

A Gentleman Called

A visitor from Sawtry's past has recently been here. His name is Mr R. Paddison and it has been approximately 75 years since he was last here. He is 94 years old with an amazing memory of old Sawtry.

He remembers the W.I. Hall as a tin hut, the Post Office was on the Green and the Baker's was where Mr Lakhani's Chemists shop is now. I remember the ovens in the back when I worked for Lockheed Electronics in 1969 on the same site. There was a man known as "Squinty" who repaired watches near the Bakers shop. Vine House was a farm house with farm buildings at the back where Mellors Court is now. Along the High street going towards Church Street were four small dwellings (shown on the O.S. map in 1920 was a row of houses with a small shop at the end). [I can remember it as a sweet shop.]

There was a tin shed there where cycles were repaired on the corner of High Street and Church Street. He remembers the A1 B&B when it was a shop. From the corner of Tinker's Lane to the Church was all fields and manor farm. He can also remember a fair on the village green.

Ben Irish, then lived in Mr Huntings house near the Green, and it was Mr Paddison's father who advised Mr Irish to buy the horse Papyrus which won the Derby at 100 to 1. Mr Paddison said he left home at the age of 18 as he did not intend to work all his life as a farm labourer.

Reginald Paddison, Mr Paddison's father, (Master of the Hunt), lived in the 'Whitehouse' Coppinford and his grandfather lived in the Manor House in the High Street near the Surgery. Mr Paddison was a hound walker, his job was to walk and train the little hounds until they were large enough to join the Hunt. Mr Paddison used to visit the Manor House often. He is interested in everything scientific and even remembers the mill up Gidding Road working. It had no sails but the mill stones in the building

near the mill were working, driven by an engine which drove three sets of stones.

He used to take horses down Green End Road to Allan's Engineers to be shod and visit the pub (The Black Bull, or Durham Ox) at the corner of St Judith's Lane to wait. Allan's Engineers was opposite St Judith's Lane and, early in the morning, he would cycle to Holme train station to collect the daily papers.

The day after he told me all this, I walked with my dog to the A1 B&B with a promise to call and see if Mr Healy, current owner of the Manor House was at home. We found the gate open and Mr Healy at home. He was very interested in what Mr Paddison could tell him about the 'old house'. In one place a building had been removed. It turned out to have been a lean-to at the right-hand side of the Manor which had been a coal house, log shed & a WC. Also Mr Paddison was able to tell Mr Healy where he could find a sweet-water well.

Mr Paddison informed me that he had done a little digging where the moat complex was in Archer's Wood. This is where the Sawtry Archaeological Society did a dig in 1979/80. He found a Great Grasshopper and a rare plant called Adder Tongue which grew in the moats.

Mr Henry Russell Paddison was impressed by the kindness Sawtry people had shown him. He had to leave for Devon the next day and I have promised to send him a copy of this Sawtry Eye. While he was here recently, Mr Paddison walked to Conington and back. Not bad for a 94 year old. He has travelled all over the world he tells me, and lives in New Zealand in the winter. Thank you Mr Paddison for paying us a visit.

Harry Milford
2004