

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - JULY 2020

*WRITTEN IN MEMORY OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE NO
LONGER WITH US AND THE CONTRIBUTIONS THEY
MADE TO THE LOCALITY*

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A VISIT FROM THE SWANS AND THEIR FAMILY

The photograph on the front cover of the book was taken in the early 1960s outside the cottage just over the hill (the former Coleorton Railway embankment) as you enter Stoney Lane from Zion Hill. This cottage is currently being mainly demolished and re-built. The lady in the photograph is Mary Barkby (nee Coates) the wife of Frederick Barkby. The Barkby's have a long history in the locality and contributed greatly to the social and industrial fabric of the area.

This particular photograph is somewhat unique as this family of Swans had walked all the way from what was known as Richard's Pond at the time, where they had built a nest and made it their home whilst they reared their brood of signets. No one in the family knew what had caused them to walk all that way from the pond except perhaps that they were looking for food and they were fortunate to find it here. It must have been extremely difficult to make that quarter mile journey, mainly uphill.

Cart Brook flowed into Richards pond from Coleorton and out towards Griffydham. The pond which was situated in the fields to the North of Richard's Bakery and just to the east of Gelsmoor Rd at the bottom of Zion Hill was formed due to subsidence caused by underground coal mining from New Lount Colliery and therefore does not appear on older maps. This was a favourite local spot for fishing and the author spent many happy hours in his youth there.

Richard's Bakery and adjacent grocery and confectionery shop was the first building on the left, just beyond where Clay Lane now runs into School Lane. Based on local maps we can estimate it was built between 1903 and 1923. The bakery closed c.1970, and was later converted into a private house, named "Brooklands".

A HISTORY OF RICHARD'S BAKERY AND SHOP

The first record found of James Richards being a Baker and Grocer in Peggs Green in a trade directory was in 1895. However, James Richards Snr. was recorded in the 1891 census as being a baker and grocer in Kidger's Lane (one of the former colloquial names for School Lane), but the author cannot be sure where the business was originally located, although it could have been on the site of the later new bakehouse. James Richards Snr. (d.1909) was married to Sarah (d.1906) and they were buried in Griffydham Cemetery.

James Snr. is thought to have left the business to his son James Richards Jnr., who subsequently died in 1934. James Richards Jnr. whose wife was named Bertha and their daughter Eileen were buried in Griffydham Cemetery also.

The Richards were staunch supporters of the new Coleorton Primitive Methodist Chapel, and it was recorded in the Trustees Book in 1924, that in order to purchase the "Chapel Field", Mr J Richards Jnr. would lend the money (£275) and that it would be paid back at 4.25% interest.

It is thought that James Jnr. built the new Bake House, and after his death, he left the business to his son Enoch. The bakery and ovens was on the RH side of the building and were accessed through an archway. There was a general grocery and confectionery shop to the left side of the bake house. This was somewhere that little children on the way from Griffydham Infant School could buy their goodies. The author has a particular memory of being able to buy "liquorish wood" from there on his way back from school. You had to chew this and it gave off the flavour of liquorish. Two old petrol pumps stood at the front and it was fascinating as a child to see them working and smell the petrol fumes.

Enoch ran the bakery and his wife Millie looked after the shop. Eileen, Enoch's sister, lived with them and they had a parrot. Eileen was one of the first people to own a car in the area which from memory was a Lanchester, and she owned the row of houses at the bottom of Zion Hill. She eventually went to live in the property at the entrance to Stordon Lane

Wonderful bread and cakes were made in the bakery, and cream horns and vanilla slices were a speciality. Their bread was delivered around the local area, and in the 1950/1960's they had two bread rounds, the vans were driven by Albert and Jimmy Weston who both lived on Zion Hill. The rounds were very extensive, and they delivered bread as far as the Holly Bush Pub at Cloud Hill, which is not there anymore now.



Above, is a picture of James Richards' Junior's delivery van, probably taken in the 1940's, when Enoch was running the business. The vehicle is pre 1932 registration, and Enoch Richards is thought to be the person sitting on the running board.

The bakery closed c.1970, and was later converted into a private house, named "Brooklands".

BACK TO THE COTTAGES

Frederick Barkby purchased the pair of adjoining cottages shown on the front cover from the Beaumont Estate during the 1920 sale for £180. He and his wife Mary moved to the cottages from a thatched cottage in the Woolrooms which they rented from the Beaumont estate after they were married in 1918.

An interesting story survives about the “well” that was built at the rear of these cottages during the 1926 miner’s strike. This was dug to a considerable depth and bricked all round by Frederick and a friend who was paid in tobacco and food for his efforts. Previous to this well being dug they had to get their water from a neighbour’s well some 100 yards down the lane. The well shown below with Margaret standing by, and Robert turning the handle was quite an up market design where Fred had obviously used his carpentry skills to make housing for it. The handle turned a roller with a long chain attached and a bucket which was lowered in and out of the well to retrieve the water. The more basic wells just had a rope attached to a bucket which was thrown down the well. It was not unusual to find the odd frog in the bucket, when it was drawn up.

It is easy to forget that mains water did not come to Stoney Lane till c.1955. This meant that water from a tap and flush toilets was not available till then.

Some people had the luxury of a hand pump to get the water from the well. The pipes would have been lead of course which speaks for itself. A field behind the George Inn was known as the “Pump Field” because a communal hand pump to raise water for the local villagers was situated there. In fact, at the Beaumont Estate sale in 1920, part of the sales specification for the George Inn stated.....”*A right of user to the pump on this Lot, is reserved to several of the tenants on the adjoining properties*”



Photograph 1927 - Margaret & Robert Barkby

The author recalls that the pre-runner to mains water at his home further down Stoney Lane, was an electric pump fitted to a copper pipe which came from the well. This raised water into a copper cylinder in the bathroom which was heated by an immersion heater. Water could then be distributed to the bath and sink and to the sink downstairs. Prior to this, and at a young age, the writer was bathed once a week in a zinc bath in front of the fire.

BEFORE THE DAYS OF FLUSH TOILETS

Anyone who has not experienced outside dry privies or closets has not really experienced life. A house in Coleorton was still using a dry privy still c.2010.



The cottages outside Privy still standing in 2013

They were usually a brick building or wooden shed down the garden, incorporating a wooden board with a hole in it to sit on. The board could contain holes graded in different sizes for children and adults, and one privy was often used by several families in towns within terraced cottage environments. Closet seats were often stepped to provide a lower platform for children also.



The more sophisticated designs had a pan or bucket underneath, and squares of newspaper hanging from a nail to be used as toilet paper, complete newspapers were usually left in the privy so the user would have something to while away the time with. Tissue paper, which oranges were wrapped in in those days, was a real luxury. The invention of the "Izal" toilet roll should not be forgotten either, but it was only in latter years before this replaced newspaper.

The weekly visit of the lavatory pan men and wagon to empty them into was a site to behold, and never forgotten. The lorry had sliding doors on the back, to cover the tanks into which the contents of the pans were poured. Pink disinfectant powder was then put into the pans in an attempt to keep them fresh; ash from coal fires was often used also.

Some people actually had an earth toilet, where the excrement built up and was then shovelled out through a hole from the back, and then put on a compost heap to be dug into a garden trench later. Even pans were emptied into garden trenches sometimes. Another version was the cesspit (hole) underneath the toilet which the excrement and urine fell into, and hopefully filtered away. Using the toilet during the night or when ill was not an issue, as chamber pots or guzunders usually kept under the bed were used.



Under bed chamber pot

The above seems a reasonably civilised state of affairs when one reads the following, which is an extract taken from "A Miner's Child" by Nora Chambers describing their closet arrangement's in Hugglescote in the 1920's. A copy is held in local libraries and it is an excellent read ;-

Candles and oil lamps were our only means of lighting; coal was used for cooking, heating water and providing warmth. There were no water lavatories, a brick built earth lavatory or closet was at the bottom of our long narrow garden, and was reached by walking down the shared path on which ashes were spread to prevent the pathway becoming slushy during heavy rain. The closet had a brick floor; the door was a few inches above ground level, and there was a space at the top for ventilation. A wooden seat with a hole in the centre was fixed across the width of the closet., and a long nail driven into the wall on which was hung squares of newspaper threaded onto a piece of string.

Behind the dividing wall was the ash-pit, with a small door built in the outer wall. Every kind of household rubbish was thrown into the ash-pit, empty tins, bottles, newspapers, dirty rags, meat bones and spent ashes from our fires. The closet and ash-pit soon became full, excrement often reaching the level of the seat, and Dad would push it down with a shovel. Flies were abundant and laid their eggs just inside the hole. The eggs became maggots and grew fat, wriggling quite happily in their birthplace, and I was afraid one might wriggle its way to my bottom. When the ash-pit and closet could take no more, it must be emptied. The little old man who lived on Standard Hill was notified and a time arranged. He arrived, complete with shovel, horse and muck-cart. His trousers were always tied around his knees and ankles with pieces of string. He wheeled barrow load after barrow load along the garden path, down the entry to his patient old

horse and muck-cart waiting at the side of the road. After he had finished work, Mam paid him one shilling and sixpence.

In the late 1920's and early thirties when the CUDC took over the Highfields district, the little man and his cart were no longer required. Once a month, council workers from the Market Bosworth sanitary dept made regular visits **after midnight**, lighting their way through the dark entry and down the garden path by flares. After the last barrow load was heaped onto their muck-cart, pink carbolic disinfectant powder was spread in the closet and on the ash path, finally along the ash pad and entry including the place where the horse and cart had stood in the roadway. Little wonder there was so many contagious diseases during that era, dysentery, diptheria, typhoid and poliomyelitis to name just a few. **Piped water came two or three years later.....**

ABOUT MARY JANE BARKBY (NEE, COATES) AND FREDERICK BARKBY



Mary Jane (Polly) Coates aged 19



**Frederick Barkby with his
wife Mary Jane**

Mary Jane (known as Polly to her immediate family) was born somewhere in Grasmere in the Lake District to George and Isabella Coates on the 30th June 1890. She was the third of eight children. From 1895 all the family lived at "Winterseeds Cottage", Grasmere which is still there.

By 1909 at the latest, Mary had left her home "Winterseeds Cottage" and was recorded in the 1911 census as working for Major General George Ayton Craster at 11 Rutland Road, Harrogate, Yorks as a servant. Ironically, also working there was Eunice Barkby (28) from Coleorton who

was the sister of Mary Jane's future husband Frederick Barkby. Another female servant working there was Lily Gertrude Toon (16) from Swannington.

Living with the Major General were two widowed daughters, Amy Margaret Rawline (53) and Ada Chaudry Morton (49) born in Darjising, India and Dalhonsie Renjab, India respectively. Mrs Morton's daughter Geraldine Ada (23) born in Somia, India was also living there. The Major General had a second daughter by the name of Lillie Ellen Craster (b.1859) who married Sir George Howland William Beaumont of Coleorton Hall on 24th February 1880 at St. George's Church, Agra, India. They had a son named Sir George Arthur Hamilton Beaumont of Coleorton Hall. He was born on the 18th January 1881 and died on the 2nd of October 1933. Lillie Ellen Beaumont (nee Craster) died suddenly on the 17th of August 1946 at Swannington House aged 87. This had become the home of Dowager Lady Beaumont.

Major General Craster is recorded as dying on the 25th of November 1912 aged 82. Some time after his death, Mary Jane moved from Harrogate to work as house keeper for a Mr. Pratt who was an eye doctor in Leicester. Having made acquaintance with Eunice Barkby at Major General Craster's, and subsequently keeping up a friendship with her, this led to Mary Jane being introduced to her future husband, Eunice's brother, Frederick Barkby.

Frederick Barkby's mother and father, Robert William (b.1853, Coleorton) and Fanny (nee Shakespeare b. 1855 at Newbold) lived at Bank House adjacent to the old Coleorton Railway embankment almost opposite to the above cottages. They had four children – George, Margaret, Eunice and Frederick of which Frederick was the youngest being born on the 10th of January 1887. Robert William reputedly used to graze his cows on the railway embankment when there were not any bushes on it even. After Robert William died Fanny went to live at Coleorton Almshouses in the room above the archway where she eventually died.

Frederick and Mary were married in 1918 at St. Mary's Church, Coleorton and went to live in a thatched cottage in the Woolrooms which they rented from the Beaumont estate where their eldest child Esme Margaret was born. Their other three children Geraldine (b.1921 d.1924) Robert (b.1922 d.2009) and Fred (b.1927 surviving for only a few months) were born at the cottages.

Frederick was a talented gentleman it seems and an accomplished dancer. He was a master carpenter by trade and was employed as such at one time at the Coleorton "Bug and Wink" pit where he was also the medical officer and was responsible for attending to the injured and accompanying them to the hospital in the ambulance.

In 1913, at the age of 26, he was a member of the Snibston Colliery No.1 rescue team and features on the right hand side of the following photograph which shows an instructor and team of five men wearing their breathing apparatus and safety goggles and carrying flame safety lamps. In the foreground can be seen other items of rescue equipment including a stretcher and ropes. Normally a caged canary would have been part of their equipment as well. The mine rescue team became a legal requirement for all collieries in the Coal Mines Act of 1911. The teams were made up of volunteers chosen for their physical fitness and experience underground. Rescue stations and teams like the one at Snibston, had to be within 10 miles of collieries to ensure a fast response to any accidents or emergencies. The rescue teams rarely found any survivors in the event of underground explosions or fires. "Afterdamp" immediately poisoned the air after a mine explosion or fire and regularly claimed the lives of miners who were nearby.



After his retirement Frederick was employed by the council to build and maintain field stiles and clapper gates in the locality.

Mary remained a housewife and looked after her family throughout her married life. Their son Robert lived with them throughout his life. Their daughter Margaret and her two children, the author's wife Sheila and her brother Bert moved back from London in 1953 to live in the adjoining cottage after their father was killed whilst working on a crane at Becton Power station.

Mary and Fred entertained lots of visitors to their cottage from London and the Lake District. Mary was extremely hard working, both in their large adjoining garden as well as in the home and was an accomplished amateur tailoress. She had lost two of her children, Geraldine and Fred at an early age. She had to dedicate herself continuously to caring for Geraldine who was seriously disabled during her short three year life whilst at the same time looking after the rest of the family. Mary was a long standing member of "Coleorton Darby & Joan Club" and had been a member of the WRVS. She was a genuine, straight forward and caring person, who would help anyone in trouble if she could.

Mary died at her cottage in 1977 and Frederick died in hospital in Leicester 2 years later.



Photograph taken outside Grasmere Church