

### Chapter 3: Living in Kirkby

While grandad's diaries do not systematically catalogue who lived where and when, it is possible to piece together some of this information from his notes and this can be supplemented from other records, such as censuses and electoral registers. At the time of the 1901 census, grandad was living with his parents and siblings at [20 Victoria Road](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Walking to Larch Farm

By Kirkby Lad

ON a beautiful Saturday in August, in that wonderful summer of 1959, I was spending a few days at the home of my old confidential friend at Old Kirkby. I always like to pay him a visit, for it reminds me very vividly of the days of my early childhood at dear Old Kirkby. It does not matter how often I make a journey there, I always find something which seems to do me more good than my medicine, which my doctor prescribes. I once mentioned this to him, and he advised me to keep visiting the old place, for it will help me to keep young, especially if I kept on living my childhood days over and over again. And he always ended his advice by telling me to do plenty of walking, as it does more good than any medicine.

**Bacon and eggs breakfast**

So on this particular Saturday, after having a breakfast of home-cured bacon, and a couple of eggs fresh from the nest that morning, I told my old friend and his dear charming wife, that I was going for a walk to Larch Farm, and hoped they would come along too.

My old friend promptly turned it down as 'too far,' and his dear wife made an excuse saying she would be busy cooking and making raspberry jam. Having fortified me with a flask of coffee, in which was a splash of rum, my friend's wife, at my request, cut me two very thick slices of home-made bread, and half a pound of cheese.

With this meal in my pocket, I was soon on my way to Larch Farm. As I was passing along Church Street, near Bateman's Yard, I saw Jack Oscrifft, whom I had not seen for many years. He bade me a "Good morning. Looks like being a nice day," and I continued my journey into Chapel Street, where I saw another Kirkby lad, William (Billy)

Bains. He, too, said "Good morning."

Proceeding past Cock-at-Hill, I entered Victoria Road, where I saw Fred Leach, who married pretty Annie Copeland, an Old Kirkby lassie. Fred was talking to his dear Annie as I was passing, and neither noticed me.

**Big change**

As I continued along Victoria Road, I thought what a change there had been since I was a lad, for then on the south side, between the stone house of John Lowe at Cock-at-Hill and the old Northern Railway bridge, there was not a house, and now there must be scores of houses, on what was once Job Wilson's fields. Ah! dear Job Wilson, how he used to run us when we were lads.

Continuing my walk, I was soon in Station Street, and when I was near Ellis Street, my thoughts wandered to dear Doctor Mackenzie, who was our family doctor, and a famous recipe of his for good health, was to have a walk over the Forest Hill, towards Larch Farm, and inhale plenty of God's fresh and free air.

**Parkin's Row**

I passed the Four Lane Ends and was soon ascending Forest Hill, after which I was near the Derby Cross Roads, and crossed over on to Blidworth Road, where there is a row of houses known as Parkin's Row, for I understand they were built by the late Henry Parkin.

Did I know Henry Parkin? Of course I did, and his dear wife Sarah too, and they knew me very well indeed. The Parkins were as good a pair of Christian folk as one could wish to meet. I knew them over sixty years ago, when they and their family lived on Victoria Road, where they were held in high esteem and were highly respected.

A daughter, Alice Olive, who married John Smith, was, until the time of her death, an indefatigable worker at the Primitive Methodist Church on Low Moor Road for many years as a Sunday School teacher and a regular worshipper. When this article is read hundreds of Sunday School scholars will remember with pride and affection Mrs. Smith, especially when she trained them for the Sunday School anniversary in May. If she had been alive when this church was closed and sold in 1961 it would have been a dreadful blow to her.

**Hundreds of vehicles**

By this time I was near Larch Farm, and sitting on the grass verge enjoying my coffee and cheese. I was very interested watching the hundreds of motor vehicles of all kinds passing to and from Mansfield and Nottingham, and as I sat there I wondered what Lord Byron would have thought of it all. No doubt the poet himself had been on the grass verge where I sat when he was in love with the beautiful Mary Anne Chaworth, of Annesley Hall, in the year 1803, when he was fifteen years of age and pretty Mary Anne was sweet seventeen. Perhaps the happy couple walked to Larch Farm in the old days.

I glanced at my watch. It was three o'clock when I left Larch Farm, and I started on my journey back to Old Kirkby. Passing Kirkby water-works, I thought of Elijah Charles, and his wife Maria, and with these and many more happy recollections, I reached the home of my dear old confidential friend at five o'clock.

A sumptuous tea was ready, consisting of new home-made bread and raspberry jam, and as the curtain of night fell on the old town there were the three of us, talking of old times, old friends, and counting out blessings.

Article from early 1960s with interesting information about the Parkins (outlined in red) including that they lived in Victoria Road and that Henry built houses in Blidworth Road. A very similar walk is described by Gerald Lee in his book "Kirkby-in-Ashfield: Yesterday Remembered" (from p108).

<sup>1</sup> This ties in with the article "Walking to Larch Farm". The writer says he knows the Parkins from when they lived in Victoria Road more than 60 years ago, i.e. around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1911, grandad was living at [70-76 Station Street](#)<sup>2</sup> with his parents and his siblings, Leonard, Cyril and Eva.<sup>3</sup> So, at the start of 1914, when the diary starts, the family were living above their shoe shop in Station Street. This served as both a shoe shop and a place for the family to live. In addition, I am not sure if the workshop was there too. Initially, it seemed inconceivable to me that such a property could have housed the shop, the workshop and living accommodation for at least five adults (Henry, Sarah, Cyril, Eva and grandad). But, I am not aware of any other location for the workshop. Perhaps it was possible given that the family were occupying from 70 to 76.



*This photo was in one of mum's albums so I presume she took it but I am not sure when, perhaps in the 2000s. It shows 70-76 Station Street where grandad had his shoe shop for many years and where various members of the family lived at different times. At the time of the photo, The Booking Centre occupied 74-76 where the bridal shop Create Your Day are currently. The hairdressers Surreal were occupying 70-72 where the café Coffee n Crème was located until recently.*

On 17<sup>th</sup> December 1915, the diary entry simply reads “we flitted”. Initially, I had no idea what this meant! But, I am told by both Jo, my wife, and Google that this is a northern expression for moving house! It is used in this way in various other places in the diaries. In this context, it means the family moved from Station Street to [54 Welbeck Street](#).<sup>4</sup> Although the two properties are close geographically, less than half a mile apart, they differ markedly in character. The family had moved from a town centre commercial, retail property to a semi-detached, suburban house. This move could perhaps show that business was going well for the family and they were now relatively well-off in the context of a fairly poor mining community.

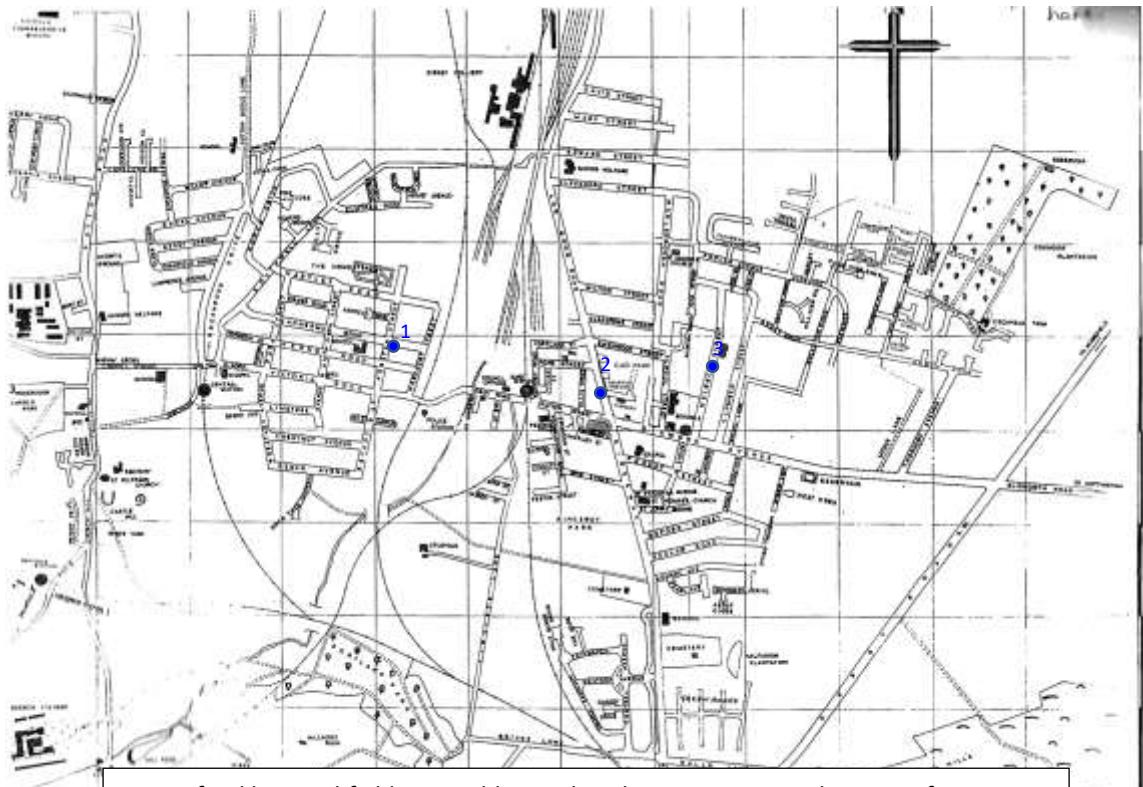
<sup>2</sup> I was aware that grandad had had a shop at 72 Station Street but I was not aware that they had occupied from 70 to 76, that is what is now Coffee n Cream and the bridal shop, Create your Day.

<sup>3</sup> His sister, Olive, was living with her husband John and their son Leonard at Hurst Leigh, Welbeck Street. Grandad's brother James Henry was living at 67 the Hill with his wife Annie Maria and their two children John Henry Gordon and Ethel Eva Doreen. In 1921 and 1922, James Henry and Annie were living at 76 Station Street. After that, they may have emigrated to Canada.

<sup>4</sup> According to the 1921 electoral register, Henry, Sarah and Grandad were living there while John and Olive lived next door in 56. James and Annie were said to be living at 76 Station Street, Len and Ethel were at 64 Forest Street and Cyril was listed as living at 3 Welbeck Street.



Above and right – photos of 54 Welbeck Street taken in August 2023



*Map of Kirkby in Ashfield 1969 – blue circles show approximate location of properties*  
*1 = 20 Victoria Road 2 = 70-76 Station Street 3 = 54 Welbeck Street*

Also, the family purchased some additional land in 1915 to build a further three houses, at a cost of £969 16s. Construction of the houses started in August 1915.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> I am not sure of the location of these. It may have been the properties further along Welbeck Street but I think there were only two houses there. More likely is the houses they lived in from 1925, 158-162 Diamond Avenue – see [Chapter 24](#). In the newspaper article above, reference was made to a Parkin's Row of several houses on the Blidworth Road which were said to have been built by Henry Parkin. Could it have been these? It may have been the three properties that grandad later owned 158-162 Victoria Road but this seems unlikely. While Diamond Avenue and Victoria Road are continuous, they are quite clearly delineated and separated by other roads, e.g. Station Street, Urban Road and Lane End.