

MY STORY
BY
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EARLY MEMORIES

My earliest memory was of living with my aunt in Doncaster. I was two years old at the time. She was very kind to me, even though she had two children of her own to care for. I lived with them for about two years. I never learned until later in life the reason for my being sent to live in Doncaster. Apparently, my mother had been taken very ill with a nervous breakdown following childbirth and had to go away to be nursed for quite a long time.

I can well remember watching the trams run on Becket Road. This would be in the year of 1920; there were very few cars on the road then. I can also remember going to Thorne and Rossington on a horse and dray.

My grandmother Oldfield, who also lived in Doncaster, was a kindly religious old lady but very strict. She lived until she was eighty seven years of age, and even when she was over eighty she would travel on a bus from Doncaster to Tupton to see me. I have very clear recollections of her last visit to see me although at the time I didn't know it was going to be her last.

Grandad Oldfield had died years before, when he was about sixty. I can well remember him too. He used to 'pull my leg' about not liking rice pudding.....I still don't like it to this day..... unless it has raisins in it.....and then I love it!

My Mother's parents were called Croft. Grandad Croft was well respected, as was his wife, my Grandma Croft. She was a tough little lady. Grandad Croft died at about sixty two years of age with cancer of the throat. It has been said that his fatal illness was the result of an accident he had had years before while he was working at Parkhouse pit where he was an overman. I will relate more about Parkhouse pit later in my story.

My mother's name before marriage was Mary Jane Lois Croft. She was a lady if ever one was born. She brought us all up very well. As the saying goes, " she could take us anywhere" We were taught good table manners and were brought up to go to chapel regularly. My father, Harold, was a local preacher and became very involved with all chapel activities in the area. He was a well respected wherever my dad was going to preach. He preached very well, a very good speaker as we all are in this family of mine! I wish the reader at this point to understand that my family on both sides come of good stock, well bred and well respected.

As I have said earlier, it was not until later in life that I was told the reason why I was sent to live in Doncaster and I can't remember very much about living there but the kindness and understanding I received there I will never forget. I do however recall being taken at last by train from Doncaster to Clay Cross station which lay at the bottom of Hepthorne Lane. From there we walked to Guildford Lane in Danesmoor, to my real home. It was then that I was to learn that I had two brothers and a sister. Two more brothers were to be born later.

I visited the place where I started my early life many times to see my Auntie Jenny and Uncle Arthur Seaton. They both died at Armthorpe in Doncaster. They had a daughter Joyce who lived then at Haxey near Doncaster but when her parents died

she moved to Devon. She recently wrote to say that her husband had been found dead in the garden. What a shock that must have been for her.

Auntie Jenny was my Father's sister. My father died in Doncaster Infirmary in 1962 at the age of 76. From the time he was 40 to his retirement he had been a foreman with the Gas Board both in this district and in Doncaster. Later, he worked part-time only on new houses they were building at Cantley, Doncaster.

BOYHOOD DAYS

It was my mother who took me to start school. I vividly remember that first day. It was in January 1921. There was a general strike during that year and times were very hard for everyone. There was very little money, if any, and not a lot of food either. Thousands of people were in debt for years after this because of buying food during the strike 'on tick'. Everyone was in the same boat. Five years later there was another strike! I was ten years old at the time and remember it very well. It was during 1926 and became the worst strike on record lasting for six months.

I can remember going to queue for a jug of soup and sometimes we went to the butchers to buy 'penny ducks'. These days these 'ducks' are called faggots. We only had 'ducks' when my mother had any money. They were lovely served up in a rich gravy.....a real treat! I hope that you, the reader, never know what real hunger is because believe me you would eat grass. I thank God that my mother was such a good manager. She would bake her own bread, mixing it in a huge earthenware bowl called a 'panchion'. She made three stones of bread a week and there were twelve loaves to a stone. It goes without saying that we used to eat a lot of bread in those days! Her washing and ironing were perfect, the ironing being done with a flat iron which was heated at the front of the fire and had to be cleaned with a bar of soap each time to remove the soot. Can you imagine the patience that woman must have had. Nevertheless, in spite of all the hard work and lack of money she was always clean and neat and tidy in time for tea and ensured that we, her children, were too. Remember that she had five boys and a girl to bring up.

At about this time my pals and I formed a little band and we used to march around Danesmoor collecting pennies to give to the strike kitchen at the church where we were given banana sandwiches.

At the age of eleven I was moved from Danesmoor school to Parkhouse school in Lower Pilsley. My sister Doris and eldest brother Leslie had just left that school. Leslie went to work as a boilermaker at Clay Cross Works.

I was learning to play the violin at this time and was taught by my father. We used to have some lovely singsongs at home at the weekends, with Les playing the organ and Dad and I playing the violins. I later played at social evenings in Danesmoor and with Les at Sunday School Anniversaries and local chapels. Les was by this time married to Marion and lived at Morton.

My sister Doris went to live in Kidderminster when she left school where some relatives owned an hotel. Later she went to work for the Dickensons who lived at Stretton. Mr. Dickenson was H.M. Inspector of Mines. It was while Doris was at the Dickensons that she married Alfred Allen. I was best man at their wedding and slept with Alf on the eve of the wedding at their first home at Handley. I often used to visit them there and we had many good times. They later moved to a bungalow at Stretton opposite the end of Darkie Lane. My mother used to visit them there as

well after walking all the way there and back from Danesmoor. I got on very well with Alf. He was a quiet thoughtful man of never a hasty decision. Later on they moved to a house in Hill Street, Clay Cross.

MANHOOD.

Because of my musical tuition, I was able to play in a dance band. The brother of a friend of mine was band master so I also learned to play the tenor horn and cornet. I was then able to teach my brother Geoff to play the trumpet. He became quite an accomplished player and was introduced into our dance band. We were both at that time working at Pilsley pit but we had some happy hours playing at local dances. Our uniforms were white jackets with red collars and cuffs worn with black trousers. My mother used to wash our uniforms every week to keep us smart. There were only four of us in the band to begin with but finally there were eight of us, all local lads.

It was during these very happy times that my mother died with cancer of the lung. It was a great shock to us all. I was twenty three at the time she died on March 19th. 1939. It was a Sunday evening and my brother Geoff and I who were living with my sister had just gone to bed. I remember Alf calling upstairs to tell us the sad news. My mother was only 48 years old..... too young to die. I have never got over it even to this day.

Geoff and I continued to live with Doris and Alf..... I never did go back to live at Guilford Lane.

A few months before my mother died, Doris gave birth to a son called Jeffrey. My mother saw Jeffrey for only a very short time.....her very first grandchild.

Although I often helped Doris with Jeffrey when he was a baby I never became involved with her second child Jennifer who was born six years later, by which time I had moved on. but I have seen Jennifer grow up to become an attractive and intelligent young lady.

I lived with Doris and Alf from March 1939 to January 22nd 1940..... my wedding day. I was married in a snow storm and was taken in a Rolls Royce to Chesterfield Registry Office which was then adjacent to Scarsdale Hospital.

MY CAREER

I left school after attending Parkhouse School for three years, to which incidentally I had to walk twice a day in all weathers. I was then fourteen years old and I started work at Parkhouse Pit in the pit bottom. The date was April 14th 1930.

My mother couldn't afford to buy me any long trousers to start work in so I spent my first day down the pit in my dad's pit trousers turned up two feet in the leg. I learned later that my mother cried when she saw me going down the pit on that first day. I must have looked a sorry sight in my dad's turned up trousers. I was only small and very frail. I did get a new pair of trousers in time for my next shift and very proud of myself was I in them. They were moleskin trousers of the type worn by miners in those days.

I found work down the pit very strange for quite some time. I was once shown round some workings by a deputy, a Mr Tightwalker. The workings I was shown were under Danesmoor Church and my dad was at the time working at the coal face. He was lying on his side hewing with a pick under the shale coal seam which

was held up by wooden props only ten inches long. Ten inches! I can see him now. He was so surprised to see me. His white teeth shone out of his sweaty black face. I remember him pointing out to me a fossil of a fully grown tree in the roof. I was astounded! The fossil will be there even now.

Not long after that occasion I was told to fetch a pit pony out of the underground stables and go pony driving. This meant pulling tubs of coal from the workings into the pit bottom. I found this very hard and dangerous for a small lad of fourteen. I was never very strong but I got stronger as time moved on. There I was working at fourteen years of age and now as I write in 1982 even a boy of twenty cannot find work. Later on I moved to pony driving at Holmwood Pit alongside my pal George Bradshaw, who incidentally I have never seen since my wedding day forty years ago. The mine workings at Holmwood were underneath Hardwick Hall grounds and the village of Tibshelf. It was a very warm pit to work in and although each of us took a three pint bottle of water down with us to drink, it was never enough. The water for the ponies came in barrels on wheels out into the mine workings and when we had no water left we would drink the ponies water out of the barrels. Don't forget though that a horse will not drink dirty water. " You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink".....an old saying but a true one.

Sometimes you were ordered to leave your pony in the mine workings and this meant that you had to take a bag of food for him. There were 280 ponies in that pit and it was a three mile walk into the workings from the pit bottom. When you came up the pit you had to walk or cycle home in all weathers still in your pit clothes. In those days there was no such thing as pit head baths. Sometimes I have gone down the pit soaked to the skin and worked the whole shift and gone home again still in the same wet clothes.

I remember causing the death of a pit pony I was driving. It was pulling four tubs of coal up a steep gradient and when it got to the top it had to go down an equally steep gradient. When the pony reached the top it would not stop for me to put the brakes on the wheels so the tubs gathered speed on the descent and crushed the pony. The pits were privately owned then and the owners were very strict about such a loss. It worried me a lot at the time but I came out of it with only a stern warning and a lecture. There were no unions in those days to defend you. All in all I had some very rough times at Holmwood so I decided to leave and I got a job at Pilsley pit instead. This was in 1937 and I had some very happy times there with my brother Geoff.

These were our dance band days and we played often until 2 o'clock in the morning. This was to be our downfall and the end of my days at Pilsley pit. We were dismissed by a Mr. Tagg, the undermanager, for failing to turn up at work on too many occasions. His face was a picture of misery and I could see how much he was enjoying our humiliation. I was sorry to leave under such circumstances but that is fate. Fate I believe plays a big part in shaping our lives whether we like it or not.

After Geoff and I left Pilsley pit we both got jobs at Clay Cross Works, thankfully away from the dreaded pits. I worked on the spar and tarmac plant. These were happy and easy days for me after working in the pits. The spar and limestone were transported by rail from Ashover and Milltown on a railway called the Ashover Light Railway which was owned by Clay Cross Company. The last station on the line was at Ashover Butts and on the hill above the Butts was The Rainbow Cafe. This was a

circular building with a conical roof and at weekends and holiday times people would flock there travelling on the little railway. The Rainbow Cafe has since been moved and now stands close to Clay Cross Works on Brassington Street. The Ashover Light Railway, which ran on the 'Peggy Lines' so named after Peggy the daughter of General Jackson, alas is no more. It was a sorry day when that little railway closed down. General Jackson was head of Clay Cross Works and lived at Clay Cross Hall. It is now used as a home for the elderly but in those days it was an elegant family home with servants and all the trappings of wealth. General Jackson owned all the pits in the area.....South Wingfield, Morton, Parkhouse, Avenue which later became the Carbonisation Plant, Hepthorne Lane and Number 2 pit which was situated at Clay Cross Works. It was George Stevenson who first discovered coal at Clay Cross whilst he was making the railway tunnel between Clay Cross Works and Stretton. I was to go down Number 2 pit many times in my life but those experiences were to come later.

I can remember being at work one Sunday morning when war was declared. World War 2 that is. Fate had stepped in again to end my happy days. I was 24 at the time and had just met Jessie who was later to become my wife. We met at a dance in the church room at St.Lawrence Church at the top of Wingfield Hill. I was living with Doris and Alf at the time of my subsequent marriage. I shall never forget all those happy days with them nor Doris's understanding. We always got on well together and still do. No one loves a laugh more than our Doris. I have told her many jokes and still do.

At this time Geoff and I were playing in our eight piece band at dances at Clay Cross and Alfreton Drill Halls. We continued to play for a while after the war started but some of the lads were called up, including me. I signed for the Air-Force but was told that my mining experience was too valuable to waste. Coal at any price was the call..... so back into the pit I had to go with no option.

At the time that war was declared, I had just got married, so I found a job at Grassmoor pit where I worked for the duration of the war and afterwards too. I decided to study to become a colliery deputy shot firer and qualified in 1940 at Nottingham University. When I went to take my exam my Dad was waiting to be the first to hear the good news that I had qualified. He was very proud because he too had been a colliery deputy. I continued to study mining at Chesterfield Technical College for quite a few years at evening classes.

WAR DAYS

During the war Jessie and I were living in New Tupton on Nethermoor Road, just above the Co-op.

One night during the war, about 1942, German bombers dropped four bombs on New Tupton. Thirteen people were killed. One of the bombs fell only 50 yards from our house. I can remember the loud thump which woke us both with a start. I jumped out of bed, dressed in a hurry, picked up our baby daughter Glennis and ran with my wife till we came to the fish shop opposite the Co-op. The four houses which had been next to the fish shop were just one big heap of rubble in the middle of the road. I climbed over the rubble with Glennis in my arms. There was panic everywhere.....gas was escaping, water mains were burst and red brick dust was everywhere. My youngest brother Cyril ran all the way from Danesmoor to see if I

was safe. Bless him! I say that because sadly he died in 1970 at the age of 46 with cancer of the spine.

Anyway, back to the blitz in New Tupton. It was a sad day for the village. Thirteen people lost their lives, some of whom I had known very well.

During the war we used to go to the cinema at the Roxy in Grassmoor , which incidentally is now a garage. We were walking home from the Roxy one night when we heard German bombers going over and so we stood and watched the flashes in the sky.....Sheffield was being bombed.

Many local picture houses closed over the years owing to the introduction of television. The last picture to be shown at the Clay Cross Hippodrome was called " The Amazing Doctor Glitterhouse." The Hippodrome was burnt down in 1939. I can remember it being built in 1925. The Palace on Broadleys in Clay Cross closed down and became Kennings showroom and garage. The Kino in Market Street closed down and became Spriggs the Printers. So, all in all there used to be three picture houses in Clay Cross and Grassmoor, Hasland and Pilsley boasted one each.

When the war ended there was great rejoicing and many street parties were held. It is strange but I was born during the First World War, and lived through two very bad industrial strikes and a Second World War. It was the age of private enterprise, poor wages, hard work and the sack if you spoke out of turn to the boss. Happily though, in 1947, the coal industry was nationalised and the NCB was born. Wages were better and the pits were modernised with machinery to cut and load coal at the same time. Hence an increase in production. The country started to get back on its feet and there was relative prosperity for all.

POST-WAR DAYS

In the days after the war, we, the family that is and friends used to walk to the Lido at Wingerworth. At weekends there used to be crowds of people there enjoying themselves. We also enjoyed it immensely until one Sunday when I was struck down with terrible back pain and had a job to walk. I was half carried home and was glad to get to bed. The doctor came and took away some fluid from my back and I was found to have two abscesses. During the next two years and after lots of treatment and tests, it was discovered that I had a diseased right kidney. I was taken into hospital and had the kidney removed. I was seriously ill and even after the operation I continued to have large external abscesses which had to be drained by needle. I was unable to work until I was in the sixth year of my illness. I had already retired from the mining industry as it was thought that I would never work again, but the Oldfield spirit came to the fore and I began to fight against my illness.

I found a spare time job as a collector for a credit company and really did very well. I used to do my round of calls on a little motor bike regardless of the weather. I really think that all that fresh air and meeting lots of people helped me to overcome my illness. I stopped feeling sorry for myself and I did get well again.

I then got the urge to go back into mining again. I was interviewed by the NCB and believe it or not I was appointed as Deputy at Parkhouse pit.....after all those years..... the same pit I had worked in as a young lad of fourteen! When I presented myself for work I was welcomed with open arms. Many of the men who worked there had been brought up with me in my school days. It was great!

I was able, now that I was a mining official, to walk around all the areas where I had worked as a lad. I also visited the place where in November 1882 the Parkhouse Pit explosion occurred. I should now say that in Clay Cross Cemetery there stands a monument erected by the people of Clay Cross and Danesmoor. It was built to commemorate the miners who were killed in the explosion. Thirty three women were widowed and over a hundred children were left fatherless. The bodies of the dead miners were laid out in the Queens Head Hotel at the corner of Flaxpiece Road. Casualties were brought up a shaft at Flaxpiece Pit opposite the cemetery. That pit is not there now although I do remember relics of it. It was situated at the back of Flaxpiece Farm and was the escape shaft for Parkhouse Pit. The explosion was caused by a candle, a naked flame, igniting gas. At that time a lighted candle was the only means of illumination. Afterwards, safety oil lamps were introduced and fan ventilation was installed throughout all Clay Cross pits. No blame for the explosion was attached by the coroner to Clay Cross Company.....it had always been considered safe to use candles.

The inscription on the memorial reads :-This memorial is in memory of forty five men and boys who lost their lives in an explosion at Parkhouse Pit on November 7 1882 and was erected by fellow workmen.

An exhibition featuring the disaster will be held at the Clay Cross Social Centre in November 1982 to mark the centenary. Mr Clifford Williams of Clay Cross who has compiled a book of pictorial history is hoping to get a reunion of former Parkhouse Pit miners.

Parkhouse Pit was finally closed about 1969.

Now, back to my work as a mine official at Parkhouse Pit. One day I went to examine the underground roadway from Parkhouse to No.2 Pit which was at Clay Cross Works. There, written in this roadway in chalk were the signatures of my Grandad Crofts, who used to be an overman there, and of my father, who was once a deputy there. It was quite a thrill for me to see those signatures. I felt as though they were still there in spirit.....maybe they were.....Who can say?

I realised at that time that it was 25 years since I had started work at that pit as a young lad. I was now 39 years old. " How time flies." said the old man when he got to be 90.

Parkhouse Pit holds many memories for me and my family, some of them very sad indeed. I carried the memory of my father and Grandad Crofts with me.

The pit pony age had by now almost gone. There were now better roadways and mechanical haulages to haul the tubs about. More money was being spent by the Government to improve the pits and make them safer. Now, all pits have intake airways, hence better ventilation to cope with the gases which are given off. A self rescuer was introduced which is given to every miner at every underground shift. this can be used as a protection in cases of smoke or gas. It is effective for quite a time in an emergency, so a self rescuer it truly is. What a good thing.

Coal dust is still a problem even today but improved ventilation has made conditions much better. Even so, coal dust related diseases are suffered by many miners to this day. All miners have periodic lung X-rays now.

In 1958 I had to leave Parkhouse Pit. Jealous people envied my success there. I can prove it.....but what is the point? It was just a case of fate stepping in again. I got a job as deputy at Doe Lea Colliery. I was now 42 and I stayed at Doe Lea for four years. It had a six feet seam with headings, haulages and tubs. I worked hard there but for some reason or other I could not seem to please the owner-manager, a Mr. Lavin. He was a brute. He made life into hell on earth. As time went by, the Oldfield spirit came to boiling point and the day came when I told him to "stuff his nuts" and I left there and then. What he didn't know was that I was in the Deputies Union and his pit was privately owned. Eventually, he was made to pay me six weeks wages and to find me another job as deputy at another pit.

At this time I was feeling the effects of my previous illness so I took advantage of my being out of work and had a month resting. It did me good. One morning Mr.Lavin came to my home to bring me my money and to tell me that he had arranged an interview for a post at Glapwell Colliery. He asked me why I had never disclosed the fact that I was in a union. I told him, "That is my.....business Mr.Lavin!

I went to that interview, got the job and was introduced to my new boss, a Mr.Stringer. He took to me straight away and in all the ten years I worked there I was very happy. The pit was a drift mine out of Glapwell pit yard down to the Clowne seam. The coal faces, three of them, were only just beyond the bottom of the drift. the coal seam was two feet thick. On my first shift I was introduced to an overman called Colin Lawton. He was, I discovered, the senior overman. From that very day and for all the time I worked there, we got on very well. They were very happy days with good working relations between management and men.

All the tubs were transported by mechanical haulages and the underground water was efficiently coped with by a good pumping system. The main pump pumped the water into the river at the surface. Machinery was installed to cut and load the coal and this was to be my first experience of machine mining. The pit was worked on a 3 shift system which meant that coal was continually coming up the pit and so there had to be plenty of technicians to cope with any breakdowns.

I was sent many times to headquarters on courses to keep up to date with mining procedures with an eye to the future, and also first aid. I became qualified to administer morphine in case of serious accidents. The morphine was kept in concrete safes in various parts of the pit and only qualified persons carried the key to these safes. First aid boxes and stretchers were placed near each working coal face and on many roadways too. These had to be examined daily by a deputy and reported upon. I also attended courses relating to atomic warfare and how to control personnel underground in the event of nuclear attack. Fresh water is now stored down every pit in case of such happenings.

With the introduction of machine mining it was found that the coal faces soon began to greatly advance outward from the pit bottom to such an extent that some faces became over 2 miles out from the pit bottom. The water in the mine was becoming a threat and a hazard to the life of the pit. The coal seams became thinner and thinner until it ran out completely and water was raining from the roofs. They tried boring down to another seam which gave us all hope that the life of the pit would be extended but alas to no avail and the pit had to close. I had had a very happy and successful ten years working there but as I have said before, and will

say time and time again, fate stepped in. I was very upset about the pit closure but there was nothing I could do. I was at this time branch secretary for all the mine officials so I was involved in transferring them to neighbouring pits and I stayed on during salvage operations but was eventually made redundant in May 1970. I had made many friends there but sadly some of them have passed on. It was very sad when we all shook hands for the last time at Glapwell. I had worked in the mining industry for 41 years from being a lad of 14 and now I had to register as being unemployed.

Although I was interviewed for many jobs I was never successful as my age was beyond that of requirement. I did finally get a job driving for Kennings Ltd. at Cavendish Motors. I worked for them for four years and did quite a lot of travelling which I enjoyed. I would go to London, Coventry, Birmingham, Burton, Derby and many other places. It was a nice easy life after all those years in the mines. In the course of my work I visited the Rover and Jaguar factories and was able to see cars being made. I enjoyed the job but the wages were very low and at the end of four years with Kennings, my nephew, Peter Oldfield, who was the son of my brother Geoff, offered me a job in his car sales business and there I worked until I reached the age of retirement. I still help him now from time to time. He used to have a site at Highfields, North Wingfield and later on one opposite the entrance to Queens Park in Chesterfield. The latter one though was closed owing to plans for a motorway.

FAMILY MATTERS.

About this time I learned that my brother Clifford was ill with gangrene in his foot following an accident. No one knew of his exact whereabouts but I went and sought him out and found him in an old dirty hut in a field at Drayton in the Clay, near Uttoxeter. We were shocked the first time we saw him. He was like an old man lying in a dirty bed which was held off the floor with four bricks. The interior of the hut was appalling. Clifford weighed about seven stones. The last time we had seen him he had weighed sixteen stones. So you can imagine our amazement at the terrible state of his health. We didn't stay too long as the smell of the place was unbearable. It was supposed to be called a mobile home. It wasn't fit to keep pigs in and yet the rent they were charging him was very high. This is what they call social services! Anyway there we had to leave him for the time being.

During the journey home we, that is my wife and daughter Glennis and I, discussed what to do about Clifford's situation. We decided that my brother Geoff and his son Peter should be told. It was agreed that Clifford should come to stay with us while Peter acquired a caravan for him at Bateman's caravan site at Brookfield Park, Holmgate near Clay Cross.

We all got together and cleaned, painted and furnished the caravan so that he could take up residence. Between us we ensured that he visited the doctor daily for treatment following the necessary amputation of his big toe which was carried out at Burton Infirmary where we used to visit him twice a week.

By now he was well on the way to recovery and after a few months of good care by all the family he was looking more like his old self. Peter got him a van to ride about in and before long he was back to doing what he had always done.....buying, selling and eating out. Suddenly he took it into his head to go, which he did, leaving the caravan which Peter had acquired for him and which the

family had so painstakingly renovated. He left without notice owing a lot of rent and a lot of unpaid bills behind him. Peter paid all the bills and the outstanding rent but Clifford had 'gone with the wind.' We had arranged Social Security for him, home helps and even money for new clothes. I had done all the correspondence for claiming compensation for his accident which had resulted in gangrene and amputation. He had had all that help to aid his recovery back to a normal life and he had thrown it all back in our faces and vanished. He did eventually pay back some of the money which he owed Peter but nowhere near even a third of it. After vanishing he even forged cheques on Peter's bank account. He was found and prosecuted but in court he was acquitted because Peter refused to bring charges against him because he was 'family.' Now he is drifting around somewhere but to the family he is bad news. But, please note that this is my story and only my version of events. It reminds me of 'the Prodigal Son' in The Bible. I suppose we would do the same for him all over again, after all that is what families are there for. Who knows? Only God knows the answer.

During this time there was a fall in the demand for new and used cars owing to an increase in oil prices and a general world recession. So, during this very bad period Peter bought and sold cars to the trade instead of directly to the customer. This is a job he knows well and for the time being I think he made the right decision. He has a sweet and persuasive nature and should do very well. He has always loaned me a car to use on holiday and that is a big help. My daughter always pays for our holidays so really I am very lucky. 'Better to be born lucky than rich' they always say.

When I was very ill with kidney trouble, Glennis was still at school and times were hard but her mother rolled up her sleeves and got a job which helped us tremendously, and since then she has always worked. She did fifteen years as Lollipop Lady at Tupton School and also worked as a machinist at Robinson's of Chesterfield. Now, she works as a cleaner for Glennis, both at her first pub, The New Inn in Market Street, Clay Cross and at the Miners in Milltown. Besides all this, she found the time to help Glennis and Mick to bring up their three sons and fine ones they are too. The eldest, Michael, is now married with a daughter so now we have a great grand-daughter and that is something to be proud of.

We had no hesitation in letting Glennis get married, even though she was only eighteen, because they were so well matched and still are. They have done very well with the first 23 years of married life. We became great friends of Mick's parents and got on well together. Sadly, his father died soon after retirement although his mother lived till she was eighty five. We had some laughs together. With a family like mine, retirement is much easier to cope with.

FOND MEMORIES

All the days in my young life seemed to be long and sunny. The light nights of summer seemed to last until midnight and it was light at four o'clock in the morning. Sometimes, some of us in the family would get up at that time and walk miles into the country looking for mushrooms and we would play football and cricket till very late in the summer evenings. In the winter I would play the violin at social events in Danesmoor and I used to love writing music for different instruments and teaching myself to play the piano.

I remember Alf's mother and father and his grandmother on his father's side.....Jennifer's great grandmother that is. They were nice quiet people. Alf's father worked at Pilsley Pit and worked hard all his life. I can see him now walking home from work with his black face' I recall Alf starting to court my sister Doris and their wedding. I also recall my brother Les courting Marion Richardson from Morton and their subsequent marriage. Sadly, our Les had to die so young at the age of fifty seven. His wife ,Marion, has carried that burden for fourteen years up to this year of writing. She will be seventy two this year. She still looks radiant for her years and carries her age gracefully. I remember Marion's brother Clarence getting married at Morton Church. I was his best man' We were all pals together in those days and had some sober and happy times. I say sober because alcohol never passed my lips until I was twenty five years of age.

Another pal I had was Jack Jennings. He went to live in Australia. George Bradshaw, another friend of mine, moved to Nottingham. I haven't seen either of them since they moved. There was one other friend with whom I kept in touch all my life until he died in 1881 at the age of 66. His name was Stanley Crofts and although my mother's maiden name was Crofts we were not related in any way. He was a comic and so was I so we were in great demand at any party or wedding. We were well thought of even if I do say it myself!

I can clearly recall even after all these years, the clogs clattering as the miners walked to Parkhouse Pit for the night shift. They walked smoking a last cigarette before going underground because of course they were not allowed to smoke there. There were no showers at the pit head in those days, so they came home in their dirt. They bathed at home and then their wife or mother would have to dry their pit clothes in time for the next shift. Can you imagine what the bed sheets would look like. There were no washing machines in those days. In fact the houses had 'wash houses' as doing the laundry involved so much equipment such as tubs and mangles. the women had a rough deal in those days. there was no soap powder or detergents to make the job easier.....only red carbolic soap. This soap was also used for personal washing and bathing and even shaving. It made the skin tingle I can tell you!

Sliced bread wasn't invented yet, maybe because most women baked their own bread. It was cheaper and better than bought bread. It seems that in those days women were expected to be able to cook, clean, wash, iron, bake, bring up the children and be prepared to work very hard indeed.

If a relative of the family died, members of the family wore black bands around their arm for several weeks as a mark of respect for the dear departed. All funerals were solemn occasions with a tea afterwards for family and close friends. Transport then was by horse and even their shoes were painted black. Everyone wore black and walked only in couples. Walking in a threesome was tempting fate as it was supposed that the middle one would be the next to die.

THE MINERS ARMS

Before Glennis and Mick had a public house they worked and saved very hard. Michael worked in the pits and that is hard work as I know only too well. Glennis was an auxiliary nurse at Morton and at Scarsdale hospital. I must add of course that her mother helped her an awful lot by looking after the children. Then came the excitement of first their move to The New Inn in Clay Cross, and later, to The Miners Arms in Milltown.

Since they moved to The Miners Arms I have been able to meet more of my family as the pub seems to have developed into a family meeting place, especially at Sunday lunchtimes. We all got together with many of the local people and held a fete, the proceeds of which were sent to the Falklands Appeal. There were stalls, a sheep roast, a barbecue, a sponsored marathon, hot peas, fancy dress.....a wonderful time was had by all. Two of the pub's regulars, Tom and John Camp, were paratroopers and had fought in the Falklands War. We held a surprise party for them when they came home victorious.

During the summer on Sunday evenings a brass band played outside the pub and the proceeds from this went to the Falklands Appeal which is now called The South Atlantic Fund.

A great deal of effort went into these events and co-operation from customers was essential to achieve success. The Miners Arms was a country pub and completely different in type to The New Inn which was a town pub but even there Glennis and Mick organised many social events such as tramp suppers, fancy dress evenings and Easter bonnet parades which were all a big success.

When I look around at the Miners when all the family are there, and there are many of them, it is grand. There are some 'film stars' in our family but I won't mention any names as it might not be taken in the right spirit. My niece Jennifer, her husband Michael and son Nicholas come to the Miners when they are over from Cheltenham. She is my sister's daughter and it is she who has kindly offered to type this story for me. She says she will be proud to do it and I am proud of her offer. God made us all in His own image and when we look around at one another we must wonder at the wonderful power God must be. When Jennifer offered to type my story it gave me a great lift and the incentive to carry on writing it. I hope I can do just that. Our Doris has a great gift for writing and I often wonder why she doesn't put pen to paper. There is one gift which all the family share and that is the ability to laugh and enjoy a good joke. We don't need a joke book we invent our own jokes. There was a man who found a piece of wood in his sausage so he took it back to the butcher and said, "I don't mind eating your dog but I object to eating its kennel as well!" I have written down and kept a lot of jokes in my diary over the years. Good clean jokes. They still make me laugh, and others too.

HUMOROUS MEMORIES

There is a famous hymn called, 'Tell Me The Old Old Story.' Tell me the story as to a little child, uncomplicated and simple so that they can understand. This is my story, uncomplicated in its nature but true.

I remember an incident when I was a boy of eleven. My pals and I decided to smoke out a wasps nest and not thinking of the danger, we set fire to a large tree. We panicked and ran away. We daren't go home so we camped under a hedgerow

and bedded down for the night. The 'camp' wasn't far from the end of Guildford Lane. During the night there was a violent thunderstorm and we were all frightened to death. My dad came and found us. He had been searching everywhere. When he had finished with me I couldn't sit down for a week after the good hiding he gave me with his leather strap! My dad was a good and truthful man but he had a violent temper when roused. He ruled the roost at our house until I was well into my teens. Cliff used to rebel against him though. Anyway, how can we be cured of our faults when we are being continually reminded of them? It is the same as the man who said to another man, "Have you forgotten that £5 you owe me?" And the other man said, "How can I forget it when you keep reminding me of it."

When we were in our early teens, we used to have a pet goat which used to follow us everywhere just like a dog. It was a white goat and one day it died. Our Geoff took meat sandwiches to work for many a day afterwards. He said the meat tasted just like lamb!

In those days, my dad used to repair all our shoes. There were shoes for six children and he couldn't afford to pay for someone to repair them. He used to soak the hammer in water overnight to make the wood swell so that the hammer head wouldn't come off. One day while he was cobbling, the hammer head flew off as he had forgotten to soak it. It took three days to find that hammer head. He was livid. He had been cobbling outside so it could have gone anywhere. Can you imagine it?

I can remember our Geoff, when he was very small, dropping an iron pick on his toe. He still carries the scars today.

There were some very dirty houses in the 30's and most had only two bedrooms. Some families had as many as twelve children.....so you can imagine the problem. Six would be sent to bed and when they were asleep were reared up in a corner so that the next six could go to bed. This was one of my dad's old jokes. He liked a bit of fun. I think the same trait is in all of us.

Once, some family or other 'flitted' and they found the house so filthy that it had to be stoved before even the cockroaches would move in!!!! Some families would have fowls and cockerels running about the house and eating off the table and the cockerel crowing out loud. This is true because I have seen it. I have even seen chickens kept behind chicken wire in the front room.

I once saw a butcher kill a pig. In those days they killed their pigs on a wooden bench in the back yard. On this occasion the pig escaped with its throat cut. It did no end of damage before it dropped dead in somebody's garden. They killed it then to save its life! The latter is a joke. Ha! Ha! Ha!

The street lighting in the 30's was by gas and a man was employed to light every lamp in every street every night in both Clay Cross and Danesmoor. He carried a long pole to light them with and the lamps were 100 yards apart. By the time he had finished it was time to start all over again!

Toffees and chocolates in the shop windows used to go mouldy. There was never any money to buy them with; and this is no joke. A pennyworth of chips was a luxury and you would make them last twenty minutes.

When we were lads we used to walk out for the day to play at Ogsten, where the reservoir is now. There would be about fifty of us including parents. We carried bottles of water with us as there were no soft drinks in those days, and no money to buy them with if there had been. Sometimes, on the long walk back, we would call at a house and ask for water. We always said please and thankyou for that was the way we had been brought up. Sometimes we would go to Ashover Faebric (rock) for the day to make a change. The Faebric was to become a favourite family beauty spot. My brother Les carved our father's initials and the date of his birth and his death upon the rock. In turn, Les's initials and dates were carved there by the family after his death. This I think will become a tradition. The carvings are there for posterity.

You could buy a new bicycle in those days for under five pounds. Doris and I used to cycle a lot in those days and so did her husband Alf. If we got a puncture and had no repair outfit, we have been known to stuff the tyre with grass to get us home. I remember once cycling to Doncaster with my dad. I would be about thirteen at the time and my dad had to tie a cushion on the crossbar for me to sit on as my feet wouldn't reach the pedals. I could hardly sit down for a week afterwards.....my dad often used to pull my leg about it. When we got to Doncaster, my Grandma cooked us a nice plateful of bacon and eggs. She was a real lady and knew how to set a high society table.

A lot of children used to wear clogs and hob-nailed boots so that their parents were saved the cost of shoe repairs. In those days it was either walk or run as there was no money for bus rides and not many buses anyway. I do remember however my first bus ride. The bus had solid rubber tyres and you sat in front with the driver. Those buses were called 'bone-shakers' and believe you me, that is precisely what they did! Mostly though, for most people it was 'Shanks' Pony' and very tough on shoe leather. Some people, who had holes in the soles of their shoes, would place cardboard or even newspapers inside their shoes to cover the holes. You might think that this is an old wives' tale but it is quite true.

People used to 'live' for brass bands in those days. At Whitsuntide (now called Spring Bank Holiday) all the children from the local chapels and churches used to parade through the streets led by the Clay Cross Silver Band. Later, they would congregate on the Highflats at the Miners' Welfare to play games and eat ice cream if they could afford it. The Danesmoor chapels used to 'walk-round' on Whitsuntide Monday afternoon and Clay Cross 'walked round' on the Monday morning. Their procession was so long that they used to have two brass bands. Thousands of people used to line the streets to watch the procession take place. The Clay Cross Silver Band used to perform in the bandstand at the Miners' Welfare for carnivals, flower shows and sports days. It was a sorry day when the Silver Prize Band was disbanded. Perhaps someday, someone will re-establish it.

There also used to be a jazz band at Clay Cross which also paraded at carnivals and won many prizes. It was called The Robin Hood Band and all the bandmen wore Lincoln green and red uniforms and were very smart indeed. My brother Geoff and his wife Emily were long time members of the band. I note now, that in this year of 1982, there are signs that jazz bands, carnival bands and even brass bands are

returning to the area. Many children are taught to play musical instruments at school now and so many new bands are starting up.

MY PHILOSOPHY

I have always thought that, if we had had more prosperity and less poverty in our young days, we might have had better success in our lives. However, it is true to say that none of us have been exactly unsuccessful in spite of the hard times. It may seem peculiar to say this, but with more and better education, I would have liked to have become a doctor or.....a reader of minds. Our Doris, Glennis and I, all have psychic powers and my mother was very effective and true when 'reading' teacups. I believe our Doris also has the same gift.

I think that Glennis and Mick will remain at the Miners Arms until they retire, not necessarily at old age. She has spoken of retiring to Scarborough someday. It is a nice thought. We all have dreams don't we? Sometimes those dreams are shattered, but you have to pick yourself up, dust yourself down and start all over again. Everyone needs good health first and foremost to succeed in anything. Hard work never hurt anyone but it helps you to eat and sleep well and to realise your ambitions. I am a great believer in the inter-action of the mind and body. If the mind is sick and worried then the body will suffer. Similarly, if you find happiness you will find health.

I am a great believer in the stars and the reading of horoscopes. They can tell us a lot of truth but one must learn to read between the lines. For many years I bought a magazine called The Prediction. It was a very interesting journal on this subject. It is too expensive for me to buy now but in those days it cost just a few pence and provided very good reading. The late H.R.Naylor used to write for the magazine and was very interesting.

I like to read when it is very quiet. Some people can read when all around them is noise, but I can't do that.

I recall, during the Second World War, children being evacuated from London to places like Derbyshire which were thought to be safe from bombing. I made friends with a lot of these evacuees who had been sent to Danesmoor until the Blitz ended. I often wonder where they all are now and what has become of them. My brother Geoff became very attached to one evacuee called Ivy Rowen who came from Peckham. He was very upset when she had to go back. Ironically, and in spite of being protected from bombs, we were to learn that after the war she was killed in a car accident. Geoff was very upset at the time. She had been a lovely girl, young and gay, but you see yet again fate took a hand and whether we like it or not Fate is Life's Destiny. My dear old dad wrote a poem called The Destiny of Man. We buried him with a copy of that in his hand. I too have a printed copy of it somewhere in my treasures which someone will find one day when I am gone.

CYRIL

I have spoken about some of my brothers and my sister, perhaps now I should mention my youngest brother Cyril. He was a great lad when he was young. He loved music as we all do, in fact he turned out to be a very accomplished drummer and played with many local dance bands.

He also had a temper like the rest of us but I don't think that that is too bad a thing. It does good to have a bit of fire in you sometimes.

Cyril married a nice girl from Nottingham called Nora and eventually had six children, two girls and four boys.

I used to travel to Braunston in Leicester to see him when he lived there and to stay with him at weekends. At that time we were both studying at Technical college and we would exchange views on maths and trigonometry. Cyril was very clever indeed and eventually passed as an engineering inspector. From then on he progressed very well and moved to Hayling Island. I visited him there only once. The next time I saw him was at Dad's funeral in 1962. I never saw him again. He moved to America and was there for eight years and was doing very well for himself. We wrote often to each other. He had started to play the organ and in his last letter he asked me for some tips on organ playing. Soon after that, he was taken seriously ill and advised to return to England as the cost of the treatment he needed was so expensive.

He bought a house in Devon where incidentally his Nora still lives. By now Cyril knew that he was suffering from spinal cancer and refused for anyone in the family to see him in the condition his illness had reduced him to. Nora would write and keep us up to date but alas, poor Cyril died. I was very upset. I hadn't seen him for over eight years and now would never see him again.

NUMBER TWO PIT

When I was writing about the different pits which were owned by Clay Cross Company, I mentioned Number 2 Pit. This pit was situated at Clay Cross Works approximately 80 yards from Wingfield Church. It was closed down in 1962, the same year my Dad died. I have many memories of this pit both as a boy and also when I was a grown man. As a lad of fourteen I would watch the tubs of coal being wound up the shaft. I would look down into the darkness and watch the cages loaded with coal come into view and then disappear again down the shaft. I would watch the winding engine and the driver for hours on end. I also liked to watch the tubs of coal lined up on the pit top before they were emptied into wagons. The wagons were owned by Clay Cross Company and said so on the sides of the wagons. The company even had its own wagon repair shop which was situated at the bottom of Hephthorne Lane and employed many people in those days. During the First World War, my mother-in-law, Ethel Bowen (née Ramsdale) worked there. The wagon repair shop has been closed now for about twenty years.

There used to be a roadway at Number 2 Pit which connected underground with Parkhouse Pit at Danesmoor. This underground roadway had to be inspected once a week by a deputy. During my duties as deputy at Parkhouse Pit. I had occasion to travel this roadway many times and it was there that I discovered my Father's and Grandfather's signatures.

I supervised as a deputy at Number 2 Pit on the pumping system which was kept going for many years even when coal production had long since ceased. These very large pump horses were way out in the underground workings about 2 miles under Highfields at Wingfield. They were all left in when the pit closed. The pit shaft was filled in so no one knows exactly where it was. To pinpoint where the shaft was, I would say 80 yards from Wingfield Church and 50 yards from the railway bridge.

FAMILY OUTINGS

When my daughter's children were small we used to take them out in the car I had at the time. I have kept records of some of these outings. We decided to visit as many old churches as possible and I have on record that between the 5th & 6th June 1968 we visited St.Giles in Great Longstone, St.Anne's in Monyash, St.Edmund's in Fenny Lenton, near Ashbourne, Ashbourne Parish Church, St.John the Baptist Church in Kniveton and the Parish Church of Wirksworth.

The children were only small. Michael was six and Richard was only two. I wonder if they can remember paddling in the brook at Dovedale. It was such a lovely summer that year. I took Glennis there as well with her friend Beryl Belcher. She loved it. We all went together to so many places and we enjoyed every outing. They were very happy days for us all. We loved having our grandchildren and helping Glennis with them.

A few years later another grandson was born. He was christened Glen. So now we had three lovely grandchildren. Throughout their young life they have had the very best of care any child could have both from their parents and from their grandparents. My wife, Jessie, had so much patience with them when they were children and still does even though they are in their teens or even older. Now she has another happiness. Michael's wife, Mandy, gave birth to a little girl, a great granddaughter of whom we are very proud. Isn't it surprising what can happen in one's lifetime.

HISTORICAL FACTS AND FIGURES

I am going to enter into my story a few interesting facts which I feel sure will be of interest to others and to future generations. I have kept careful records so I know they are all true.

There used to be a Hippodrome Theatre in Chesterfield where variety shows were staged. It was situated at the top of Corporation Street and was the centre for entertainment from early 1880 to its closing in 1955.

At the entrance to West Bars in Chesterfield, there used to be a railway station. It was to the side of The Portland Hotel and was closed down on September 19th. 1955.

South Normanton Pit, which was owned by Clay Cross Company was closed down on March 2nd. 1951.

Eighty miners died at Cresswell Colliery in a fire on September 20th. 1950.

Four Glapwell miners shared £75,000 in a football pools win on January 13th. 1952. My birthday.

Work commenced on October 3rd. 1951 at Wingerworth of the new Avenue Carbonisation Plant. It cost £800,000.

Lady Bower Reservoir was opened on September 28th. by the King and Queen.

The heaviest snowfall ever recorded fell on January 6th. and 7th. 1947.

Clay Cross Hippodrome was completely gutted by fire on February 19th. 1940. It was built in 1925. I was 9 at the time and remember it well.

The trolley buses of Chesterfield were replaced by double decker motor buses on March 24th. 1938. Before trolley buses there were trams.

The hottest Whitsuntide recorded in Chesterfield was on June 5th. 1933. The temperature reached 85 in the shade and 115 in the sun.

An explosion at Grassmoor Pit killed 14 and injured 8 miners on November 19th. 1933.

There used to be a skating rink in Chesterfield at West Bars. It was destroyed by fire in 1932 on February 16th.

Oil was found at Hardstoft, near Tibshelf, on May 27th. 1919.....I can remember an oil well there for some many years after.

There was a riot at Chesterfield's Midland Station when windows were smashed and extensive damage was done. The Mayor read The Riot Act. There were baton charges by the police and bayonet charges by the Second Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. August 19th. 1911.

Trams commenced running from Chesterfield to Brampton in 1882.

Clay cross Company was formed in 1840. Pilsley Pit closed on April 27th. 1957.

The oldest existing cinema in the county, The Coliseum, at Chatsworth Road, Brampton was opened on October 7th. 1907 and closed on October 28th. 1957.

Deerpark Primary School at Wingerworth was opened on July 9th. 1960.

The well known ice cream manufacturer, A. Manfredi, was killed when his car hit a concrete post at Wardlow, near Tideswell, on July 27th. 1960. He was well known in the district and was a lovely man. He was 69 when he was killed.

I do hope the reader has found these facts interesting. I could add many more but I think they may prove too boring all at once.

MUSICAL MEMORIES

I would like to mention now, a Mr. Wilfred Harris, who years ago was the local postmaster and grocer in Danesmoor. He played the piano. I had many happy nights accompanying him on my violin at social evenings. These evenings took place in the Danesmoor Chapel schoolroom. Wilfred was a very fine pianist with a cap and gown to his credit. I also played violin in the streets, when I was a young lad, for the Sunday School Anniversaries. We had many stops in the streets and the children sang their Anniversary Hymns while we played the tunes. Wilfred Harris used to play a little harmonium on these occasions; it folded up and could be

pushed from street to street on an old pram. It was a lovely sounding harmonium yet very small. I wish I had one now. It must be worth a fortune. I kept in touch with Wilfred by letter until he died.

Frank Stone was another pal of mine and one I played with in the dance band days. We had some great times together and still met from time to time and chatted about the old times. I was told one day however that Frank had been killed in a pit cage accident at Markham Colliery. What a very sad end for a very nice man.

During the bad years of my illness, I had the pleasure of playing the violin to a gentleman known to me only by the name of William. I never knew his surname. A drummer also played with us by the name of Les Barker. We used to play 5 nights per week in the Nelson public house, off Holywell Street, in Chesterfield. I quite enjoyed those evenings. I was only in my thirties and was quite a good violin player then. Practise makes perfect so they say, and with playing as I was so regularly, I got in lots of practise. In fact, the landlord of the Nelson told me that he had never heard such rhythm played on a violin before. We entertained there for about two years until the landlord emigrated to Rhodesia. I never saw the pianist and the drummer again after that, but I have heard that William drowned himself. He was at the time landlord of a pub at Winsick, Hasland. He must have had terrific problems to do a thing like that. The drummer also died through illness.

After recovering from my illness and getting back to work again, I started to play the violin at our local pub, The Britannia, in Ward Street, New Tupton. I played to the finest pianist I have ever come across. I also played alto-saxophone to him. I used to play the piano at the Manor House Farm at Wingerworth at weekends. I also used to play during the week for different charity events in aid of Cancer Research or Oxfam. We had some lovely tramp suppers there and all the customers would dress the part. I don't play there anymore, now that Glennis has her own pub, although I did play at weekends in her first pub, The New Inn, and occasionally at the Miners Arms.

MOVING HOUSE

My daughter Glennis was married from the house on Ward Street in New Tupton. It was in February 1959 and I remember what a lovely sunny day it was. The following year we had to move in a hurry to my present home on North Side, New Tupton.

The house on Ward Street was one of a row of six, which was the way they built in Victorian times. We were the only ones in the row who didn't own our house and I paid a rent of eight shillings and two pence per week for it.(41p) It had three small bedrooms with plaster floors, a front room and a kitchen. We also had a cellar where the coal was kept. Anyway, the houses were in such a bad condition that the council condemned them and ordered them to be demolished as soon as all the occupiers had been rehoused. Well, time went on and first one family was rehoused and then another and another until there was only us left. The demolition firm even started pulling down the houses at the other end of the row and still we had heard nothing from the council about being moved.

One day, a man from the Electricity Board arrived, climbed a ladder outside my front room window, where I was sitting watching television and cut off my supply of

electricity. He obviously thought the house was empty. I ran outside and played 'merry hell' and persuaded him to reconnect us to the supply.

At this particular time I was doing night-shifts at work and so had to sleep during the day. Whilst I was sleeping one day, there was a large crashing noise which woke me up and frightened me to death. A bulldozer bucket had crashed through the bedroom window and had pulled part of the wall and the window out. I jumped out of bed, yelling at the top of my voice, to try to make myself heard. There was only me in the house, in the row even.

The contractor, when he realised what he had done, was astounded and very upset. There had been a misunderstanding and he thought that all the houses were empty.

I really should have taken the matter up with the council and sued them for gross negligence or something.....but I didn't. However, as strange as it seems, along came a man from the council that very day and brought me the keys to my present house. The contractor very kindly offered to help move us that very night to our new home.

When Jessie came home from work she was very upset, but at the same time pleased to know that at last we were moving out. So with help from two good friends and the contractor, we moved to our new home with all our belongings on the back of a lorry. during a violent thunderstorm. We were all drenched. It is an incident in my life etched on my memory. We moved into our new house and for the very first time I knew what it was to have a bathroom.

POSTSCRIPT

Sadly Uncle Harold died in March 1985 and was buried as he said he had been married, in a snow storm, at North Wingfield Church.

Glennis and Mick left the Miners Arms, as Uncle Harold predicted, but not to retire They took over the tenancy of the White Hart in Station Road in Tupton. His widow, Jessie, continues to live in New Tupton.

His brother Clifford continued to lead a nomadic existence and died in September 1990. He was 73 years of age.

Harold's only sister, Doris, my Mum, lived until she was 81 and died of pneumonia in Chesterfield Royal Hospital on May 27th. 1994. She was cremated at Chesterfield, as was my Father, Alf, who died in 1979.

At this moment in time, October 1996, Harold's last remaining brother, Geoff, the lovable blue eyed boy and the life and soul of family gatherings, is suffering from Alzheimers Disease. He is 76. His wife Emily continues to care for him at home. Uncle Les's widow, Marion, is now 86 and is still living in the marital home in Slough and Auntie Nora, Cyril's widow, remains in Exeter, Devon.

I can remember urging Uncle Harold to persevere with His Story. He said that no one would be able to read his writing and that because " I am not an educated man, my spelling and grammar leave a lot to be desired." I told him to just get it down on paper and I would sort it out for him.

I have endeavoured to maintain ' the essence of Harold' in editing his story and indeed had very little correcting to do.

He was overwhelmed when I presented him with the finished copy in a smart folder. He told me that he was busy writing part two.....sadly, I never received it and after his death I felt it to be insensitive to ask Glennis if it had been found. Maybe one day I will do so.

It is so important that these things are recorded for posterity, which is why, in my fashion, I will try to continue the Oldfield Saga.

I often urged my Mum, Doris, to 'put pen to paper'. She tried to make a start in her later years but never seemed to get beyond the first page, which is such a shame as she had a wonderful gift for storytelling. She used to entertain us with her tales of yore, her childhood and her family life etc. It is all 'lost' now and therefore I must put 'pen to paper' for her. Please bear with me. I will do my best.

Jennifer Copson

(née Allen)

October 1996

February 2000.... Update.

When Uncle Geoff, " our beloved blue eyed boy" died in June 1997, Peter, Marion and I decided that as Uncle Geoff had been the one who had tried to hold the family together, we must for his sake keep it going.

When Auntie Marion died in late December 1996, there was a gathering of the clan.....even Tricia from Oz..... and I think that was when the seed was really sown for what was to become the Annual Oldfield Reunion. So far, we have had two very successful reunions: one in Derbyshire in 1997 and again in Devon in 1998. Although we talked about having a third one in 1999 for various reasons it did not materialise. However, in 2000 the stage is set for a Surrey get-together, hosted this time by Marion and Bobby. I can't help feeling how that one girl, my Mum and her five wonderful brothers, would be so pleased by our efforts to keep the Oldfields together and that now we are bringing Michael and his family into the picture...albeit by courtesy of the internet.

More recently there have been new additions to the family. My next update will include them all.