

I was born in Mountsorrel, this place which was for so many years, the village in north Leicestershire where hard granite was quarried. Nothing of great importance is known of the village, as everyone had to work for an existence.

I was born in Bond Lane, in one of a row of small cottages, an end one, which I cannot remember much of, but it must of had only two bedrooms, one room downstairs with a tiny kitchen only possessing a sink and a small table. There was only an outside water tap serving the row of cottages (possibly six of them).

My Aunt Nan (Hannah) Kennedy lived the other end of the row and she eventually had two of the cottages. Aunt Nan was my Dads sister and I was told that at times she would tell tales about my Mother to my Dad, he being her brother. So there was feeling between them.

I was born September 25th 1907 and we were moved from there before May 1912, so I would be about four and a half years old when leaving there. One or two things I do remember vividly though: Mrs “Chick” Mee used to come for a cup of tea often, which was one reason for the tale telling. The Mees lived in one of the cottages as did the Gillivers. Elsie Gilliver was around my age. One day I cut off her hair with some scissors, an incident which she would often remind me of later in life, of course she remembered this too! Amos Gilliver was either a sett maker or a curb dresser of the granite products of the Mountsorrel Granite Company and among others would move to other quarries for work, mainly to Scotland I believe, but I believe a large number of them emigrated to America. So for this reason Mrs. Gilliver was without her husband at times.

One of my earliest memories is of being taken, by my sister Minnie, up to the fields around the Common, known as Stony Close, picking up stones in the fields for William Pepper who farmed from Home Farm in Crown Lane. How much she got for each bucket full picked up, I don't know, perhaps a ha-penny.

I remember starting school very well, as it was at the age of three when children could start school. I used to wear pale blue beads and cried so much when the string on which they were threaded broke, and I lost them. That was the end of my wearing beads around my neck! I wonder if boys were encouraged to wear beads in those days to ward off illness. Possibly!

I do remember how “Deaf Un” Austin, who lived in Water Lane, now known as Sibley Road, used to come into the fields in Bond Lane, in which stood several huge elm trees, with his gun to shoot the crows which nested in these trees, he used to walk back home with a string of these shot crows over his shoulder. There used to be talk of crow pie, but if they were made into pies I don't know.

I started my schooling at three and a half years at St. Peter's School in Watling Street and ended my education there.

Our move as a family to a larger house, no doubt because of a larger family, was in the Main Street, no number then, but later No. 54. This was against the Railway Inn, a public house, and possessed two rooms downstairs, passaged, two bedrooms and above, two attics. An old room upstairs, over the back kitchen, we called the lumber room. This part of the house was older than the front of the house and we were always told to be careful as the floor was very unsafe. In this room, we as children used to play.

We had no gas for lighting and used paraffin lamps for light with the aid of candles. Coal fires had to provide our means of heat for cooking purposes and both downstairs rooms possessed fireplaces, with a boiler on the side, whilst on the opposite side was an oven for cooking purposes. The boiler

would warm water, which could be ladled out for any purpose. One had to get water out of the boiler carefully, otherwise the rust would be disturbed and one would have rusty water for use.

Water had to be boiled for making tea etc. in a kettle, hung over or stood on the fire. Sticks for lighting next morning's fire would be placed in the oven to dry and often, if they were forgotten for too long, they would become alight in the oven. One could soon detect the burning though.

In the kitchen was also a copper which was used to boil clothes and for an amount of hot water for bathing purposes. The mangle stood also in the kitchen with a galvanised tub beside it. How we all managed to seat ourselves at meal times was a problem, as there were ten of us in the family. The tub had to be used as a seat and at weekends and holiday times, the amount of bread needed was kept in it.

There was a small pantry off the kitchen.

The back yard was very narrow and small and had no opening on to our long garden, which reached down to the river. The toilet was down at the bottom of the yard, a pan lavatory which was emptied from the garden. We had to go down the private yard of the Railway Inn to get to our garden. The open gutter in the yard took the drainings to a sump in our garden, which needed to be emptied at times.

The dust bin was kept in the back yard and the dustmen had to come through the passage of the house to take it to the dustcart in the street. At times the dustbin was full to overflowing, as there was no definite days for emptying them and with only coal fires used for heating, an amount of ash accrued. Coal was kept indoors under the stairs, a very dark corner where we used to hang our clothes too.

The living room was quite cramped, in it we had a sofa, some dressers which had to hold some of our food and two or three chairs. The stairs, which were wooden and were rickety, boasted no carpet on them, or even any sort of covering.

My mother came from the Chapman family, she being Helen Chapman. She lived as a child at the Prince of Wales public house, at the bottom of The Green here in Mountsorrel. Her father was a builder and building continued in the Chapman family for some years. She used to tell us how, as early as she could remember, when, on going to bed, her mother would give her a drink of beer (she used to refer to it as "porter"). I never knew either my paternal or maternal grandparents. She attended some schooling on The Green, having to pay and to provide one's own slate and crayon.

She would attend this private school either mornings or afternoons. She was able to read and write in spite of this, far different to her eldest sister, Mary Anne Kirchen who never had any opportunity to go for any learning, yet in spite of her intelligence was never able to read or write, or even spell her own name.

My mother's other sister, Sarah Boyer, was always a "cut" above us, very smart in her dress, while we thought how well-off she was, as she had a sweet shop, also a shop which sold shoes. This was in Quorn. She never gave us any a sweet whenever we visited her. My Uncle George Chapman and Aunt Lizzie lived across the road from us at Rock House. The address, at this early part, was only known as Main Street Mountsorrel, but later the house we lived in was number 54, Loughborough Road.

The streets were muddy when the weather was bad and dusty in the summer: no tar macadam roads and cobbled causeways were slippery and uneven to walk upon. Each house had its foot scraper, to remove mud from ones boots, fixed in the wall outside the door in the street.

My father, Henry David Whitehouse, worked at the Mountsorrel Quarry. He used to work at the face of the rock, preparing places for the explosives to be set in the drill holes, which blasted down the rock for the men in the quarry to work. I really don't remember much of my dad, as he was generally ill, and died when I was only about nine and a half years old. The Whitehouse family were a family who worked the narrow boats coming from Nottingham and plying as far south as London.

No doubt the stone carried in their barges, caused them to become stationed at Mountsorrel. Uncle Jack Whitehouse told his family that he was born on the barge down in London. Had I been interested more in family history, I am certain that this would prove quite interesting.

I well remember my Mother and Dad going on a one days outing to Cleethorpes, no doubt that would be a quarry holiday. I even remember how they brought me home a wooden cricket bat, which I treasured for years.

Apart from our large garden, we had two allotments, the near one being at Hawcliffe Hill at the top of Bond Lane. The other called Cufflin's Pit. Cufflin's Pit was a deep quarry hole, no doubt one of the first areas to be quarried for granite. As the quarry extended the Pit was blasted away. It was a long way for youngsters to walk and how I hated to have to go up there to do some weeding. At one time I had to stay away from school for a half a day to go and pick black currants, as there was a row of these bushes there. Not only did we have to walk this up-hill road but it also meant that we had to push up one or two of the younger family in a pram or in push chairs. Life would be very hard at those times, having no father and women did not go out in factories to work. There would be domestic jobs to be found in the more prosperous families. Washing clothes was another means of helping with finances, but they were hard jobs and little in return. My Aunt Mary Anne used to wash for the "Whiskey" Smith family who lived in Watling Street. She had two weeks washing to do, providing her own soap too, for half a crown (that was two shillings and sixpence, or in today's metric money, twelve and a halfpence. To supplement this, she would work in the fields at the time of strawberry picking, pea picking etc. in the summer months.

Of course, my Mother, now a widow, with all these young children to care for, had, of necessity, to stay at home. The wage for a quarryman, she would tell us, was 19 shillings and 2 pence a week and if the weather was wet and no work could be done, this time was deducted. So my Mother, on being left a widow, had to apply for relief. This meant she would have to present herself and case before the Local Board of guardians, who used to sit at the Workhouse, later to be called the Institution. Whatever help they gave to her, I don't know, perhaps two shillings per week, this assistance would have to be found from the local rates or taxes, administered then by Barrow on Soar Rural District Council.

How she managed to feed us, yet alone clothe us must have been a miracle. Of course clothes were handed down to the girls, but I, the only male in the family, must have been a headache. I know I often had boots to wear with holes in the soles, trousers and a jacket well patched. My Mother used to tell how she was put out to a Mrs. Morris, dressmaking. I am sure that she had little experience out of this tuition, as her sewing results showed this in her stitches and patches. This Morris family lived at "Kingsbury" on the Leicester Road, now gone and Harry Morris, a small round man, was one of the local builders. As part of her living, assuming she, like most girls, would "live in" with these families who hired them, she had to walk down "the Marsh" to Sileby Brewery. This was Sharpes Brewery and she had to go there and bring back maltings, a residue of the brewings. These were fed to the pigs which Harry Morris kept at the top of his yard. She mentioned too of working in one of the hotels in Leicester and of walking home from Leicester.

I never found schooling difficult and liked it so much, apart from the history subjects, which gave me no interest, especially dates in history. I liked Mrs. Joe Smith as a teacher, also a Mrs. Antill who lived on the Rothley Road. Then there was Evelyn Calaway, a senior teacher at St. Peters School.

She was a forceful person and really made the children learn. At this time caning of the children was allowed. I only remember being caned across the hand by the headmaster once only - for what I don't remember. But the teacher, Mrs. Calaway did really give the stick to one or two people, rather children.

There was Arthur Austin, son of "Deaf Un" who was always at the headmaster's desk for caning. Often this would be because of behaviour out of school' sometimes reported for pinching apples, breaking a pane of glass in a window or fighting in the street. Parents or villagers would come and report these misbehaviours to the headmaster and he would mete out the punishment accordingly. Then there was Billy Carter who lived with Mrs. Harding at the bottom of Crown Lane, he was a wild boy. What became of him, and why he was there at Mrs. Hardings, I don't know. I was frightened of him. Billy Seaton, alias Billy Bags, was another uncontrollable boy. I suppose he was given that nickname because he always wore trousers much too big for him around the seat and legs. I have no doubt that they were trousers which were cut down from an adult pair.

Boys, or "lads", which was the general word for school attendees, always wore knee length trousers, some times they were fastened around the knee by a band and a button to fasten together. I wore this fashion of trousers until about 14 years old, which was the general thing and then into full length trousers or "long uns" as we termed them. It was not usual to wear a shirt for weekdays, but a pullover "jersey" as we called this garment. This jersey had a round neck, so to complete the neck area, a celluloid collar which had a stud through fastened the collar around the neck. The celluloid collar could be washed with soap and water. If there was a jacket available, one was well off.

I always had to wear boots, never did I have a pair of shoes until I could buy some for myself. The boots I wore were studded with hob nails and the heels had a steel rim around. Usually they were fastened with leather laces. I would be taken to Burdetts Shoe Shop, a little shop against the Anchor Inn on the Loughborough Road. These boots of all sizes, even for girls, hung from the beams, tied in pairs by string through the back. Mr. Burdett seemed to have some disability in one leg, as he leaned on a stick when walking. He would push a truck up and down to his allotment which was in the Quorn Road against the Cemetery. His vegetables, grown on this allotment, were placed just inside the passage leading to the shoe room and any flowers he grew were placed in buckets there too.

Then further down the road, in one of the Company Cottages, lived Mr. Goodman, who only had one leg and a wooden pole for his other half. How this wooden leg used to sound as he went along the cobbled causeways up Bond Lane to his job at the quarry.

George Seaton lived at Stonehurst and farmed from there and had fields up the common. We used to fetch our milk from him there. We would go to the farm with a jug, for the amount of milk my Mother could afford. A thing which always intrigued me at Stonehurst, was the row of bells which were fixed in the kitchen, one would be for the front door and others serving various rooms in the house. I heard my Mother tell of how my Dad would help George Seaton's father, Theodore Seaton, at lambing time but I have no idea if he farmed from Stonehurst too. As he also worked at the quarry, perhaps he eked out his living by keeping a few sheep.

It was to this house, Stonehurst, that the Seager's family came. They were a Belgian family, grandparents, sons, daughters and children, coming as refugees from Malines near Brussels as their homes were over-run by the Germans in the First World War, 1914 -1918. These families eventually

found separate houses and became part of the village. All except Marid returned to Belgium after 1918. We had some connection for many years after Marid returned home to Malines in Belgium and I, myself, visited her there twice.

We used to have wonderful times as children, playing in the main street. There were no motor cars then. The street was rough and dusty and the means of transporting any goods was by horse and cart or dray (a dray was a vehicle which had no sides to it, unlike a cart. The stone from the quarry was carried this way. So too was the coal which was transported on the narrow boats to the wharfs.

Coal was brought from the mainline railways, the Great Central Railway at Rothley Junction, which is now defunct and the London, Midland and Scottish Railway bringing freight to the Barrow on Soar sidings. The engines of the Mountsorrel Granite Quarry would bring the goods from the sidings and they would be collected and weighed by the various merchants needing them. The weighing machine was at the offices just against the bridge. These engines used to roar over the bridges, the one over the main street and the 1860 one, at regular times of the day, for the stone to be picked up by mainline trains and taken all over the Country. The quarry engines had names to identify them: “

The Countess”, “Violet”, “Lady Winifred”. George Wakeling was a driver, Tom Canning, “Shaver” Mee and others. The engine sheds in New Road housed them at night and there were men who would go from about 9 pm to clean these and to fire them ready for the next day’s work.

There were gates at the bottom of New Road and these were locked and tended by “Old Naglan” Geary who lived just inside New Road. He was a frightening man to we children, very small, with a disfigured face as if by burn, one eye, always wearing a peaked cap and looked greased. In fact it was he who did put the grease into the axle boxes of the trucks. His wife was a round woman who never appeared in the street, as I remembered her. In spite of the forbidding and frightening manner of the couple, we had to do little errands for them and perhaps got a ha-penny or else nothing for this service.

There were other neighbours which we as a family of young children, were called to do errands for: Miss Harrald living in one of the Alms Houses below Bond Lane was often calling us to do little errands. I don’t remember her giving us anything except some beef or mutton dripping to take to my Mother. I have no doubt she had so very little to give away. I used to carry a cooked dinner in a basket, open with a clean cloth over it, to Mr. Tom Snow up to the Wood Quarry in Wood Lane.

This was when I came from school at 12 o’clock. For this I got 6 pence a week and often from Mrs. Snow, a piece of steamed pudding or Yorkshire pudding in some paper, to eat as I went along.

I would go up New road, past Hawcliffe Hill quarry over the stiles, down to Tom Snow’ hut in Wood Lane. He was a “ganger” as the man in authority was called. I hardly ever remember what I got for my dinner, as we were back in school by 1.30 pm.

Then there was Mrs. Geary, living at the bottom of Bond Lane, who was always sympathetic to us, no doubt because of our large family. Mrs. Pearson, living in the Company Cottages, would sometimes bring my Mother clothing, handed down from her family. Then there was also Mrs. Mee living in the Company Cottages who would help too in such a way.

I am sure that the one person who looked after us so much was my Aunt Lizzie Chapman. There was Ethel, George and Reg who I used to play with. I would go into the kitchen of an evening often. She would give me something to eat, of which I always needed. Sometimes she would bring across to my Mother, a basin of soup and for each Christmas, would make a Christmas pudding and give it to my Mother. We would not have had such a treat otherwise.

These were days of austerity, before and during the First World War 1914-1918. I can remember this War coming and the men volunteering for Service, leaving the quarry and going to Wigston Barracks to join up. These included very young men who never came back. There were no aeroplanes in those days, the Germans had zeppelins and the night a zeppelin dropped bombs on Loughborough, which was in 1916, January 31st., it must have been around 7 pm, as I was across at Aunt Lizzie's and heard the thud and shake of the bombs as they were exploding.

The main street was lit by a few gas lamps and the local Boy Scouts used to be detailed to climb the lamp standards to turn off the gas lights when there was fear of a zeppelin raid.

At this time my Dad had died (July 1916).

Food at this time was scarce, as was coal, as in the early part of the war there were no ration cards issued.

The boys who left school at thirteen years of age, mostly went to work at the quarries. The majority of them learned to make the "setts" of granite which were used for paving streets in the cities and for pavements. The experienced men doing this would sit in one of rows of huts chipping the stone to the required size and the young boys would load them into small trucks and take them to a stock pile. We called these trucks "tubbies" and the expression was used of the boys doing this as "tubby" lads. The lads by this time, would be wearing long corduroy trousers, always a cloth cap and take their "snap" (eats) in a red, spotted neckerchief and an enamel can of tea. There was a coal Fire in one large hut where the meal was eaten and the can of tea could be kept warm. The more accomplished "stone dressers" made kerbs and headstones for cemeteries. Work would start and finish, in the winter time, according to the daylight and the men knew the time of starting and "knocking off" by the quarry steam hooter which could be heard a great distance away.

At this period, there would be 600 men employed in the three quarries. The cottages we know as the "Company Cottages" on the Loughborough Road, would be built specially to house the employees. They were each rented and the senior employees, or "gangers", were allowed to live in the end houses of each row. These were larger than the centre ones. The Calaways lived in the First end house. Mr. Calaway was a master carpenter and joiner working for the Company. I have some oak wooden picture frames, made by him for Mrs. Crosby when she was married.

Mr. Calaway always kept his garden so neat and tidy, while hanging over the wall by the side of the path leading to the river were his soft fruit bushes, black and red currants. They were always so very tempting to us lads, but we dare not touch them, as Evelyn Calaway, being the strict teacher she was, would surely have caned us for such stealing. They were her father's fruits!

The opposite end of the Cottages lived George Wakeling. He was a very big man, with a big voice and this voice instilled into the youngsters some fear when he "let go". He was the Sunday School Secretary of the Wesleyan Chapel, which the whole of the family used to attend. It was to Mr. Wakeling, who lived at 154, that we would take a choice of book title, to be given as a Sunday School prize for attendance. Each child was given a card and stamped with a star for each time one attended, Morning Service and afternoon Sunday School and according to the number of stars stamped, so a book to this value could be chosen. These prizes were always presented to we

scholars on Good Friday evening and as part of this event, we would give items as solos or recitations. Mrs. Elizabeth Crosby would select and teach us these items, helped by Ivy Bolland and Ida Veasey. We would practice for this occasion maybe 5 or 6 weeks before hand. I recall I did a recitation once, "The Slaves Dream" and remember even now - "Beside the ungathered rice he lay, His sickle in his hand, etc." I would sing too, always loved to sing and so enjoyed some of the hymns we used to sing at Sunday School - "I hear ten thousand voices singing", "Care to do right", "Pass it on" and so many more, which all the School sang lustily.

Then we had the School Sermons or Anniversary, always held on the third Sunday in May. The United Methodists the 1st Sunday, the Baptists 2nd Sunday, Wesleyans, 3rd Sunday and the Primitive Methodists about the 3rd Sunday in June. Mr. John Tyler was the organist at our Chapel and the Senior Sunday School Superintendent too. He also lived in the Company Cottages, 160.

He worked in the blacksmiths shop. How he managed to play the organ, a pipe one, after being at such heavy work all the week even until 11.45 am on Saturday mornings, amazed me. Then to be called all day in the Chapel, to play twice each Sunday and to take Sunday School alternate weeks with Mr. George Pannel. would surely be unheard of in this day.

We always referred to our place of worship as Chapel, the distinction from the Church of England. Learning the special hymns and anthems for the Sunday School "Sermons" was a real bore for the first week or two, as Mr. Tyler would teach us by playing an old harmonium with his right hand, trying to get the melody, while thumping the instrument casing with his left hand, he gave no melody for us to learn and it was only when the members of the adult choir came in to practice that any progress could be made. These adults were given copies of music, though very few of them could read music. We had a copy of words only and we were only allowed one sheet during the rehearsal period, so to prolong its life, it was the thing to stick it to brown paper, more often than not, by a paste made with flour and water.

The great day always arrived with a tear or two by someone because of being lowered down on the platform, erected specially for the occasion. The young people would seat themselves where they thought that they should be, but at 10am, George Wakeling would arrive and you had to take the position on the "boards" which he decided, that according to ones height, you fitted in best.

The Chapel was always crowded, both for afternoon and evening Service and the collections taken was in the region of £46, a huge amount of money in those days. From these proceeds a "treat" was provided for all the scholars of the Sunday School. This took the form of a tea, followed by races and a game of cricket or ball games. More often than not, this treat was held up at Goward's Farm, Budden Wood. It was really William Pepper's farm, who was a member of the Choir. We children were transported up to the farm in a great big hay wagon, being loaded up about 2pm outside the Chapel, taken up the main street, up Crown Lane and so into Bond Lane. The tea itself was a treat for us hungry youngsters: salmon sandwiches, potted beef sandwiches, real tasty potted beef, (made by Wood-Antils), slices of slab cake, mixed fruit, or plain, fresh white bread and butter, brown bread too. Tea to drink was made up at the farm, which was delicious. Sweets were given to eat, before we left for home, in the same way as we were taken there. At times we had this treat behind "Stonehurst" where George Seaton farmed.

Christmas was not quite the same then as now. The Church festivals were not observed as now.

We at home never had a Christmas tree when we were young, but hung from a beam was a bush of holly, branches of holly tied together. On this was tied one or two glass ornaments, a sugar pig, an orange, a brightly coloured apple and a chain of silvered beads twined round it. It was a joy when the bush was taken down and we ate the things taken from it. We had no special treats in the way of eats at Christmas, apart from the pudding which came from my Aunt Lizzie. Oranges and apples at this time were so very cheap, a dozen oranges could be bought for about 6 pence. Mountsorrel, at

this time boasted a brass band, which, indeed, most of the villages around did too. The Band always came around playing hymns mostly, beginning on Christmas Eve about 10pm and playing around the village all through the night.

Various stopping places were detailed when the band would play any tune called for, when any who could afford to do so, gave a special donation. At the pre-arranged stops, tea or hot coffee would be given to the men and those who carried the lanterns with a lighted candle in. The whole of Boxing Day was spent again by playing in the same way, but at this time, collecting boxes were shaken. I remember Charlie Harper, a small, but exceedingly round man, who carried and struck the big drum on his huge front. Dickie Bates was one of the conductors and Harry Dakin.

Then there was Temperance Sunday at which the Band would always be in attendance. This event was organised by the Movement Against Strong Drink. People came from the surrounding area and all gathered on the Castle Hill, listening to the speakers and singing songs which were written specially against drink. Drunkenness was very rife at this time and I have recollections of various men and women, who could be seen rolling drunk, each holding the other up as they came from the pubs. There was Joe (Acker) Gibbert living just up New Road, Sammy Glover, living up the Rookery and Ike Weeldon too. Coming across the road to the Railway Inn was Albert (Dib Dob) Seaton and Mrs. Seaton. It was the usual thing that a jug of beer was carried home too after a night of drinking. How these folk managed to pay for this excessive drinking can hardly be imagined.

But all these men would dig an allotment. Some had more than one and they would keep a few hens in the back yard, to give a supply of eggs, perhaps fattening up some tame rabbits as a supply of meat. If one had the room, a pig would be kept as an addition and this was before the days of freezers and fridges. If more meat and offal was produced than required for personal use, the remainder was sold to neighbours and friends as one decided. A side of the pig would be salt petred and salted, then hung, often in ones kitchen, to be used for bacon. The food given to these fattening pigs was any vegetable surplus to requirements, mixed with any household left-overs.

My Uncle George always kept one or two pigs for his own use. How I remember a big black wooden barrel standing outside in the little back yard. In it was put all washing up water, the end results of tea making, all potato peelings - in fact anything which was edible to humans. Each afternoon, Aunt Lizzie would fill a large iron pot with this and boil it on a fire in their large Kitchen range, until cooked. It had a smell of its own. This food she then carried to an out-house and mixed a quantity of "sharpes", a meal, into it, to be fed to the pigs. Uncle George certainly produced large pigs.

I was now getting to an age when I had to earn some money, as I was taking a great interest in having a nice new suit and even some "half shoes", as against heavy boots, especially for Sunday wear.

For about 2 years, until I left school at thirteen, I was errand boy, one of two, for Joseph Lee Crosby, a grocer we lived next to. We pushed a heavy truck all over the village taking out grocery to Mr. Crosby's customers. Thursdays was the heaviest day for delivery. This was after school of course. We would fill the truck and push it up the main street, up the green, call at W.W. Jones, the headmaster's next to Mrs. Bob Wykes, Rothley Road, so up Halstead Road to Icones at the "Lindens", now the Hotel, across to Mrs. Charlie Harrington and Mrs. Briers. A little higher up the road was the next customer, Mrs. Ray Ball. There were no more houses up Halstead Road at this time. Next along Rothley Road was Mrs. Uriah Lovett, so to Mrs. William Baum and across to Arthur Brooks and Mrs. Harry Preston. There were no visits to be made in Waugh's Lane - now Cross Lane, as there were only two houses in the lane. So we had to push and pull that heavy truck up the hill into Rothley, to take the grocery order to Mrs. Moore who lived in a big house. What a long journey Mrs. Moore made each Sunday morning, down to worship at the Wesleyan Chapel

below the bridge which has now gone. She walked both ways, two miles each way, no car, no bus, not even a pony and trap for her.

Friday was delivery day for the other end of the village. This was not so far, nor so heavy, the farthest being to Arthur Wilson's, near the Cemetery. I hated to go to Simpson's at the Old Vicarage, as they insisted the grocery was taken to the back door, as they had a barking dog and I was afraid of it. The maid didn't mind us going to the front door and ringing the bell, but the two Miss Simpsons would tell us to go to the back door. Up Hawcliffe Road had to be delivered groceries to Mrs. Barnham, Mrs. Jesse Hallam, Mrs. E. Newman, Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Bert Saunders. All these baskets and boxes of groceries were packed in this heavy truck, which had small wooden wheels with iron rims on them.

Saturday morning found us in the jobs of sweeping the back yard usually. All this heavy work, before 13 years of age, for three shillings a week, this is 15 pence in decimal currency. Not one customer ever offered any tip or extra reward for this service. The earned money was put into a box I had, and often fetched out to be counted and with a look forward to whatever I needed to wear.

My sister Gertie began to look for a job for me for the great event when I left St. Peters School at the end of term, Christmas 1920. I wanted to learn the carpentry trade, as I found this to my liking while at school. The carpenters class was held under the classrooms in Watling Street. Mr. Burrows, a tall upright man, who, lived in Quorn, cycled daily to take the carpentry class at the school. Anyway, as I had to have a job at something and there was nothing for me in this line at Wright's Quorn factory, I had to go into the weaving sheds there, supposedly to learn the weaving of elastic etc., but in only about 3 months of this, there was no work and the factory only worked half the week. As my starting wage was the princely sum of eight shillings and sixpence (today 42.5 pence), this could not continue. There was a serious recession of trade, which the 1914 - 18 War had brought about, so I had to look around for some work. Perhaps I could have found a job at the quarries here, but my Mother didn't wish me to do this because of her memories of losing my father, which she blamed somewhat for his early death. So I walked to Sileby in the hope of finding work in one of the many small shoe or hosiery factories of which Sileby boasted. I went right up Ratcliffe road to Mavrs Shoe factory and got fixed up there. But my Mother said "No! You are not going there it is too far." She was quite right, as I would have had to walk there, as I had no bike, I couldn't even ride one at this time of **my life** and had never had the money to buy one. Seeing that Ratcliffe Road was so far, I got a job at the small shoe factory of Lou Willet's in Swan Street, which was almost as far. It was a "smelly" place and I didn't reign there many weeks as they had no work, so no work meant no money.

Next I got a job at Wrights Brick Works up Albion Road, Sileby. I thought the wage was excessive as I was given on an average about £1-16 shillings a week. For this I had to start work at 6am, leaving home, which at this time was 54, Loughborough Road (later demolished), at 5.15am and mostly walking along with Horace Riley, who lived opposite to us. Now I think how cruel this was, as I would only have been about 14 years of age. I worked "carrying off" as it was termed. This meant putting the nibs on the end of hand-made roof tiles, making two holes so that they were able to be nailed on and then to carry about ten of them on a board, laying them flat and separately, on a hot brick floor area. The amount of money earned depended on how many tiles were "carried off". These tiles would be on the hot floor sometimes just overnight or more. This high wage job didn't last more than 6 months, as orders slackened off and again I had no job. I was not too long before I found a job at the Wholesale School Boot Company, here in Danvers Road, where boys and men's boots were made at this time. Heavy, thick boots with hob nails on soles and steel rings on the heels. We worked from 7.30am until 12 o'clock, then 1pm until 5.15pm, Saturday mornings too from 7.30am to 11.45am. I would only get £1-9 shillings for this and one penny per week stopped

for Saturday Hospital Fund which supported a benevolent home at Cromer. There were times when work was short and some men were sacked, others would go on the dole, walking to Sibleby to sign on the dole twice a week.

At this time, in the early 30's, we had to leave the house at 54, Loughborough Road, and went to live in 180 Loughborough Road known as Roecliffe Cottage. We didn't like living there too much, little room and no conveniences, the toilet being down and across the garden. We put up a shed in the garden, put in a large zinc bath and used this as our bathroom. The water supply was from a pump in the yard, which served four houses. Though the hard water spring supply never gave out, the soft water often did if the weather was dry and if the neighbours took more than their share and emptied the well. We lived in this house about 3 years. Hearing that Bert Seaton wanted to sell his house at 6, Danvers Road, we plunged to buy it at the great figure of £600. How were we to pay this huge amount? We put down £200 and borrowed the remainder from the Loughborough Building Society.

While we were living at 54, Loughborough Road, about 1929, my sister Minnie had so set her heart to possess a piano. Strange that she never learnt to play the piano. I believe she paid £30 for it. I wanted to play, so I went for lessons to a Mr. Hopkins who lived at Quorn. I paid one shilling and sixpence (7.5 p) for about one hour of lesson. I learned there under him, the rudiments, but believe I didn't go to him because I had no money when work was short. I took up lessons again, when we came to live in Danvers Road, with Mr. Roland Baum who lived at the bottom of Boundary Road. He was always so keen on touch. I stayed with him for about three years, until I found I had little time to practice the long Beethoven Sonatas he gave me to learn, plus the Chopping (Chopin?).

At this time I had become more interested in singing. I became a member of Rothley Male Voice Choir and for a year or so, sang with the Leicester Oriana Choir, a mixed voice choir, which travelled to various Musical Festivals to compete, including Sheffield, Bedford, Skegness and Nottingham. This meant travelling by bus into Leicester, though at this time bus fare would be one shilling each way (5p). One had to buy the copy of the music needed and all the expense of travel, often a meal on the train and as these festivals were always on Saturdays it meant that time had to be asked off from work. Again this was costly, apart from having to deal with questions. I enjoyed these experiences, as I knew music well by now and had a decent singing voice. I had always been so interested in singing. I became the lead tenor in a male voice quartet, Harry Ward, Reg Harris, John Gilliver and myself. We would take engagements almost anywhere in the locality, having always to walk there or go by bus, as few motor cars were owned. I had a dress suit bought me especially for going out singing, by my sister Nellie. I think it cost 50 shillings (£2.50p). By this time I had finished having piano lessons, as I didn't practice long enough on the Beethoven Sonatas etc. So, I went for voice training to Mr. North at Quorn for about 4 years. I paid, on an average, one pound three shillings (£1 15p) for this and the sum would include any solo copies. So I did quite a lot of solo singing.

In the days before the War (1939 - 1945), we had an opportunity to go on European holidays. We were lucky: Rev Maynard Wilson, Minister of Nottingham Road Methodist Church, (which is no more) arranged for young people to go in 1936 to Germany and stay at Koningswinter on the Rhine. This was the year of the Olympic Games in Germany. We saved about 2s.6d. (22.5p) per week and it cost about £12 for these holidays. It meant travel by train (no aeroplanes then), overnight travel on wooden train seats. Hitler was in high power now and rather frightening to be amongst all this Nazi-ism. How I remember seeing notices on cafes : Jaden Verboden. We visited Bonn, Cologne etc., the Drachenfel Mountains and had a wonderful holiday, though only one week and this had to be the first week in August, the only full week holiday in the year. Now there was full employment

and things were cheap. 1937, Maynard Wilson took us to Lugano on Lake Majaori, a lovely holiday. 1935 we went to Wildersail Interlaaken in the Bomese Oberland, just for one week. 1939, The Black Forrest was our next holiday and this, with war impending, was the last.

I was working at this time, still at the School Boot Co. here in Danvers Road. War was looming, in spite of repeated efforts by Chamberlain to avert this and so September 3rd found us at war with Germany. I was directed to the Training Centre, Humberstone Road, Leicester, learning centre lathe turning for about 3 months. It was all so strange to me. Finishing this course, I **had** to go to work at Mellor Bromley's factory, which is the other side of the city, taking an hour, by two buses, to get there. How I hated this, as I could have been placed at the Alvis Works in Linkfield Road. Alvis had come out of Coventry. The Navy would have taken me, but Mellor Bromley would not release me as I was on **vital work** (?): most of the time hosiery machine parts. This I had to endure until the War ended. It was all a nightmare. Detestable! I did regular night shift work. Leaving home at 6.45pm, starting the shift at 8pm until 7am, then an hour to get home. Working each night except Saturday and having to go on this night very often to "fire watch". A few times we had to "fly" into air raid shelters, as Leicester was bombed some few times. I had to walk home once, as there were no buses because of raids. For four long years this continued and how I longed to get from all this. There was no opportunity to relax or have any form of freedom. We did make some effort of entertainment, by a few who could sing or otherwise. I sang. This was all in the works canteen during breaks.

At last the War finished and so I was released from this awful existence. It meant that such jobs just stopped and amongst all others I did no work, as the shoe and hosiery factories had been taken over for war supplies.

About this time my sister Gladys died.

I was friendly with the Sutton family living in Watling Street and Mrs. Sutton taught music, especially the piano. I often sang at concerts for her, as she would give concerts at various places, one of which was the Institution, which was the Workhouse at the bottom of (now) Linkfield Road, referred to also as the "Union". It was at one of these concerts, at which I was to sing, that I spoke to Mrs Carter, the Matron of the hospital, asking her advice, as I had an urge to do some nursing, not knowing myself how to begin this. She said that there was a vacancy there amongst a number of sub-normal males housed there in Mountsorrel. Would I consider this as an opening? So I went there. This would be in January 1946. It was very wintery weather just then. I had been working there only a few weeks, when, standing on steps, putting a new bulb in an outside light at home, that the steps wobbled and I came off them, falling and fracturing my right wrist. This meant a plastered wrist for six weeks. There were, at the time, 26 of these sub-normal patients there but today (1994), they would not be there, their place would be at a "young offenders" Institution for Correction.

I didn't have much to do for them as they were all capable of physically looking after themselves. I would take them for long walks, seeing they had enough exercise and to keep them from absconding.

Some of them came from families living at Melton Mowbray, Coalville and Ashby and some had no family. Reg Baxter of Coalville, who was about 22 years was a real trouble and so too was Albert Hawkes, Walter Veasey, coming from Melton Mowbray had a widowed mother, who he would threaten, unless she constantly supplied him with money and she was a widowed woman having no support.

The Carters, who were Matron and Master at this time, now retired and their positions were taken by Mr and Mrs Ward. She was a registered nurse, as there were a number of bed patients in too, who did need nursing care. The Wards did not reign long.

Then Matron Pickering was appointed in 1948, when National Health took over all hospitals, and these former high grade patients were moved and some discharged. So in this time of Pickering being Matron, I felt that it was a dead end job, though she taught me quite a lot, how to give injections etc. So I decided that I ought to take training and wrote to Matron Baldwin at Leicester Frith Hospital, who gave me help and accepted me as a Student for the State Examination for General Nursing. So, I was attached to both Leicester Frith and Mountsorrel Hospitals. I had to take my lectures for my Preliminary Examination (General) at the Towers Hospital.