was able to roll as well as grind. We fixed it up in one of the sheds and put a stationary Engine in a smaller one just outside. We rigged up overhead Pulley Wheels cut a hole in the Shed for the driving Belt to go through, and it worked like a dream, and meant that we did not have to go the Mill any more as we could grind corn for the Animal Feed and roll the Oats for the Horses. The stationary Engine was a Pig to start as the starting Handle which fitted on a Lug on the side of the Engine would get stuck, and as the engine started turning you had to sharply nip out of the shed and wait until the Handle flew off with a mighty crash. Talk about living dangerously. The Ministry of Agriculture put up a scheme to improve Farm drainage and subsidies were given to help pay for the work. Any Farmer applying had to submit a Plan and Acreage to be drained. The Farmer had some Fields that had a clay baulk running through them, the result being that when it rained the water would run up against the Clay, rise up and flood the Field, spoiling the Crop. The main way of draining was across the natural fall of the Land, running Clay pipes wishbone fashion across the Field into a main Drain and then into a Ditch the Farmer put his application in, and the Pipes were ordered. The Pipes were unglazed Clay about 18 Inches long, and arrived at East Harling Railway Station in an open Truck. There were several Thousand of them, and we set

off with a Tractor and Trailer to collect them. We found our Truck and parked the Trailer alongside and started to load it up. It took three of us over two Hours to complete the work, and then we found that the trailer because of the heavy load had pressed itself tightly against the Truck. We had to unhitch the tractor and drive down a row of three Trucks which fortunately were empty, hitch the Tractor onto the end one with a length of Rope Uncouple our Truck and pull the two empty ones a few hundred Yards down the Line. Then hitch onto our Trailer with the Truck stuck fast on the side and gradually pull away from the Truck until we were free. If it had not worked we had visions of having to unload the Trailer and start again. Laying all the Drains took some Weeks of work as we were not at it all the time having other things to do, but eventually it was finished.

The Farmer had a Brother who lived at Wortham long Green. He had a Wood Business, made Sheep Hurdles, fence Posts, Gate Posts, and Pegs for Thatcher's, and if any large Trees especially Oaks, were being cut down he would buy the Tops. From time to time Ronny and I would do a few days work for him, cutting up the Tops. Anything that could be used for other than firewood we cut out. He had an old World War one Lorry with open front and solid Tyres which was used for transport. The circular Saw was driven by an old Car, which had a pulley bolted onto a rear Wheel, all a bit Heath Robinson, but it worked. The Car was driven into position made fast and off it went. The Circular Saw was fixed on a wooden Sledge, and was dragged from place to place. As the Farmer was always short of Straw, we would go off to other Farms and collect large loads of Straw, which I built on the Trailer, Ronny and the Brother in Law pitching too me.

All the time we were in Blo, Norton I can only remember the Vet visiting the Farms twice. Whether it was lack of funds or meanness I cannot say, but I think Farmers hated paying Vets Bills. The first time

was when a Sow died and the Vet had to do a Post Mortem on it, and found it had died of Peritonitis, and the second time was when a Mare had a colt Foal and it had to be castrated. At Church Farm Pigs and Sheep were castrated and had their Tails docked by one of the Hands, Horses also had their Tails docked. We had a terrible job one Day .A Heifer was calving and had problems as the calf was the wrong way round and was dead. We had to firstly turn the Calf round and it took three of us plus a pulley to get the Calf out. The Heifer was very poorly for weeks afterwards. After wards, one of the Heifers lost a Horn fighting and there was blood every where. The Farmer managed to get a Halter on it which I lashed onto a Gatepost, He then got some Salt which he packed around the bloody Stump and tied some clean cloth around it. I slipped the Halter off and we made a rapid retreat before the Heifer went berserk, raging Bulls had nothing on this one. But it did the trick, healed up and kept the Flies off. Boars had their Tusks shortened when they became too long .The favourite way was to tie them to a Post, throw them on their side and tie their Feet together and cut the Tusks with a Hacksaw, it was a dodgy job. Trimming Sheep's Feet and keeping them free from Maggots was by comparison a doddle, as was giving them their annual dip. There were all sorts of local concoctions, for a wide range of Ailments. Eggs were very good if a Horse had the runs; routine things like worming were done with Powders etc bought from specialist Suppliers. I must say that Animals at Church Farm were very well treated, after all they were valuable Assets, but on some of the Farms they did not have it so good, sometimes it was cruelty and sometimes plain ignorance.

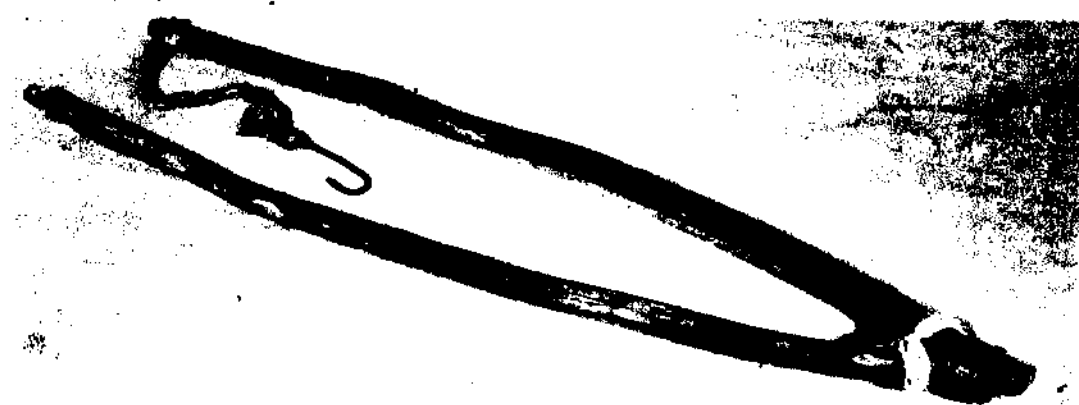
One Story I almost forgot to tell was quite frightening. I was with the Farmer in a Lane at the far end of the Village with a Horse and Tumbrel when a Storm suddenly blew up and it started to Thunder



Thatchers Yoke, would be filled with Straw bundles ready for the Thatcher to lay on roof of the Stack

and Lightning was flashing around. For some reason he told me to take the Horse out of the Shafts. There was a shallow Ditch with a high Hedge on the side of the Lane, and I stood in the Ditch holding the Horse, when suddenly there was a flash of Lightning, which hit the Steel Tyre on the Wheel of the Tumbrel. I was absolutely dazzled by the brightness for a while, and then it was gone. That was the nearest I have ever been to being struck by Lightning. Incidentally there was a Cottage in the Lane. It had no Well and the Tenants used to draw their Water from a Pond, and the Cattle used to drink from the Pond at the other end. I wonder what the Public Health of today would have to say about that.

After Hay, Corn and Straw stacks had been built in the Stack yards; they had to be thatched to keep the Rain off. The Thatching was done by one of the Farm Workers and Wheat Straw was used for the Thatch. First a Wagon load of Straw was laid out in the Yard and doused with water to make it more pliable, then another Worker would pull the Straw out all along the Heap. The Worker who would do the Thatching would say how many Bundles he would need to make a Row from the bottom to the top of the Stack. The Straw would be made into bundles to the required amount and each Bundle would be laid into a so called Yoke, which was two lengths of Wood tied together at one end (a bit like a Flail) at right angles, to each other and when the necessary number were in, the other ends of the Yoke would be fastened together and carried up to the Thatcher who would lay the bundles from the bottom to the top of the Stack. The Thatch was held in place by Stakes driven into the Stack, and each Row fastened down with Binder Twine. Today it is very difficult to find Wheat Straw for Thatching as the Combines break it up into pieces, and if a Thatcher needs some he has to get a



Thatchers Yoke, would be filled with Straw bundles ready for the Thatcher to lay on roof of the Stack

Farmer to cut the Corn with an old fashion Binder and have it Threshed out, and pay for the extra work involved.

At this time I had a Girlfriend who worked for the Forestry Commission at East Harling where there were Hugh Forests of Pine Trees planted by Soldiers after the end of the First World War as there was very little Work for them, after the War ended .She told me they were looking for Workers, and they Paid much better Rates than Farming. I went along and spoke with the Forester who said he wanted two Workers who could work together, so I asked Ronny if was interested, and he said yes. It was a few Miles away from our Village so we used the Motor Cycle that I had bought to ferry us back and forwards. It was interesting Work, and first we worked in the Nursery where young Fir Trees grew like Hairs on a Cats back. There were quite a number of Girls working there. They had an old Man in charge of them and spent most of their time in the Plantations cutting the lower Branches from the growing Trees, so that in the event of a Fire there was a clear way for the Fire Brigade .During periods of dry Weather we had to do Fire Duty, at Roudham Railway Junction. A wide Swathe of Land was ploughed up each side of the Railway Lines, as a Fire precaution, but when heavily laden Trains had to stop at the Junction when the Signals were against them, and had too start off again clouds of Sparks would be blown out of the Chimney and this would set off small fires, and one would rush up and down with a Witches Broom and knock them out. Sometimes small Fires would start all along the Track and you would be exhausted running up and down to put them out .There was a lookout Post in the middle of the Plantations built like an enormous shooting Hide, with an open type Shed on top .To get into it you had to climb up a very long Ladder, and push open the Trapdoor in the middle of the Floor, and once inside replace the Trapdoor. I don't

know what would have happened if someone had been taken ill or collapsed onto the Floor, no one would have been able to get in to get them out. We were all very reluctant to use this Lookout, although once up there you could see for Miles.

Another job for the Girls was collecting Pine Cones from Trees selected by the Forester. These were dried and used as Seed in the Nursery. The Trees in the Nursery were planted out by hand in the Plantations when they were a few years old. Someone invented a Machine to plant young Trees out in the Nursery. It was based on a two Furrow Plough, with two People sitting behind feeding the young Trees into pots fitted onto a Wheel, it was a bit like the current Potato Planter. The Forester made a big thing of this experiment, and the great Day came attended by all the National Newspapers. Off went the Machine pulled by a Tractor. The leading Furrow had a small Roller behind, so as the Earth was turned over it was rolled flat. Two Girls were feeding the Trees into the Pots on the Wheel. The Trees were spaced alongside the first Furrow, and held in place by the second Furrow, at least that was the idea. Something however was wrong with the synchronisation, some Trees went in O.K. others disappeared altogether and some were upside down with their Root in the Air. After several hours of juggling, the Experiment was called off, and it was back to hand planting. Ronny and I were offered Piece Work, cutting Trees in The Plantations at 25 Shillings per 100. The Trees were about 15 to 20 feet high and about four Inches in diameter. These were Trees that had a problem, bent tops and would not grow straight. They were marked by the Foreman, and we cut them down, trimmed off the branches and put them in the Roadway in heaps of 25. We could cut 100 Trees per Day very easily, so we were earning good Money. The Forester came every few Days to sharpen our Bow saw. One of the Foresters perks

