

# Wolston Remembered

by

Tom Walton



# W O L S T O N            R E M E M B E R E D

by

MR. T. WALTON

(Edited by Roger Clemons – 2006/7)

As I mentioned earlier, Tom's article is mostly given as tour around the Village, but he first gives an introduction, as follows.

The name of the village as it appears on official documentation is "Wolston and Marston", as Wolston was originally two villages that have merged into one. The original Wolston was on the church side of the brook, (the south side) and Marston was a village on the north side of the brook, but the latter name has all but disappeared, with Marston Mill being the last place to carry the name. The population between 1900 and 1914 was about 870, and at the last census it was 1,836. *Assumed as 1971, which means the population more than doubled, in sixty years.*

Wolston, like all other villages had no electric lighting until the early 1930's, nor any mains water, or sanitation. For lighting we used oil lamps and candles, and our water was drawn from wells with a pump, with perhaps one pump to several houses. The sanitary conditions are best forgotten, although I will give you one instance where in one yard there were two toilets (that is today's name, not the name that we knew them as) and twenty adults and children from four houses, had to use those two toilets. You needed to walk about 30 yards from your house, and if it was in the dark, and there were no torches in those days, all you had was a candle which the wind would easily blow out.

We children would play around the shop windows during the winter because there were no street lamps, but in the summer, with the longer days, it was wonderful. You could play on the roads with safety, as there were so few cars about, and those that there were, were slow in comparison. There were also no buses, and if you needed to go to either Coventry or Rugby, you caught a train from the Railway Station at Brandon. The fare was 8d. for a return ticket (about 3p today), which was not too bad, but the wages were not very good either, about 12 to 14 shillings per week, for very long hours, whatever the occupation. Some of the older women used to take in washing from the larger houses and again would get very little for doing it. There were no washing machines, so it all had to be done by hand. If you were out of work, as was often the case, there were no Labour Exchanges to go to for help. People in the village found it difficult to know where the next meal was coming from, even though food was very cheap and plentiful, but they got by.

## TOUR OF THE VILLAGE

BROOK STREET - I will start with Brook Street because I was born there at number four. The street has been so named for obvious reasons, and there is an old saying that you are not a true 'Wolstonian' until you have fallen into the brook. I have certainly been in it many times, and you quickly learned not to go home until you were dry.

There are twenty or so houses in the street, some of which were very old. The oldest cottage in the street was a thatched one, which had originally been two cottages with one of them apparently being built in 1737, and this date became a very important to the residents recently.

The road had deteriorated to such an extent, due to modern traffic, that the residents approached Warwickshire County Council to repair it. The Council refused because they said it was not their responsibility. This rather disappointed the residents because they argued that they paid their rates the same as the rest of the people in the village, but the Council stood their ground, although they did add that they would take over responsibility for the road if any of the houses were built in or before 1737. After some detective work, the deeds to the properties were examined, and revealed that the date of 1737 was mentioned for one of the cottages, so the County Council then carried out the necessary repairs.

Of course the most important building in Brook Street was the Brewery, which had been started by a Mr. John Cave. My eldest sister remembers that the brewery had originally been a row of old thatched cottages, but these caught fire one day and were rebuilt into the brewery that I remember. It was a different beer to that which is produced today, it was very strong, and you didn't need many pints before you began to loosen your tongue. The price for a nine-gallon barrel of beer was 8s. 9d (43p in today's money, about a 1/2p a pint), and 4/6d. (22 1/2p) for a 4 1/2 gallon barrel, and these prices included bringing the barrel to your home and setting it up ready to draw from. Mr. Kelsey was the last owner of the Brewery buildings, and when the brewery closed, he had the buildings converted into the four cottages that we have today.

There was also a Slaughter House, the owner of which was Mr. Jenson, the village butcher, and before him, his father and grandfather. The conditions were very different from today. There was no running water or lighting, and no shot-gun to stun the animals. Water from a well was used to flush the place out, a candle or lantern provided the only light, and we just had a knife. I helped in there many times, but I will leave it to your imagination as to what it was like.

When I was a boy, the building that is now the Garage was a saddler's shop, which supplied all the necessary needs for people with horses, such as saddles, bridles, reins, collars, etc. Then the war came and thousands of the horses went overseas, along with the soldiers, and when the war ended, there were far fewer horses, and the need for saddlery declined dramatically. The trade changed to the selling of Ironmongery - Paraffin, candles, nails and such things, and with the increase in cars, Petrol was sold initially at a farthing for a two-gallon can.

AVON TERRACE - Avon Terrace is the name of the row of houses in Main Street between the River Avon and the entrance to Bluemel's, and has always been referred to as such by the older residents of the village. The first house by the river was owned, as were many of the others in the row by Mr. Henry Stretton, who was the son-in-law of John Cave, the brewer, and was a very enterprising man, as he was also a coal merchant and the owner of two threshing machines used for threshing the corn stacks at the farms.

Next door to Mr. Stretton lived the Schoolmaster, Mr. Lole, and next to him, the Station Master, Mr. Cooper. Then came Mr. Kite, the clock repairer, and next to him was Mr. Lock, the Policeman. As we come along the row there was Mr. Meadows the baptist Minister; Mr. Dodwell, the signalman; and also Mr. Lissaman, who was a newsagent, and also the Church Verger.

BLUEMEL'S - The Bluemel's factory, as most people knew it, was originally built for Cash's of Coventry in 1898/9, who opened it up to produce Artificial Silk, but this failed because of lack of money. Bluemel's then took it over, moving up from London in 1903, and who were, among other things, manufacturers of walking sticks and umbrella handles. They brought with them many of their employees from London, all of whom I became acquainted with over the years, first as a boy and later as one of their work colleagues.

When I started work at Bluemels, the wages were very low. A mans wage was between twelve and sixteen shillings per week, a woman would earn between eight and nine shillings a week, and as junior, I earned six shillings a week, and the working week in those days was 51½ hours. People came to work at Bluemels from most of the villages around here, with some of them walking from Ryton, Stretton, Church Lawford and Princethorpe.

The ground on which the factory was originally built had been a small holding of a few acres, and the house that went with this land was demolished in 1924, to make room for the office block which was well known to all in the Village. During the two World Wars, Bluemels were heavily involved in the manufacture of munitions, and the workforce was between 800 and 900, four times the number that there are now (late 1960's)

MAIN STREET - Continuing along Main Street, the large house after the Bluemel's entrance, has always been known as "Rosedale" and was the Doctor's residence over the years. Next we come to Meadow Road , or Boldron Meadows as we knew it as children, and the houses that have been built here, were built on the village Cricket Ground which was the scene of many a wonderful match over the years. We had a very nice Pavilion and a lovely green for the wicket and all in very pleasant surroundings.

We next come to Mr. Orton's shop, which was a ladies outfitters, and I understand that once it had been a public house called "The Blue Pig". Next we have the Village Hall, built in 1897 by a local builder, a Mr. Walter Fitter of Brandon, and until recently it was the Oddfellows Hall, which is confirmed by the inscription still displayed over the entrance. It was also a social club with a large sized Billiard Table, and card tables and where refreshments were available. The field at the back of the Village Hall, which was also part of the property, was where, before the First World War, during the first week of August, a sports day was held, with dancing to a

Brass Band and of course a Beer Tent, as part of the 'Wolston Wake', and this I will cover later.

Between the Village Hall and the cottages is Mr. Corfield's workshop and Builder's Yard, which I remember as a child being the yard of a Mr. Lord who in later years owned the Motor Mart, on the London Road in Coventry. During the war, Mr. Lord's, main business was producing barrows and stretchers by the thousand for the armed forces. These were taken to Brandon and Wolston station and sent overseas. During the latter part of 1918 there was a fire in the workshop and everything went up in smoke, workshops, timber store, the lot.

The house in which Mr. Patrick, the policeman now lives, was built in the site of the Store yard of Mr. Lord's business.

The first two cottages were one house until recent years, and was where Mr Lord lived. In my youth there was a Draper's shop run by a Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Lissaman. \*\*\* Then it became a Sweet Shop known as Preedy's, and following that it was a Greengrocers and General Store, run by some people by the name of Teasdale, but has now reverted back to a cottage. For about two years, the first cottage was the Post Office and is the only time I can remember the post office being somewhere other than where it is now.

Next we come to the Wheelwright's business of Mr. George Field and his son, and as well as making wheels, they repaired farm carts, wagons, barrows, etc. Mr. Field was also the Village undertaker.

We have now reached the Post Office and village bakery, which is run by Mr. and Miss Berry, and before them, their parents, who were also postmasters. Postage rates in those days were a penny for a letter and halfpenny for a postcard. I have never known anyone else other than the Berry's live there, and the loaves that they baked were mostly of the Cottage type. How we used to love the smell of the bread and cakes being baked. \*\*\* There were many people in the village, who would take advantage of Mr. Berry's skill in cooking by taking their Sunday Dinner along for him to cook. This was usually Yorkshire Pudding and Roast Beef and you would see people trailing down the street, between 10.30 and 12.30 every Sunday, with a clean white cloth over their dinner, which would be in a tin. The charge for this service was a penny, although I remember it going up to a penny.

Another of Mr. Berry's cooking sidelines was Pork Pies as there was a lady, a Mrs. Townsend, who lived next to the chapel, and who specialised in making them. During my childhood, most people in the village kept a pig in their backyard, so she was kept quite busy.

Behind Mr. Berry's bakery, in an adjoining the field, there was a Blacksmith's shop and beyond this a small cottage, although neither had been occupied for years, but it was where the Blacksmith, a Mr. Joseph Ward used to live.

The next building we come to is the large building on the roadside, which is the home and shop of Mr. Jenson the butcher. This family have supplied the village with meat for a long time, as the business was established here in 1862, by the current Mr. Jenson's grandfather. The animals were prepared for sale in the slaughterhouse in Brook Street, which I mentioned earlier.

Next we come to the Rose and Crown Inn, which is very different from the days of my childhood. Originally there were two cottages next to Jenson's the butchers, and then the original public house, also named the Rose and Crown, and then a further two cottages, all of which stood in a line adjoining the footpath on the roadside. There was also a further row of cottages, and a skittle alley, at the back of the old Rose and Crown, but all were demolished in the 1930's to make way for the new pub. The cottages along Main Street were all small, but even so businesses were run from three of them, with the first one, next to Jenson's, a newsagents run by a Mr. Kelsey. The second cottage was a fruiterer's run by a Mr. Allkins, and another was a sweet shop known as Webb's. This last shop must have sold in the 50 years of its existence many tons of sweets, and was owned by my Grandmother who kept the shop until she passed away, and was then taken over by my Aunt and Uncle. My Grandmother used to take her sweets to the boys school at Priory Hill. They were very cheap, and they sold in very large numbers, as the sweets could be bought in farthing, ha'penny and penny lots, along with bottles of lemonade, ginger beer or limejuice, the latter being sold for a penny a bottle.

The next shop we come to Bourton Page's, which has changed completely over the years since my childhood, but it has always been a butcher's shop. A man named Bunting was the first butcher I remember in this shop, but now it is the business premises of Bob Jenson. This shop also had a slaughter house, with the water for cleaning out the slaughterhouse, having to be carried from the Derry pump.

We then have the row of cottages alongside the slip road known as the Derry, followed by the Baptist Chapel.

This place of worship has been here for well over 100 years and it has always been well looked after, even when the congregation was small in numbers.

My parents told me that during the 1870's there was a disagreement within Baptist congregation, to such an extent that one faction decided to build themselves a new Tabernacle in Brook Street. The commemoration stone for the tabernacle has inscribed on it 'BAPTIST TABERNACLE 1876', and unlike the building itself, the stone still exists, and is in one of the gardens, in Main Street. By a strange coincidence, the land on which the Tabernacle stood is now the site of a new house in which the present Baptist Minister, Sister Cynthia Allegro lives.

Before we cross to the right hand side of the brook, I must first mention the "Beeches", the current home of Mr. Lionel Jones and family. This residence has been made into a very

attractive place both inside and out since the family arrived in the village some 25 - 30 years ago. The owner was the Squire, Mr. Wilcox, of Wolston Manor.

Adjacent to the 'Beeches' is the "Gate House" which was also owned by Mr. Wilcox, and where, between 1909 and 1912, was also their home. After that time they leased the Gate House to an Admiral Bacon (retired), who was involved with the Ordnance factory in Coventry, and which at that time were making the large guns for the Battleships of the Royal Navy.

After the "Gate House" we begin again with the cottages, and where the first one was a shop which changed hands a few times, being in turn, a General Stores, Barber's, Photographers, and Fruiterer's. \*\*\* *Adverts for Starch, Lyons Tea, Perth Dye.* The second one was the Bootmakers and Repairers, run by a Mr. Hence, who many of the boys remember so well, because of the old trick he would play on them (only once, of course). He would listen to their instructions regarding the boots or shoes, and in the meantime, unbeknowns to them, he would place a piece of cobblers wax on a seat, hoping that they would stay with him for a while to watch him at his work. As the wax became warm from being sat upon, their trousers would become attached to the stool, and when they came to leave, they realised that they were stuck; *how he would laugh.*

There are then three more cottages which I believe have been made very comfortable inside, before we arrive at the Fish and Chip shop. This was previously a sweet shop, tea-room and fruiterers.

We then find ourselves at the Red Lion. A very different place to my boyhood days. It has been modernised along with all the other Wolston Inns. The Red Lion now has a car park, but to make room for this, two old cottages were pulled down to make way for the present gardens and car park. Both the Red Lion and the Rose & Crown had large skittle alleys, and matches were arranged with other village pubs.

The two old thatched cottages on the other side of the Red Lion date back to between 1600 and 1700. They have had a few occupants over the years, and have very low ceilings but are very beautiful inside. The one next to the Red Lion was for many years a boot and shoe repairers owned by a Mr. Fields, the brother of the wheelwright and undertaker that I mentioned earlier. He was for many years the local postman for outlying farms and houses. Although he had lived in the village all of his life, somehow one night, he misjudged the Brook which was running very high. He fell in and was taken down by the flow of water, but managed to hold on to the side just before the brook enters the Church field. He called for help and Mr. Kelsey, and Mr. Jenson, the butcher, found him by lantern light, and they hauled him out. Unfortunately he caught pneumonia and subsequently died.

The other house has also been occupied by a lot of people over the years, and one couple was Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Kelsey, who had had the newsagent's shop on the other side of the street, and who transferred their business across the road. In those days there were no delivery vans to bring the newspapers into the village, and when the papers arrived at Brandon and Wolston Station, they were collected in an old pram and delivered around the village, by Mrs. Kelsey, every

weekday, and by Mr. Kelsey on Sundays. Both were always cheerful, and I remember Mr. Kelsey saying in the springtime, that we shall get no warm weather until the daffodils and the blackthorn have gone, and he was not far wrong.

Mr. Kelsey was for many years a Councillor who did his best to get us a new River Bridge. He succeeded to a degree, as the plans were all drawn up, but the Second World War arrived and that was that, and we are still waiting. \*\*\* Kelseys Close, in the village, was named after Councillor Kelsey.

There is only one more house on this side of the street, and that is the large one, now known as the Manor House. There is not a lot to say about this house other than as far as I can remember it has always been a farm house and occupied by Mr. Snell, the father of Mr. John Snell who farms near Bretford.

THE BROOK - The danger of flooding is ever present when there has been a lot of rain, and all the cottages in the centre of the village, along Brook Street and Main Street are particularly vulnerable, and have been flooded many times over the years.

The brook has two sources, both of which are pools upon Wolston Heath. I have never known it to be dry even in the driest of spells, but I have seen it in flood a few times. The biggest flood that I ever remember happened on the 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1932. We had certainly had some rain, but in view of the flooding that occurred, there must have been a cloudburst up on the Heath. It was not only Brook Street that was flooded, which was fairly usual, but also Main Street was awash with water a foot deep at least. In Brook Street, houses that normally escaped flooding, were caught out this time, and my parents home, had water up to the second step on the stairs. In the house next door to my parents, lived an old lady of 80 years of age, a Miss Essex, who was practically bedridden. With the water touching the bedclothes some of the neighbours broke the window to get into the house, and propped up the bed with bricks, so that it was above the water. The large house where the Snell family lived was also flooded, and the water was so deep coming along Brook Street that it continued across the Warwick Road, straight into the farmyard entrance, between where the Co-op and the 'Half Moon' car park is now, into the back door of the farmhouse, and out of the front.

SCHOOL STREET - To continue our tour, we now move into School Street, and start along the left-hand side going out of the village, with first of all, the small Engineering Workshop. \*\*\* This was the home and Smithy of the village Blacksmith, a Mr. Jackson, who was a very well known figure in the district and a member of the Warwickshire Yeomanry. He was a first class man as a Blacksmith and farm implement repairer, and was also one of the village characters. When Mr. Jackson passed on, the business was taken over by Mr. Field whom I mentioned earlier, as the wheelwright and undertaker. This was probably a very good investment for him because he could now get all his ironwork requirements for his Wheelwright's business more quickly, not having to wait for the Blacksmith to fit his work in.

The small field that went with this business now has the new Doctor's Surgery built on it, along with three new houses. These were built several years ago, but before they could be erected, three cottages had to be pulled down. A further three cottages, similar to the ones demolished, still remain a little further down the street. These cottages were all 'tied

cottages', which meant that if the occupiers were farm labourers, when they left their employment on the owners farm, they had to leave their house. After the last of the remaining cottages was a very small cottage, one room up and one down, and built with a single brick wall.

We now come to the long row of houses, which reach nearly as far as the old school on the other side of the road. They were built between 1904 and 1907, for Bluemel's, to house the employees that they brought up from London, and were constructed by Mr. Lord, the builder who lived in Main Street. All of the houses are now all privately owned, with two of them having now been converted into ladies hairdressers.

Having reached the end of the properties on this side of the road, we will need to go back to the corner of Brook Street, to cover the houses on the right-hand side of School Street.

The first house is the detached house where Peter Page now lives, and was a small nurseryman's abode, belonging to a Mr. Harry Whitmore. He had large greenhouses, and as well as keeping bees, he was a seed agent, who most people went to for their gardening needs. Living next to the brook, he found a very easy way of making sure that he always had sufficient water for his plants, by fitting a small pump in the brook and pumping the water into his tanks.

Next is the Grocer's Shop, owned by a Mr. Woodward. His Father owned a large grocer's shop in Earl Street, in Coventry, and this was the 'class' shop of the village. It was a very small shop compared to its current size, with most of the alterations and extensions into the self-service store that we have now, being carried out by Peter Page.

Next door we now have the Butcher's shop. \*\*\* Next to the butchers is another shop, which over the years has been both a children's wear shop, and a wool shop, and is now owned by Mrs. Butler and Mrs. Lovatt.

The next property is the newsagents, now run by Mr. Cawfield. This was a private residence, known as "Sunnyside", which at one time, was the home of the Holdens, a well respected old Wolston family. The family have lived in Wolston for many years, which can be seen from the large number of gravestones in the churchyard, some of which date back to the early 1700's. The house was converted into a newsagent's shop, by a son-in-law of the Holden family, sometime between 1945, and 1950.

Mention must now be made of the "Derry House" which stood in front of the shops just mentioned, in the middle of the road junction that we have today. There was just enough room for a vehicle to pass through between the house and the shops, and with the increasing levels of traffic, the County Council decided, in 1936, that it had to be pulled down, and altered the road layout to how it is today. The road used to run all around the house, and at one point it crossed what is now the grassed area by the telephone box. People often ask me

why, in very dry weather, the turf there goes brown and dry, and I am able to tell them that just below the surface, there is the old road.

About 1935-6 they demolished twenty old houses along School Street. There were nine houses in the Square Yard, four houses in Tim's Yard, four old thatched houses and one very old small house, with one up and one down. \*\*\*\* Beyond this there were two fields, the first of which had in it the 'cattle pound', where stock was held for the night, prior to being moved to another farm or to the station, or sometimes used for holding stray cattle, to await its owner claiming it. These fields now have houses built along the roadside.

Just before the school there was another house, which has since been demolished, where a Mr. & Mrs. Robert Newcombe lived. They had a smallholding with a dairy herd, and the milk was taken around the village in a bucket or churn, and was ladled out in 1/2 pint measures, to whatever quantity was required, for a copper or so. (a copper was an old penny). They also had some 30 acres of fields in the parish of Ryton by the old Silk Mill, on the Brandon side of the River Avon. This was pasture land, and the grass was harvested as hay during the summer and brought into Wolston, to feed their cows. They were not the only farmers in the village to supply milk in this way, and there was keen competition, even in those days.

The School was the last property on this side of the road, and was where both my two sisters and I went to school. The classes were all mixed and I was told that a charge of 1d. per week was made by the authorities, but that this had been abolished in 1892. I do not know when the school was built, but I do remember that in 1912, the School was altered and the playground was added, and it was a very memorable period because we had six months holiday.

PRIORY HILL - There is one other property on this road, at the top of the hill. This is Priory Hill, which is a fairly large house, and is now owned by a Latvian Community, and known as Musmaja. Until about 1909, it was a Boarding School for 40 or so boys, and the Master and Mistress were a Mr. & Mrs. Hammerton. The boys used to attend Church every Sunday morning, marching in twos in their school uniforms, complete with mortarboards, a sight not many can remember now. They used to sit in the Lady Chapel for the service and if you look in the Chapel, you will see that there are two commemorative plaques, which were put there by 'School Old Boys', one is to Mr. & Mrs. Hammerton, and the other to their colleagues who died in the 1914-18 war.

After the school closed the house was occupied by a Mr. Kirby who was the Coventry Registrar, and a fairly wealthy person, as he had his own chauffeur-driven Daimler. Mr. Kirby didn't live at Priory Hill for very long, as he moved to the "Gate House", in the village, during the early years of the First World War. Priory Hill then stood empty for most of the rest of the war, and also for a few years following.

PRIORY ROAD - The first property along the road is Wolston Priory, and is a very historic place and was where one of the very first printing presses were installed, apparently against the law of the day. \*\*\* In my childhood, the Priory was a farmhouse and very different to the building that we have today, having since been restored to its

former glory, and looking as I imagine it must have done, when built.

Further along the lane there are some cottages, and in the middle one of them lived the village Carrier, a Mr. Alfred Clarke. He used to travel to Coventry twice a week with his horse and cart, and delivered or purchased anything people wanted. He would do your shopping if you wanted, but mainly it was to collect things that were not available in the village, and when my wife and I married, he brought all her goods and chattels, from her home in Coventry.

Further along, the road goes under a Railway Bridge, and after a further  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile, you come to a farmhouse known as Marston Mill. The Mill fields were used for camping by village groups and also youths from Coventry, before and well after the First World War.

WARWICK ROAD - Returning to the centre of the village, we continue our tour along Warwick Road from the entrance to Brook Street. I mentioned the Garage earlier when talking about Brook Street, and also the Saddler's shop, the house of which was in Warwick Street. The saddlery was hung outside on the wall so that passers-by could view and buy if they wanted. After the Garage, there were three cottages, which were demolished, I think in the early 1960's, and replaced by some maisonettes. In one of the cottages, there lived a Mrs. Kirby, who made ice-cream, and in another, a Mrs. Butlin, who kept a sweet shop, both of which were favourites.

Following these shops was, and still is, the Vicarage, which has been modernised during the last six years (the mid sixties), much to the comfort of the Vicar and his family. It used to have a very large garden where the Church Fete was held annually to raise money for the Church, and one year I recall we raised just over £300. The garden had fruit trees of all kinds, and most of the apples and pears were delicious, but this disappeared, along with the adjoining field, when John Simpson's Close was built in the early 1960's. The Vicarage was the last property in Warwick Street on the left hand side, but I must mention the allotments on the other side of Stretton Lane, which have been in use for many years, and I understand that their usage goes back at least 150 years.

Returning to the centre of the village, the land on which the Co-Op stands, along with the car park for the 'Half Moon', used to be the kitchen garden for Mr. Snell's farm, now the Manor House in Main Street. The Co-op was built in the late 1950's.

The "Half Moon" is just one more village pub, no character, and very much altered from how it was in my childhood.

After the "Half Moon", there are two cottages remaining out of an original row of nine. Of the seven that have gone, two were boot and shoe repairer's and the largest of them was an Off Licence. The last Licensee was one of the village characters, a Mr. Bishop and his wife Rose. You would see her out on most days collecting the empties from around the village, and she would either be pushing an old pram, or if going further afield, on her bicycle.

Between two of the cottages there was an entry that led to another building, which I remember as a bakehouse and which used to compete for trade with Mr. Berry in Main Street. On the site of these cottages, we now have three detached houses which were built in the 1960's.

The large house next along the road is 'Avonthorpe' which was for many years the home of the Page family. These were the butchers I mentioned earlier, and I understand that it has a very lovely room of oak panelling, which was brought from the Church when the Gallery was taken down in the early 1900's.

St. MARGARET'S CHURCH - The Church dates back to 1150, and I have been going there since I was a small boy with my Mother and Father who were regular worshippers, and the first Vicar I remember was the Rev. H.A.M. Wilcox. He was succeeded by Archdeacon Merideth, who in turn was followed by the Rev's. Gooch, Johnson Barker, Eccleston, Wingate, Jenkins and the Rev. Jones.

I recall that everyone wore their finest clothes to church, the ladies with their long flowing skirts, beautiful capes and bonnets and the gents in top hats, morning coats or tails. One of the people that I remember well was a Mrs. Rander, who was over 80 years of age, and travelled to evening services from a small farm on the road from Ryton, whatever the weather, and a Miss Hirons from Brandon, who was also over 80, and lived in 'Goodrest' thatched cottage, and was a dressmaker.

The Churchyard is a 'closed churchyard', meaning of course that no-one is buried there any more. 1880 was the official closure date, but I can remember burials there since then, the last of which I am sure was the last squire, Mr. Wilcox of the Manor House, in March, 1926.

THE MANOR HOUSE - The Manor House was the home of the Wilcox family who, I believe, originally came from Brandon. It was a lovely large house, and they employed quite a large number of staff, with servants of all kinds, including cooks and butlers inside the house, and outside were grooms, gardeners, farm-hands and keepers. The kitchen gardens were where the Infants' School is now.

The house was near the Church, and some of the out buildings are still to be seen adjoining the churchyard. These were the coach houses and grooms quarters and some still stand as they were in its heyday, but for the most part, they have gone or become overgrown. I remember the beautiful lawns and lovely gardens, with the front of the House looking towards the park known as the 'Grove'.

It was lovely to see a carriage and pair traveling in and out of the Manor House grounds. I think they were quite wealthy at one time because they owned most of the farms in the village.

Mrs. Wilcox, I understand, was concerned about the welfare of the old people in the village, as she supplied soup in the winter and helped a little towards a Clothing Club fund. This was

saved for, for 12 months at a shilling a month by the old people and Mrs. Wilcox would add a shilling on to that total for the year. It was then spent in Coventry on sheeting, shirting, wool and towelling.

The Manor House, and Bluemel's, were the first places in the village to have electric lighting, as they had their own plant installed.

The Manor House was demolished in 1928 and the furniture sold the year before in 1927.

WOLSTON WAKE - Wolston Wake was held annually on the first Sunday in August, and was something everybody looked forward to. The fair itself began to arrive during the week prior to Wake Sunday, and set up in a field by Mr. Berry's bakery, to the delight of everyone especially the children. It opened on the Friday evening, and again on Saturday afternoon until midnight, and the rides on the roundabouts and the swing boats were 1d. On the Sunday the Oddfellows' Club took over, and at 3 o'clock the Church Parade would commence with a procession of Members, adults and children. This was a very colourful affair, and was headed by a brass band, with a beautiful Silk Banner, and the adults marched with sashes around their bodies, with differing colours according to their status, and the children following on with a long kind of adornment pinned to the lapels of their coats.

On Monday the parade would again take place, but this time it started at 11.30 in the morning, and would travel around the village, then across to Brandon and back, returning to the Oddfellows' Hall, for a dinner with speeches from the Officers and visitors from other Oddfellows' branches. After the dinner everyone would go into the field at the back of the Hall, where there was a Beer Tent, and dancing to the Band, and at about 2 o'clock the fair would reopen and do a roaring trade, carrying on until midnight. The stalls and roundabouts would then be dismantled, and reassembled in the Manor House Grove for the Wolston Flower Show which would open twelve hours later. To get into the Grove, everyone would have to go through Mr. Goldstraw's farmyard, and on reaching the show you were presented with a wonderful sight with the Flower tents, running tracks, beer tents and fruit drays. People came from everywhere to see the Flowers and Vegetables, and the runners and hurdlers, with people coming from all over the county to take part.

Wednesday was a quiet day, with the fair being dismantled again, loaded up and taken to Brandon Park for another Flower Show and sports, which were held on the Thursday, and so ended the Wolston Wake week, leaving everyone looking forward to the same again the following year. Unfortunately the First World War brought a stop to this kind of village life activity, and although it restarted after the war, it was never the same, and eventually it faded away.

That is the end of Tom's article, but before I finish, I would like to show you half a dozen photographs that I took during the time I lived in Wolston.