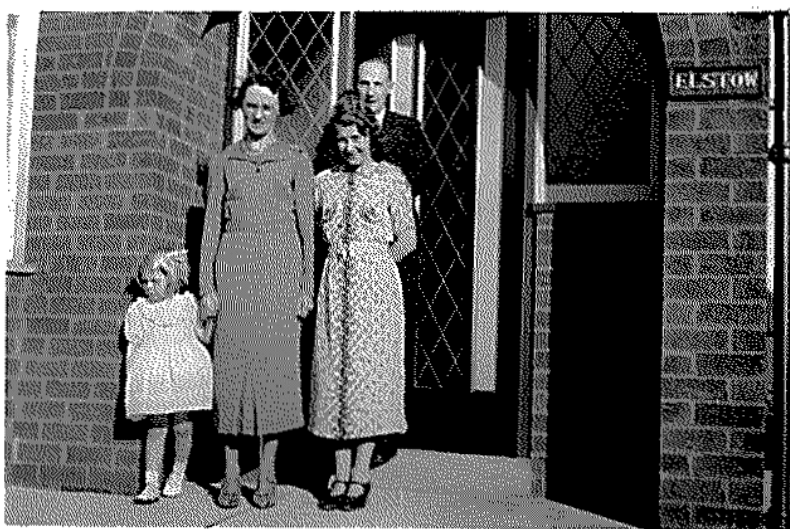


Chapter 31: Other Aspects of Life

House and housing

While the Parkins lived at the shop in Station Street throughout the war, there were various developments relating to houses and property during this period. The family continued to visit “*Elstow*” but entries relating to this are difficult to follow as the term is used for the village in Bedfordshire and for two houses, 96 Welbeck Street in Kirkby and another, 22 Beech Hill Drive, in Mansfield.¹ During this period, Auntie Bertha, grandma’s maternal aunt, was living at the Mansfield “*Elstow*” but following the death of grandma’s father, in 1937, I am not entirely sure who was living at the Kirkby “*Elstow*”.²



“Elstows”

Left – 22 Beech Hill Drive in Mansfield with mum, grandma, Edie and Bert

Right – 96 Welbeck Street, Kirkby with grandma’s parents

Grandad owned other properties which he rented out. In January 1940, he noted that he went to “*Maria’s*” about the lease and it appears that he agreed a long lease of 21 years. I am not sure who Maria was or which house this related to.³ In December 1944, grandad noted paying the sum of £422 14 1 to the Derbyshire Building Society to pay off the “*houses*”.⁴ It seems grandma and grandad may have still owned the house at 61 Milton Street⁵ as, in October 1945, grandad noted that they had a brick wall built in front of that property. Grandad may also have been consulted by family members who were thinking of buying a property.⁶ For example, in March 1943, Jim and Renie came to talk to him about buying a bungalow and, the next month, he went to see it in Mansfield.

¹ The “*Elstow*” in Mansfield is definitively identified in a newspaper article about Auntie Bertha and Uncle Frank’s golden wedding anniversary in 1956. Interestingly, the house, 22 Beech Hill Drive retained the Elstow name until [at least 2012](#).

² Initially, I thought perhaps one of grandma’s brothers, Ray or Bert, might have been living there but this appears to have not been the case. In May 1939, grandad noted that, after tea, he had a bike ride to Bert’s and “*Elstow*” which implies that Bert was not living there. In October 1945, when Ray moved to Bedford, grandad noted that he had a house to sell. When grandad and family finally moved to “*Elstow*” in 1951, this was possible because the couple who were living there – Mr & Mrs Smith – were moving out because they had bought a bungalow in Trusthorpe. Based on the 1939 Register, Samuel Smith and his wife Dora were living at the house in Welbeck Street. He is described as a colliery undermanager. I am not sure why they were living there whether they had some connection with the Parkins or if it was just a commercial rental arrangement.

³ It seems unlikely to have been one of the three properties in Victoria Road (158, 160, 162) as grandad did not buy these until 1946. Perhaps 61 Milton Street or a property in Diamond Avenue?

⁴ 96 and 98 Welbeck Street perhaps or the houses in Diamond Avenue?

⁵ Where grandma’s parents used to live

⁶ Perhaps because they were borrowing money from him and grandma

Chapel

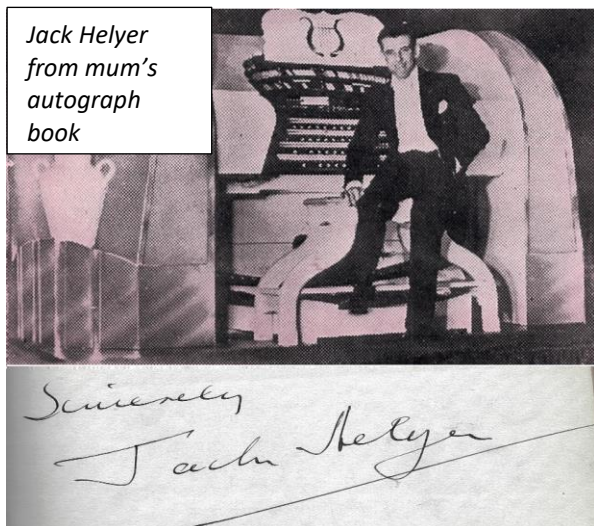
Although grandma, and increasingly mum, were actively involved in Methodist chapel during this period, grandad's attendances, or at least those he noted, were increasingly restricted to special events, particularly those in which mum featured! Other relatives were also actively involved in church life. Bert, grandma's brother, chaired the service/concert in December 1941 where [Jack Helyer](#)⁷ played the organ. Bert's wife, Doris, chaired the ladies' effort in April 1942, and that same year, Jim, grandma's cousin, preached at chapel.

Mum's public performances at chapel 1939-1945

In January 1939, when mum was still four, she received her first Sunday School prize. At the same age, she was also on the platform for the Primary Anniversary and for the Flower Service. In June 1940, at the age of five, mum said her first recitation at the Primary Anniversary. At the Flower Service that year, she took the collection and, in December, she was in the Primary Concert.

In July 1943, aged eight, she took part in a biblical play and, that same year, when she had just turned nine, she spoke from the pulpit at the Harvest Festival. In February 1944, still aged nine, she played her first piano solo as part of a concert at chapel. That same year, for the Sunday School Anniversary, mum "*presided from the pulpit*" and she also went to help at another anniversary in Newstead.

Mum also had her tenth birthday party at chapel in 1944.



Grandad did place particular emphasis on special events in the chapel calendar. In 1939, he noted both the Sunday School Anniversary and the Whit procession. He also noted the introduction of a "*Flower Service*" in July of each year from 1939. In May 1940, he noted that the Whit procession did not take place but he did not explain why, particularly as it did take place during the war subsequently. Grandad also particularly liked to attend special musical events associated with chapel. During this period this included performances of the Messiah in 1939 and 1940, visits by organist Jack Helyer in 1939 and 1941, and two [Glee](#) Male Voice Choirs in 1945.

Grandad was also involved in the financial side of chapel⁸ including through giving. In 1941, he donated £1⁹ towards debt reduction on the minister's house. In 1944, he donated a further £5 towards helping to clear the church debt. In 1945, he lent one of the Ministers a total of £17¹⁰ but was very unimpressed as the minister did not give him an "*acknowledgment*".¹¹

⁷ Apparently, he was a [well-known cinema organist](#) in Nottingham.

⁸ During this period, on some Sundays, he went to "CC". Could this be church council? In later diaries, he refers to himself as a Trustee and is involved in discussions about the sale of the church building to Meridian.

⁹ Worth around [£35](#) today.

¹⁰ Worth over [£500](#) today.

¹¹ I am not sure if grandad meant a receipt, a private thank you or some sort of public recognition. I assume it is one of the former two.

Grandma was involved in a chapel ladies' group and, among mum's papers was a newspaper cutting from the Free Press on November 14 1941 which included a section of Kirkby News. In there, was a brief report on the Bourne Methodist Bright Hour annual meeting.¹²

From March 1940, the Parkins formed a strong and lasting friendship with one of the Methodist ministers, who was with them at that time, and with his family. Arthur and Ella Lofthouse¹³ had a[n adopted] daughter, Dorothy, who was around

a year younger than mum, having been born in January 1936.¹⁴ Mum and Dorothy became firm and long-lasting friends. During this period, they frequently visited each other's houses and went to pantomimes and the cinema together. However, in August 1942, the Lofthouses left Kirkby to move to West Hartlepool. They stayed with the Parkins prior to leaving Kirkby on the 24th. The Lofthouses returned to Kirkby twice in 1943. In March, they came as Arthur was officiating at Verlie Deakin's



Above left – Dorothy Above right – mum, Dorothy and Ella

house, who gave a splendid missionary address. Mrs. Clarke was soloist, and Mrs. Brown the organist. The offering was for Overseas Missions.

Women's League.
Mrs. Westlake presided over the meeting of the East Kirkby Baptist Women's League on Monday afternoon. The Rev. F. Bass, of Eastwood, was the speaker, the topic of his address being "Salt." The roll-call was conducted by Mrs. Musson, and the hymns were selected by Mrs. Woodhouse. The pianist was Mrs. Wharmby.

Bourne Methodist Ladies.
Mrs. Williams, of Sutton, was the speaker at the Kirkby-in-Ashfield Baptist Church Women's Own on Tuesday afternoon, and gave a very interesting talk on "God cares for all." She also opened with prayer and read the lesson. Miss Fox presided, conducted the roll-call and closed with prayer. Mrs. Hopkins was the soloist, and Mesdames Pugh, Bradley and Green announced the hymns.

Baptist Women's Own.
The annual meeting of the ladies of the East Kirkby Bourne Methodist Bright Hour was held on Tuesday afternoon. Mrs. Munns opened with prayer, and the Rev. G. A. Lofthouse presided. Reports on the work and efforts during the year were given by the Secretary, after which, the Rev. G. A. Lofthouse offered congratulations and thanks for the splendid work done by the ladies during the year, and also for the most acceptable sum of £63 which they have raised by various efforts and presented to the Church. The officials elected for the coming year were as follow:—President, Mrs. Bust; Vice-President, Mrs. Munns; Secretary, Mrs. Smith; Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Barlow; Treasurer, Mrs. Deakin; Pianist, Mrs. Hufton; Assistant Pianist, Mrs. Smith; Promise Box Secretary, Mrs. J. Adams. Arrangements were made for efforts to be held during the coming year.

Musical Afternoon.

News cutting from November 1941 featuring a report of the annual meeting of the East Kirkby Bourne Methodist Bright Hour

wedding. In June, they came again and this coincided with the Whit procession. During their visit, the Parkins and the Lofthouses visited Sutton and Newstead Abbey¹⁵, and had a picnic in Portland Park ("the Quarries"). Arthur, grandma and Ella attended a service in Nottingham and Arthur preached at the Primary Anniversary. The Lofthouses visited again in April 1945 for a week's holiday. Arthur again preached at the Sunday School Anniversary and the

¹² Although confusingly it is presented under a heading "Baptist Women's Own". It seems that the relevant headings have been transposed.

¹³ [George Arthur Lofthouse](#) was a Primitive Methodist Minister who was born on 22 August 1901 in Brotton, Yorkshire and who died in 1991. He was ordained in 1932 as one of the last ordinands in the Primitive Methodist Church and one of the first ministers of the Uniting Conference. He was [Minister at Bourne from 1938 to 1942](#).

¹⁴ She celebrated her 21st birthday in 1957 (see [Chapter 66](#)) but one of mum's photos of her notes her date of birth as 7 January 1935.

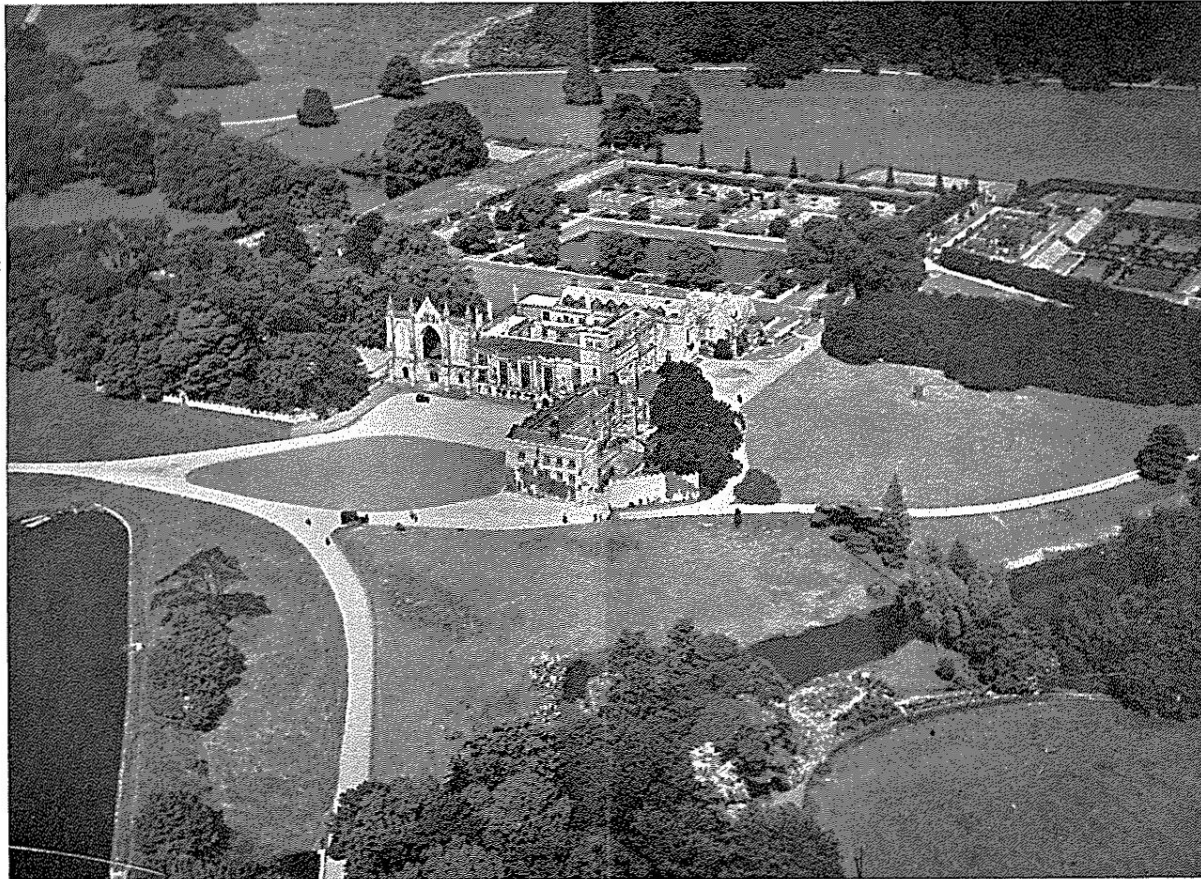
¹⁵ Former Augustinian monastery, this was the [ancestral home of Lord Byron](#). There are pictures of trips to Newstead Abbey, with the Lofthouses in 1948, in [Chapter 40](#) and with other family members in [Chapter 66](#). There are also more recent photos of a trip I made there with my father in 2010 in the [index of people](#). There are pictures of two paintings of Newstead Abbey by Jack Attwood in [Chapter 34](#) and there are two pictures of Newstead Abbey in Frank Ashley, Sylvia Sinfield and Gerald Lee's book "Kirkby & District from Old Photographs" (p13). Among mum's papers were two (undated) guides to Newstead Abbey. Inside one there was a booklet about the grounds dated 1945 and an aerial photograph which has been annotated to show space to park a coach.



I rang this department, he explained when I said that he would send this plenty of room to park the coach.

PARKS DEPARTMENT
CITY OF NOTTINGHAM

NEWSTEAD ABBEY NOTTINGHAMSHIRE



Aerial photo of Newstead Abbey that was tucked inside one of two old guides to the abbey that were among mum's papers. It has been annotated to say that there is plenty of space to park a coach

NEWSTEAD ABBEY FROM THE AIR *By Courtesy of the Nottingham Guardian Journal*
Nine miles north of Nottingham and five miles south of Mansfield on the main Nottingham — Mansfield Road, (A60)

entire family went to the Empire¹⁶ in Nottingham¹⁷. Mum and grandma visited the Lofthouses in West Hartlepool twice, in July 1943 and again in August 1945. On the first occasion, Olive¹⁸ went with them and, on the second occasion, Bert took them as far as Grantham. Grandad did not go on either occasion.



*Top left – grandad and Arthur
Top centre – Dorothy and Arthur
Top right - Dorothy
Above left – Ella, Arthur, mum and grandma
Above right – Dorothy and Ella
Left – trip to Matlock showing Mr and Mrs Hill, Dorothy, Arthur, grandad, Ella and grandma*

¹⁶ See [Chapter 21](#).

¹⁷ I am grateful to Trevor Lee for sharing with me that this was to see a revue called "We're Coming Over".

¹⁸ I am not completely sure which Olive this was – grandad's sister or niece (who was living in Grantham at this time). I think the former is more likely but I am not sure.

Dorothy



The handyman

Throughout this period, grandad continued to be a practical handyman and presumably this attribute was particularly valued through the rigours of wartime, not only in his business but also at home. He made necessities, such as a night commode¹⁹, and he also made a number of other things.

In the early part of the war, in 1939, he expanded the aviary he had in the yard of 72 Station Street including adding a nest box for the blue budgies.²³ However, in 1940, following the first air raid on England, he decided to take the aviary down and sold the budgies for nine shillings. In July 1940, he and Ray, grandma's brother, built a "cabin" at "Elstow".

Things made by grandad during the war years

A case for a dart board (that Olive had bought him)
A bird cage
A nest box for the aviary
A case for a vacuum cleaner
A meat safe
Two trucks
A corner speaker cabinet
A ten foot folding ladder
A barrow²⁰
A chair²¹
Two clarinet cases and an oboe case
A hot air cupboard and a frame for it
A concrete safe and a drawer for it
A bell push up²² for mum
A swing for mum
A board for an electric train set for mum
A scooter for Dorothy
A tool bag for Dick Clover
A bike box for Ray
A garage door with G Unwin
A shed for a barrow for Harold

In addition to making things, he fixed various things, such as windows in the glass house and the oven thermometer, moved others, for example, a cupboard and installed others, including new fireplaces and an electric heater in the bathroom.

Illnesses

While there were illnesses and injuries in the Parkin household, perhaps surprisingly, these did not dominate the landscape as they had in the inter-war years. Mostly, they were minor coughs and colds but they did sometimes mean missing a day or two working in the shop or calling a doctor. Mum had the childhood illnesses usual at that time. She had "German measles"²⁴ and measles in 1940 and, in 1943, both she and Geoffrey Letts²⁵ had chicken pox at the same time. Mum was quite unwell with chicken pox and was off school for two weeks. The family continued to have dental problems.²⁶ In June 1944, mum fell and sprained her arm.

There were a number of illnesses and injuries among friends and family of various severity. For example, in 1942, Bert, grandma's brother, had pneumonia. In November 1939, grandad simply noted

¹⁹ I assume to use in case of night air raids.

²⁰ Which he initially made from "Ethel's dad's old wheels" but these must have been too heavy as he replaced them with lighter ones a week later. The old wheels did not go to waste as he put them onto "a truck for Mr Kemp".

²¹ To be used as a throne in a concert!

²² Whatever that is!

²³ In February 1939, grandad, Roy and Harold bought a cock blue budgie for seven and six. They each contributed half a crown.

²⁴ Rubella

²⁵ Initially I was not entirely sure who he was but he was living with Annie and Tom and came to stay at the Parkins when Tom died in April 1943. I had initially assumed he was an evacuee. Anyway, it turns out that he was Annie's nephew. His parents were Alf and Mabel Letts and they collected him from Kirkby and took him back to Northampton a few days after Tom died.

²⁶ Mum had four teeth out in March 1940, aged only five, and at the same time, grandad had his remaining 13 teeth cleared. He was unwell and off work for three days after that. In June 1944, grandma had a full set of dentures. These cost 14 guineas but they received a four shilling discount so only paid £14 10 0.

that “*Phil Newcombe died*”.²⁷ In 1944, Rue Baker²⁸ was going to work and had a cycle accident on Church Hill. He was taken to Mansfield Hospital²⁹ but died from his injuries three days later. In August 1944, grandad’s friend, Harold (Green), had a car accident and broke his arm. In July 1945, a friend of mum’s, Sally Rosser was killed by a Trent Bus.³⁰ She was ten years’ old.³¹



Photo of Phil and Mary Newcombe with Tom Wright. I am grateful to Helen Jay, Tom Wright’s daughter for permission to include this photograph

Music

During the war years, grandad remained interested in music, both listening and playing, and that interest began to transfer to mum, an interest she retained all her life. Grandad continued to enjoy music performances and concerts through the Methodist church and also attended concerts elsewhere when he could. For example, in May 1939, he attended a concert in the Market Hall.³²

²⁷ Phil Newcombe was born in 1884 and he had four brothers. He worked as a draper and, in 1943, his wife Mary was still running the [draper’s shop in Station Street](#).

²⁸ Reuben Baker was 36 years old and worked as a colliery engine driver. It [seems](#) that, on his way, to work, his mudguards got tangled in his bike and he came off. He banged his head sustaining a fractured skull and a cerebral haemorrhage. No other vehicle was involved.

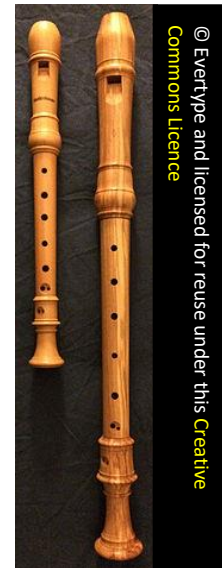
²⁹ See [Chapter 50](#).

³⁰ Established in 1913, the Trent Motor Traction Company operated a number of bus services in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. It expanded through the 1930s. In 1969, it became part of the National Bus Company. But, in 1989, as part of privatisation, it was sold. It merged with Barton Transport in 2005 and now operates as [Trentbarton](#). Details of the bus routes operated by Trent in 1969 are included in the Kirkby Directory of that year. I have made a detailed [post](#) about buses in Kirkby.

³¹ I presume this is the Sally Margaret that was “*killed on the road*” as noted by Edith Searson in her book(let) “*I Remember*” (p39 and p47). One challenge with that book(let) is that people are described largely using first names only.

³² Which later became the Festival Hall – see [Chapter 59](#).

Instruments grandad tried during the war included the concertina, piano accordion, violin, recorder, treble recorder, oboe and clarinet. Initially, he had a concertina but, in 1941, he traded it for a piano accordion. In 1942, he was given a violin and another concertina by Ella Lofthouse. That same year, he also bought a recorder, a treble recorder³³ and a clarinet³⁴, and Jack Attwood lent him an oboe. In February 1944, grandad exchanged his C clarinet for a Bb one and then again for one with an [Albert fingering system](#). Mum started music lessons with Mrs Chadburn in 1941 and dancing lessons in 1942. In 1943, she passed a music exam in Nottingham with 70 marks and appeared in a concert as Cinderella. In 1944, mum played her first piano solo in chapel.



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Comparing descant and treble recorders



Mum photographing her cousin Olive

Entertainment

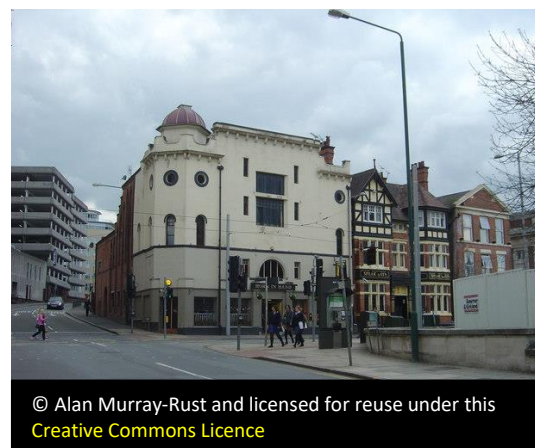
In December 1939, grandad sold his existing “wireless” for two guineas and, on Boxing Day, ordered a new one from Barker’s³⁵ for almost £7. Grandad was interested in photography. He had a new camera at the start of the war and bought one for mum in 1945.³⁵

I recall playing lawn bowls on my grandparents’ lawn when I was a child. Grandad noted that they played bowls on “the acre”³⁶ with visitors, including Aunt Bertha, Uncle Frank, Jim and Bert. They also sometimes played golf on “the acre” and also sometimes watched cricket there. In June 1944, not only did he watch a cricket match there but he also saw a motor cycle exhibition by soldiers. I thought he may also have attended horse racing during the war as he noted going to Jim’s after tea and then all going to the “racecourse”. But, it seems he may have been referring to a park in Mansfield.³⁷

While the Kirkby in Ashfield carnival³⁸ was held in July 1939, it did not appear to take place during the wartime years. Grandad certainly did not record it. He noted that, in July 1939, as part of the carnival, he attended a “Dunmo Flicht trial”³⁹ at the Market Hall. During the war years, a number of pantomimes



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³³ I recall grandad having a large recorder which could have been this one or a later replacement. Apparently, a treble recorder is [also called alto](#).

³⁴ See more details of musical instruments he purchased (p16).

³⁵ See more details in section on items purchased (p15).

³⁶ Kingsway Park. It is identified in Jonathan Evans’ book, “The Mystery of Ernie Taylor’s Abdomen” (p70) as where they played football.

³⁷ This appears to be a [park](#) on the site of an old racecourse.

³⁸ I have produced a detailed [post](#) about carnivals in Kirkby.

³⁹ See [Chapter 19](#). Mark Ashfield describes a similar “trial” from the 1935 carnival in his book “A Carnival Crown and a Roasted Ox” (p5).

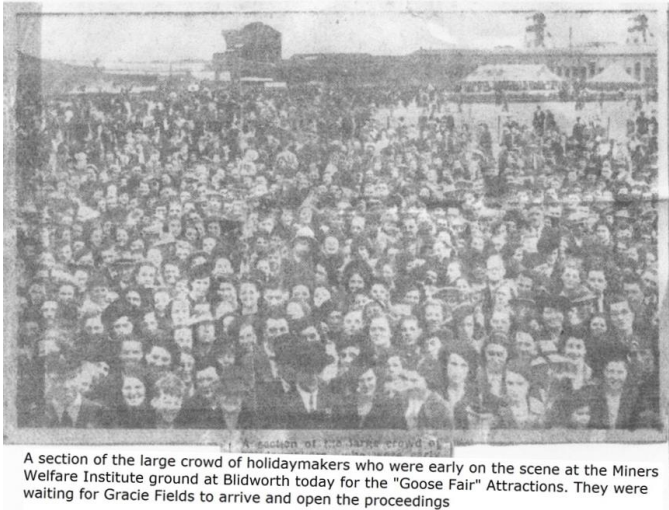
were held. Grandma and mum attended pantomimes⁴⁰ in Sutton and at the Theatre Royal⁴¹ and the Little Theatre⁴², Nottingham. In August 1944, grandad noted that they “went on the Trent to the [Pleasure Park](#)”. One particular entertainment event happened in August 1941 when Gracie Fields and a boxer called [Len Harvey](#)⁴³ came to [Blidworth](#). Grandad noted, “I did not go out watched the folks crushing for Blidworth buses Gracie Fields & Len Harvey were at Blidworth”.

August 4 Mon A big day at Blidworth. A big do on Welfare ground in aid of Notts comfort fund for soldiers. Gracie Fields the actress came & opened it with the Mayor of Nottingham. Len Harvey the British heavy weight boxing champion was there. I was at work till 12 noon. When I came down “brickins” the people lined the road 3 deep each side, who were going. There were 2,500 people there according to the papers. Also 2,400 gallons of beer, this was sold out in 2 hours. The public houses were shut. One of the fields on the right-hand side of “Brickins” coming down was a car park. They came up New Lane to get to it & through Winch’s muck yard. When they left, they went out at other end of field next to road. Mother counted 400 cars in 2 hours. No buses or motor cycles were allowed in. Some put their bikes in our yard & one pair on a tandem had come 40 miles. It was a complete washout, there was no attractions & it rained.

Bottom of previous page
Left – Theatre Royal Nottingham. Two additional postcards of the Theatre Royal are pictured in the [web version](#) of this page
Right – Site of Little Theatre Nottingham when it was part of the Horn in Hand pub

I am grateful to [Blidworth & District Historical & Heritage Society](#) and their secretary Jayne Williams for permission to use this description and these pictures of the event in Blidworth in 1941 that grandad described but did not attend.

Above – description of Blidworth event from the diary of Harry Clarke.
Right – later news cutting describing the visit of Gracie Fields to Blidworth
Below – news cutting showing some of the crowd that attended the event in Blidworth that day



⁴⁰ For details of the pantomimes they saw, see [Index of films seen](#).
⁴¹ Opened in [1865](#).
⁴² This [cinema](#) opened as the Pringle Picture Palace in 1910, renamed as the Goldsmith Picture House in 1912, it became the Little Theatre in 1941. It [became the Playhouse](#) in 1948 until 1963 when the [Playhouse](#) moved elsewhere. Since closure, it has been a carpet warehouse, bar and pub. It is currently a bar called [Alberts](#).
⁴³ He is mentioned in the book by Gerald Lee called “Kirkby-in-Ashfield Yesterday Remembered” (on p76). Lee, a boxing fan, noted seeing him in the film “[Excuse My Glove](#)” at the Star. He also wrote to him and received an autographed photo. He does not mention Harvey’s visit to Blidworth but perhaps he was serving in the Armed Forces at that point.

The Parkins do not seem to have taken family holidays as such during wartime. However, they did visit family and friends at times, particularly in the summer. In July 1941 and 1942, mum and her friend Dorothy went to stay with Cyril in Ruddington for a few days. Mum would have been six the first year that they went. In July/August 1943, grandma and mum went to the Lofthouses in West Hartlepool for a week, and they spent a similar week there in August 1945. They also visited Olive in Grantham, in September in both 1940 and 1945, and in August 1945, they visited Bedford.

While I do not recall my grandad being much of a partygoer, he did note having a small party, presumably for his birthday, in December 1940. They also held parties at other times, for example on 6 April 1942 and, of course, around Christmas time, for example on 27 December 1945. Grandad tended to celebrate Christmas the same way each year. While mum and grandma would go to stay with relatives, particularly Aunt Bertha, grandad used to go to the cinema after dinner. For example, on Christmas Day 1941, he went to the Regent⁴⁴ and saw "[Once a Thief](#)". In 1943, he saw "[We Dive at Dawn](#)".



Image licenced for re-use from Alamy

John Mills in the 1943 film "We Dive at Dawn"

⁴⁴ See [Chapter 21](#).



Cuttings from the work of Norman Longmate "How We Lived Then" illustrating that one form of entertainment that continued during the second world war was going to the pictures.

During the war, grandad and the family did go to the cinema fairly frequently but grandad no longer recorded books he read and rarely noted the films he saw. He did, however, note, in July 1941, that he went to the County Library⁴⁵ for books for the first time. He noted going to several local cinemas including the Star⁴⁶ and Kings⁴⁶ but he most frequently went to the Regent.⁴⁷ Films he did note seeing during this period included Once a Thief; [One Day in Soviet Russia](#); [Christmas Carol](#); [Mrs Miniver](#); [Random Harvest](#); [The Black Swan](#); We Dive at Dawn; [I'll Walk Beside You](#); [Madame Curie](#) and [Gone with the Wind](#).⁴⁸ He also noted seeing Henry V in Sutton in December 1945 but did not think much of it! Mostly, he did not note who he went to the cinema with so perhaps he went alone. But, he did take family members sometimes. People he noted taking to the cinema included mum, her friend, Margaret Bird and Kath Evans.

Travel

Restrictions on travel were introduced during the wartime years. So, from April 1942, if there were more than six people waiting for a bus, they were required to form a queue and, from July 1942, all pleasure motoring ceased until after the war. This meant that increasingly the family relied on cycling, walking and public transport. However, before the restrictions came in, although the Parkin family did not have a car, they did sometimes benefit from lifts from family and friends who did, including grandad's brother-in-law, Arthur and grandma's brothers, Bert and Ray. Towards the end of the war, in June 1945, Frank⁴⁹ bought a car, a 1935 [Vauxhall](#) 12, for £150.⁵⁰



⁴⁵ According to Nottinghamshire County Council's book "*Kirkby-in-Ashfield: A Pictorial View 1889-1989*" (photographs 9-13), the town's library was located at 35 Urban Road in the 1940s. As of April 2023, this was occupied by [B Cooke](#), carpets and vinyl flooring. Between 1954 and 1966, the adult lending library was located in a prefab on Urban Road. From 1966, it was in a purpose-built building in the shopping precinct but this was [demolished in 2015](#).

⁴⁶ See [Chapter 4](#).

⁴⁷ See [Chapter 21](#).

⁴⁸ I managed to identify other films he saw during the second world war from a Notts Free Press archive at Sutton Library. A full list can be found [here](#).

⁴⁹ Presumably, this is Auntie Bertha's husband

⁵⁰ Approximately [£4,500](#) today.

The family did use buses and trains. They were able to go into Nottingham periodically, mainly by bus. On one occasion, in September 1940, grandad noted that they went to see a German plane that had been shot down. On Christmas Day in 1942, mum and grandma did go to Aunt Bertha's by (Thorpe's) taxi and grandad commented that this cost five shillings.⁵¹ In April 1944, mum and grandma went by train to Newstead for the reception for the new Minister, Rev Hodder⁵² but later that month they went there on bikes. When the family went to visit Harold (Green)'s new house in Clipstone, grandad went by bike but grandma and mum went on the bus. Grandad noted that from 29 January to 3 February 1940 no Trent buses had reached Kirkby because of snow.



*Above – example of Trent Bus
Right – advert in Notts County
programme April 1950*

TRENT
MOTOR TRACTION CO. LTD.

COACHES and OMNIBUSES
For Every Occasion

SPECIAL EXCURSIONS
TO FOOTBALL MATCHES
:: RACE MEETINGS, Etc. ::

For further information and to book seats
Apply—

**HUNTINGDON STREET &
MOUNT STREET, NOTTINGHAM**
Telephone 45601 (6 lines)

⁵¹ Equivalent of about £8 today. According to the Kelly's Directory for 1941, Tom Thorpe was a cab proprietor based at 20 Factory Road.

⁵² This was Gwynne Hodder. He is mentioned extensively in the diaries. Mum noted him frequently as a speaker until 1946. He is not mentioned by Edith Searson in her list. According to the My Wesleyan Methodists [website](#), he was born in Tupton, Staffordshire in 1889 and he entered the Wesleyan Ministry in 1915. He died in Dolgellau on 5 March 1965. However, I have not been able to find a Tupton in Staffordshire although there is [one](#) in Derbyshire. I checked and his birth was registered in Dudley, Staffordshire. So, I wonder if he was in fact born in [Tipton](#). More details of Gwynne Hodder and other Ministers at Bourne chapel are available [here](#).

Right from the start of the period, grandad described walking and cycling. Favourite walking routes included on the acre, the 44 steps, the Quarries and through the cow pastures.⁵³



The two photos to the left and above were taken in "the Quarries"

Left: Dorothy, Mum and Fred Wilkins

Above: Grandma, Fred, Eileen Fawthrop, Dorothy, Arthur, Ella, Mum

Below – postcard from Pye Bridge carnival in the 1920s

The family increasingly used bikes to get to particular places e.g. to family members and they also went on cycle rides. Favourite routes included to Alfreton, Blidworth, Clipstone, Fountain Dale⁵⁴, Hardwick Hall, Hucknall, Huthwaite, Linby, Mansfield, Moorgreen, Newstead, Papplewick, Pinxton, Pye Bridge and Sutton. Most of these places were within a 6-8 mile radius and were similar to those explored by grandad and his friends during the first world war.⁵⁵ On at least two occasions, grandad cycled to Hucknall aerodrome.⁵⁶

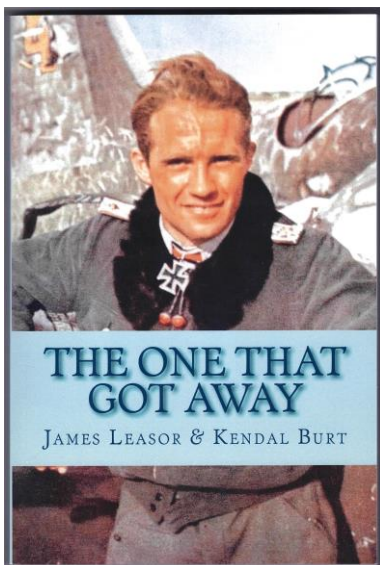


⁵³ I found all these places a little difficult to identify as they are all local, informal place names. The "[acre](#)" refers to Kingsway Park. There is a photograph of this in the book "*Kirkby & District from Old Photographs*" by Frank Ashley, Sylvia Sinfield and Gerald Lee (p88) and another in their other book "*Kirkby & District: A Second Selection*" (p31). The "*44 steps*" were particularly difficult to identify but apparently they are a well-known local landmark on the walking route from Old Kirkby, Mayfield and Bentinck to Portland Park. They are described (p34) with a photograph in the book "*Kirkby & District A Second Selection*" by Frank Ashley, Sylvia Sinfield and Gerald Lee which is part of the series of "*Britain in Old Photographs*". The same, or very similar photograph, appears (p30) in the book "*Ferrets, a Tin Whistle and Haircuts at Home*" by Mark Ashfield. I have produced a detailed [post](#) describing my efforts to locate the 44 Steps. "*The Quarries*" refers to Portland Park – see [Chapter 4](#). Some postcards of the Quarries can be seen [here](#). The "*cow pastures*" are a large expanse of what was common grazing land reached (perhaps unsurprisingly!) down Cowpasture Lane – see p33 of "*Kirkby & District in Old Photographs*" by Frank Ashley, Sylvia Sinfield and Gerald Lee. They are also mentioned in Mark Ashfield's book "*Horses, Herbs and a Cockatoo*" (p1). I walked down Cowpasture Lane in August 2023 and described that experience [here](#).

⁵⁴ An area to the north west of Blidworth that is linked to [the legends of Robin Hood](#).

⁵⁵ See [Chapter 4](#).

⁵⁶ According to the book "*Aviation in Nottinghamshire: Airfields & Memorials*", the aerodrome in Hucknall was used by the RAF from 1917 to 1919 and from 1928 to 1957. It is known for the attempted escape of Franz von Werra and was used after the war as a testing site by Rolls Royce.



Left – front cover of book about Franz von Werra who attempted to escape during the second world war by stealing a plane from Hucknall aerodrome

Below – 1955 news cutting of testing a Rolls Royce vertical take-off aeroplane, nicknamed the Flying Bedstead, at Hucknall aerodrome
Bottom – mum, grandma and Barbara Coupe at Papplewick Lido



SOME PRIVILEGED SPECTATORS AT THE ROLLS-ROYCE FLIGHT ESTABLISHMENT AT HUCKNALL, IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE: One member of the party finds it necessary to block his ears against the deafening roar of the two engines. The noise made by this type of aircraft is one of the problems to be overcome now that the machine has proved it can fly under full control. The first flights were made with the aircraft tethered, in case of mishap, but many free flights have now been made up to a height of 25 ft.

The family also visited Papplewick Lido⁵⁷ and Mansfield Reservoir.⁵⁸ On at least one occasion, one of mum's friends, Margaret Bird, cycled with them. Grandad did have an accident with his bike in March 1940 when a girl ran into him on Low Moor Road but it seems he was uninjured.⁵⁹

Mum may have got her first bike in October 1940 when she had just turned six. Grandad noted that he had swapped Kenneth's bike for his old one. I am not sure if she had another bike after that but, in October 1941, grandad noted that thieves stole mum's "fairy bike" during the night. It seems unlikely that Kenneth's bike would have had fairies on it but I suppose mum or one of her parents could have added them. In September 1943, grandad got a new bike for mum from Somercotes⁶⁰ and paid 11 guineas⁶¹ for it. But, it was much too big for her so he took it to Currys in Sutton to get a smaller one. This was delivered in March 1944 and grandad paid a further £9 16 9 for it. He expressed disappointment that the bike came with "no pump etc"!



⁵⁷ This [lido](#) was an open air swimming pool in Papplewick which opened in the 1930s and closed in 1995.

⁵⁸ I am not entirely sure what this refers to, perhaps Kings Mill Reservoir.

⁵⁹ He did not record what happened to the girl!

⁶⁰ Initially, I thought this was a business but I think it is a [place](#) in Derbyshire.

⁶¹ Equivalent to over [£300](#) today.



Although grandad does not mention a tricycle specifically, there are a number of early photos showing mum on one. Presumably, this was not the first bike he referred to but preceded that.

Clocks

Both mum and grandad loved clocks. In 1941, grandma went to Nottingham to buy a Westminster chiming clock. Three days later, grandad collected the clock but Ray took it back because the chimes were “*incorrect*”. Grandma brought a replacement a few days later but this too was taken back and grandad bought a “*long case one*” which he and Ray collected from Nottingham. It had “*Westminster chimes*” and cost £7 15 0⁶². This clock was inherited by mum when grandad died and then passed to me when she died. Although mum believed it to be valuable, the probate value of this was only £30 as they are very out-of-fashion currently. We have it midway up the stairs at our house. It does work provided it is wound up about once per week. However, the chimes are currently not working and, for much of the last two years, the clock gained a considerable amount of time, about 20 minutes in a week. Grandad would have hated this telling me the pendulum needed to be lengthened or shortened. I kept thinking it was something I might get round to once the Coronavirus lockdown was over. We found having a clock that is always fast reminded us of mum as she was a real stickler for time and punctuality! Of course, the clock itself reminds us of her each time we go up or down the stairs.⁶³



Grandad's Westminster chiming clock

Other items purchased

Burton Montague Ltd. tailors, 5 & 6 St. Peter's sq.;
10, 11, 12 & 13 Beestmarket hill; 2, 4, 6 & 8 Friar
la.; 46 & 48 Clumber st.; 55 to 56 Goore gate; 2 & 4
Parliament st. & 1, 3 & 5 Carrington st

Entry in the 1941 Kelly Directory

During this period, grandad purchased a number of other items. In both April 1939 and October 1945, he bought new suits from Burtons⁶⁴ in Nottingham.

In August 1939, grandad bought a new camera. The price was £3 17 6 but he was allowed £1 on the old one meaning he paid £2 17 6. In October 1939, he returned the camera to Ensign and, on 3 November 1939, received a new one.⁶⁵ In July 1945, he bought mum a camera from Mr Davis.⁶⁶ The camera was 25 shillings⁶⁷ and the case 2/6.⁶⁸

In December 1939, grandad sold his wireless for two guineas. He ordered one from Barker's⁶⁹ on Boxing Day for £6 19 6. It came in January 1940. On 15 July 1942, grandad bought an “*ultra*” [moving coil](#) speaker from Harold for £1.⁷⁰

⁶² Equivalent to around [£275](#) today.

⁶³ I have since had a go at fixing it having [read](#) that some pendulum clocks have a nut to turn. I found such a nut/wheel, turned it and since the clock has kept better time as long as it is wound up! In fact, it started running slightly slow but is now again running quite a bit fast.

⁶⁴ See [Chapter 93](#). Although there were other tailors by the name of Burton at this time, I suspect it was the one founded by Montague Burton that went on to be the well-known menswear chain. In 1941, it seems they had six branches in Nottingham alone.

⁶⁵ I am assuming it was the new camera he returned as he had already traded in the old one and he received a new one so presumably there was some fault with the one he bought in August 1939.

⁶⁶ I am not entirely sure who this was. I wonder if he was a private individual perhaps selling his old camera. I could not find any entry for a commercial shop or business by that name in Kirkby in the 1941 Kelly's Directory.

⁶⁷ The entry was just “25” so I have assumed it was shillings given the price he paid for a new camera for himself in 1939,

⁶⁸ For a photo of mum taking a photograph of Olive Evans, see p8.

⁶⁹ I found these [details](#) of a radio manufacturer by this name. Apparently, they sold mainly through department stores and mail order which would fit with how grandad bought this one.

⁷⁰ I am not entirely sure what this was. Apparently, moving coil loudspeakers are those commonly available. I don't know what “*ultra*” denoted. It was in speech marks so perhaps a brand name?

In June 1942, Dick Clover went into Mansfield and bought grandad a recorder for 7/6. That same month, grandad bought a treble recorder from Schotts⁷¹ of London. The price was £2 plus 18/6 postage and tax. In August 1943, Dick Clover brought grandad an oboe tutor from Nottingham at a cost of two and six. In September 1943, grandad bought a clarinet from Sutton for £3 10 0. In February 1944, grandad exchanged his C clarinet for a Bb one and paid £7 10 0 difference. But, the next month, he exchanged that for one with an Albert System⁷² for which he paid another ten shillings. In July 1944, he bought a clarinet reed for 3/8.

During this period, grandma, grandad and mum were living at the shop in Station Street (see p 1) and grandad bought a number of things for the home and the shop. In January 1940, he ordered a new fireplace and this was delivered in February along with some stone. In January 1941, Harold⁷³ bought a new fireplace for upstairs and this was delivered a few days later. In October 1942, grandad bought an electric heater for the bathroom for £2. In February 1945, he and Frank had 2 tons 6 cwt of soil for the garden⁷⁴ at a cost of £2. In April 1940, Grandad bought a stove for the shop from Walkers⁷⁵ in Mansfield for thirty shillings but, in November 1940, he went into Nottingham and bought another stove for the shop for £3 8 9.⁷⁶ In June 1941, he bought an oven for a paraffin stove for 32/6.⁷⁷

Other items grandad purchased during this period included an electric tram for mum from Nottingham for £3 13 0, a pair of wheels for nine shillings to put on a barrow and a Parker pen from Frank for thirty shillings. In January 1939, Olive bought grandad a dart board for six shillings. Grandad also sometimes sold items. In January 1942, he sold his piano accordion for £9 and, in October 1943, he sold a violin to W Wardle for thirty shillings.

⁷¹ See [Chapter 92](#).

⁷² See p8.

⁷³ I believe this was Harold Green. At this point, grandad may have been renting this property from him so he may have put in the fireplace as landlord.

⁷⁴ I am not sure which garden. At that time, grandad was living in Kirkby and Frank Seville in Mansfield.

⁷⁵ According to Kelly's Directory, there were two builders' merchants by the name of Walker in Mansfield in 1941. Samuel Walker and Sons was based in Station Street and F H Walker Ltd was based in Handley Arcade. [Samuel Walker and Sons](#) were apparently based at [Station Foundry](#) in Mansfield and were established in 1847. It appears they were still in operation in 1988 but in [Commercial Street](#). Walkers were known as a [hardware shop](#) in Handley's Arcade. I don't know which of these ones it was but the one in the arcade seems probably more likely.

⁷⁶ I am not sure if this was instead of the earlier one or as well as.

⁷⁷ I am not sure if this was for home or shop use.