

## **To Tell a Grandchild**

I think one of my earliest memories, was the first day at school, a walk of two miles, sometimes my Father took us in the pony and trap. If the weather was hot we were given by my father 2 pence to buy pop, the empty bottle we hid until next day when we returned it for a penny. When my sister was old enough we had bicycles and rode home for dinner.

My Father was one of the School Governors, one day the headmaster said, would I ask him when we were to break up for the Harvest Holiday, later this was done through the Education Authority. This Holiday was early so that the boy's could help with the harvest. I never heard anyone say they were bored. On some occasions we had to drive cattle to various fields, this on our way to school.

I attended Sawtry Council School and often rang the school bell, which could be heard two miles away. The bell was always rung on the Saturday at the end of Harvest, calling us to school on the Monday.

One day in 1912, after we were in school it rained, snowed and froze, bringing the telegraph wires down, the children were sent home early, but we had to wait until Father came with the pony and trap.

At 12 years of age I was exempt from school to work on the Farm, one of my jobs was to escort the German Prisoners from a camp nearly 2 miles away. The first morning my elder brother put me

on the pony, and said, "Off you go", great laughter following me as I had not ridden before, I just hung on, but like any one else I soon learnt to ride.

A mile from our Farm, Lord Chesham had a Shooting Lodge, which was turned into a Hospital for our "Boys in Blue", my Father would muster us together to pick 2 bushel of peas which were then taken to the Hospital. Our House was at the top of a hill, so we used to have a long freewheel down this, one day the Quarter Master Sergeant was walking with a 'lady' on his arm, when I rang my bell they jumped apart, one this way, the other that. He said he would report me, but I didn't bother, as he was well known, having a different lady each week passing as his wife! The boys in Blue had a spaniel which one day bit me, Father took me to their Hospital, and the dog had to wear a muzzle after this, I always looked to see if he had it on.

The school leaving age was 14 years, so when the war finished I had to return to school for a further year. This was one of the happiest years of my life. My last day at school was a concert, when about 100 of us appeared during the show.

We always had a lot of parties after Christmas, and we played lovely games, Charades, Sardines, Musical Chairs and Parcel, Postman's Knock and Squeak Piggy Squeak, we were always happy.

The church bells rang on Armistice Day, we were in the field, drilling wheat.

There was a lady from the village, who used to spend her days sitting in one of my Father's fields. On doctor's orders, she had to have lots of fresh

air. She would be there by 9 o'clock and stay until dusk, doing her crocheting. As she was deaf, when one spoke to her she used a horn to hear with.

We were 9 in family, 6 boys so we were all given jobs, when the Thrashing Machine came I was the Chaff Carrier. As the old sheet was worn out I made a new one at night, by cutting sacks open and stitching them together. When I'd finished I realized I could see through it, so I put it over my head. My brother was working on his car in the garage, (Sam) so I just went quietly and stood near him; he suddenly turned and saw me, going very white. He had a spanner in his hand with which he chased me, he thought "Old Nick" had him that time, he really was frightened.

Being a large family we didn't get pocket money, so we used to go rabbiting at night with nets, some were ferreted, when we netted them we had to be sure the wind was blowing into the wood to take the scent away, then after setting the net, we'd drive them in, we had to be very quiet, so we didn't take our sisters with us very often. The "catch" was sold, this being shared amongst us.

On the Farm were 4 or 5 Brood mares, their offspring were broken in at 2½ years old, they would eventually join a team and the older ones sold to go to London, we used not to like the Horse Dealer coming, as Father always sold our best horses.

The beginning of the "Tractor Age" during the Thirties made a lot of difference to Farming. Farmers would look at them at Shows but not ask the price, as money was short.

My Father bought some sheep, and it was my job to look after these. I think sheep and bees are the most interesting things.

Two of my brothers were given some pigs, and in a few years these were a paying concern. Then one of my brothers left home, in that way I was able to get into farming.

**Leonard Cole 1982**