

HOW 'MOLLY' MET 'SADIE'
A TALE OF HAPPY DAYS & SAD DAYS



The Lincoln & Lincs Girls Home
(© Peter Higginbotham)



Cole Orton Hall, Leicestershire.

c. 1900

BY SAMUEL T STEWART - DECEMBER 2021

PREFACE

In the 1980s and 90s, 'Mantle Lane Arts' recorded a series of oral history interviews with people in North West Leicestershire. These recordings covered all aspects of life in the first half of the twentieth century : Childhood, Domestic Service, Industry, Wartime Experiences, Entertainment and Life in the Coal Mines.

On originally discovering the website, the author, purely by chance, decided to listen to the first recording by an elderly lady referred to as "Molly" whose brief description of her early life in Rotherham was unimaginable. Molly subsequently went to a girls home in Lincoln and it was at the point she left there to take up employment in the outside world, that the author realised that he could contribute additional information to her story.

Although the recording was not always easy to follow, and somewhat confusing at times, the author decided that an attempt should be made to transcribe it and integrate his own knowledge into it. Hopefully, the following will prove of interest, particularly to those who may have also known the person who features in the latter part of the story known as "Sadie" and her husband Albert.

It is clear from what is said in the oral interview that Molly's real name was Annie Buckley, but at some point she was called Molly, the earliest indication of that from her interview being when she was in the Girls Home at Lincoln. However, the author suspects it was most likely her future foster mother who called her that, on the basis that it seems the fostering / adopting of Annie could not have been a legal arrangement. Foster Care in the modern sense was first introduced in the United Kingdom in **1853**, when Reverend John Armistead removed children from a workhouse in Cheshire and placed them with foster families.

By reading between the lines of the interview, Annie and her step brother Walter (Annie stated he was 'No Kin') would have been in the Rotherham Workhouse with her birth mother prior to her foster mother taking possession of her.

In order not to cause any confusion, we will refer to Annie as Molly throughout this publication as she is addressed as this in the oral interview.

It is hoped that this poignant story will bring forth further complimentary information from the readers, which can then be subsequently added to the publication. It would be amazing if we could find descendants of Molly who lived her later life in NW Leicestershire, as she does refer to her granddaughter

There are many gaps in the oral interview, but the author has annotated in italics relevant additional information to compliment Molly's story, which hopefully makes it an enjoyable read about days gone by, some happy and some sad.

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MOLLY'S EARLY LIFE

The interview starts by Molly saying that her 'subsequent foster mother', told her that her birth mother was going to drown her in the River Don at Rotherham. Apparently, her birth mother used to take what appeared to be her step brother named Walter, down to the River Don to make him 'shout', as Molly describes it, as he only had one working lung and was suffering from Tuberculosis. Her birth mother said to her future foster mother, who was obviously with her at the time, that she was going to drown her daughter Annie (*Molly*). Her future foster mother, who Molly recalled lived near the railway station in Rotherham said to her "don't do that, I'll have her".

Molly relates that her subsequent foster mother, got up one morning and found her sitting on the wall wrapped in a shawl. Molly said "Well that was that, and she kept our Walter as well". Molly explains that Walter was no kin to her, so it is assumed he was her step brother.

Molly said "I remember going to Ferham Road school in Rotherham, she (*her foster mother*) took me and fetched me back but didn't allow me to associate with other people's children, but I don't know why".

"She liked me to go to the Salvation Army on Sunday afternoon, and I remember one day that she dressed me up in purple, shoes, socks dress and hat. They called me the purple lady at school and tormented the life out of me for it"....."There I am going off my tale again".

"I had every illness under the sun. I was always poorly and had head lice like I don't know what. I had to wear a hat and my mother did my hair in curls to try and stop the lice". Molly confirms that she called her mother.

Molly remembered going to the door one day and the postman was there with a letter. I could read and write at this time. I gave my mother the letter, and said, "there is no Annie Buckley living here". She gave it back to me and said "yes there is, it is you". My mother said, "you were adopted, from the Rotherham Workhouse", and she took me upstairs to show me the shawl and clothes from the workhouse that I was wearing when I was placed on the wall of my foster mother's house. "**That was the day I knew I was adopted**". Clearly, from Molly's description of events, this could not have been an official adoption. Molly said "she was good to me but she was paid well; lots of people have said since that I ought to have gone into that, but there you are, I wasn't clever enough for that". *The author gets the impression she had taken possession of Molly and Walter in order to get money from the authorities for it. Again the interview is very sketchy in its content and there are large gaps in between her accounts.*

Molly said "My mother (*foster mother*) became ill and the neighbour said I should go to the workhouse to see her and I should fetch Dad as she is dying" (*Presumably, she had been taken to the Rotherham Workhouse Hospital - the workhouse was opened on July 31st 1840*).

"So, I ended up in a girls home at Carline Road in Lincoln, a big house it were, I remember it ever so well. We had to get up at six o'clock in a morning and after I had been there about three years, responsibility fell on my shoulders a lot. I had to get em up in a mornin (*the other girls*) and I can see myself goin up and down the corridors to get em up". *Molly does not give any indication of her age when she went there but she was probably about 13 or 14 based on other comments she made.*

MOLLY'S HOME AT CARLINE RD, LINCOLN



The Lincoln and Lincs Penitent Home for the temporary residence, moral reformation and religious instruction of unfortunate females was established following a large meeting in the Lincoln City Assembly Rooms on the 11th June 1847. A property for this purpose was rented at Steep Hill, Lincoln although it soon proved to be too small for the purpose, with the inmates said to be crowded together to their great discomfort and the danger of their health.

After emergency fund-raising, a piece of land was purchased on Carline Road, at the south side of Lincoln Workhouse, on which to erect permanent premises for the home. On May 2nd 1850, the foundation stone for the new building was laid 'with Masonic Honours' by the earl of Yarborough. the same evening, a celebratory tea party was held at the Corn Exchange, with tickets priced one shilling. The building admitted its first inmates on Dec 14th of that year.

*In 1884, the home, whose location was then referred to as 'Above Hill', could accomodate 25 girls and women, with the maximum age for admission being 25. Destitute cases were admitted free, others on payment of £3. A medical certificate of good health was also required. **Inmates were expected to remain for two years in the home and were occupied in needlework and laundry work.** The superintendent at that time was Miss Nunn.*

By 1912, the establishment was known as the Lincoln and Lincs Girl's Home, and the premises had adopted the name of 'Bell View House'. The superintendent was now Miss L. A. Taylor.

The above information was taken from www.childrenshomes.org.uk website and is copyright of Peter Higginbotham.

The home was approximately 500 yards from Lincoln Cathedral and Bell View Terrace now stands in its place.

"We used to have to light the fires in the laundry there. There were huge coppers and we used to play hide and seek in them. You could get three of us in there so you could see how they were. We used to put the copper lid on the top after we were in. It was such fun, but if we were caught we were punished. We used to get the apples and pears off the lawn, but for anything like that we were all punished by being sent up to bed, so that matron was sure to punish the actual culprits".

"There were thirty two of us in total in the home, all girls, no boys or men. Just let me think.....There were several rooms in the dormitories with beds in them and it was bitterly cold in there. We had to strip off, and Matron would come up to make sure we

hadn't got into bed with our petticoats or pants on. You had to strip off completely and just put your nightdress on, but it was alright and we had some fun".

"Mrs. Abrahams was the new matron and she called me Molly. When I first went there, there was a different matron who called me Annie. There was a long table in one room and that was our recreation room where we darned our socks, did needlework and things. We liked the first matron, she had a spaniel dog, and he used to sit at the table with us but 'wo betide you' if you put your hands on the table, as he would jump up and bite you. There were happy days and there were sad days".

When you first went there you got sixpence a month pocket money and after twelve months nine pence a month. After two years you got a shilling, but the matron made candies to buy, so by the end of the month she had got it all back off you.

There were rules in the home and when you weren't doing the laundry for the Bishops, Deans, Sub-Deans and others from Lincoln Cathedral, you were working on the upkeep of the home. The discipline didn't hurt, but I would have liked to have become one of the staff. *The home was only about 500 yards from the Cathedral.*

I remember when I was confirmed at the cathedral by the Bishop of Grantham. On Sunday afternoons we used to have a walk out to the arboretum . You got invited out once a year by the Dean and others which made life a bit more pleasant. We went to church Sunday morning and Sunday night and the third and fourth rows in the Cathedral were reserved for us girls. We used to make Bunny Rabbits with our hankies as we were bored to tears. *They may have gone to the cathedral church actually.* When they came back from church they had cold meat and hot potatoes, which Molly had fond memories of, She said she had never tasted anything like it. This was followed by white blancmange and prunes. She recalled that once they had lentil soup and ginger sponge pudding with custard and Matron put the sugar in the soup by mistake.

Christmas time was the worst time for me. Sometimes, children's parents used to come and visit them, but I think I was one of them that got nowt ! We used to get invited to pantomimes sometimes. During the period of high unemployment in Lincoln, the men used to come and give us entertainment, and they were happy nights. Every year we went to Mablethorpe for the day with picnic baskets.

"We didn't do too bad, we had good plain food and it was clean, but you weren't allowed to send food back as it was good and you were expected to eat it. I didn't like eggs and gave them away and was copped for it, and put on dried bread for a month". "We had porridge for breakfast and put a pinch of salt in it with dried bread, and we had tea to drink.

The girls had to work in the laundry from when they were 15, starting at 8.30. with half an hours dinner and half an hours play, and finishing work at five o'clock. In the laundry we had a break at around 11.00., and we had huge buckets of cocoa come up. We used to toast bread on the boiler fires and have it with our cocoa. The floors in the laundry were brick with little diamonds in them to stop you slipping. The washing machine was massive and even in those days it was driven by electricity. It would take 40 sheets. *Electricity of course came to the industrial towns much earlier than it did in the villages.* We had to use that mottled soap which had to be grated with a cheese grater which grazed your knuckles. A hand full of soda had to be added as well. The whites had to be boiled in the coppers first, and then boiled again in the coppers after washing to make sure any stains were removed. Then they had to go through the rinsing processes in big tanks about six foot wide by four foot deep.

The whites had to go through a blue tank to improve the whiteness. *This was a chalk like substance and coloured the water a light blue, the blue was supposed to stop them yellowing.*



Reckitt's Blue Bags

You used to get wet through in the laundry Molly recalled, as there were no rubber aprons at that time. There was also the pillow cases, damask table cloths, table napkins, pillow cases, and the Bishop's and Deans surpluses to do. Then they had the Bishops Robes to do followed by all the folding and ironing as well. When we had finished the Bishop's robes we used to have to put tissue paper in between the folds to keep them looking perfect.

You weren't allowed to go out in the evenings, unless perhaps you were older and you had to take a bit of laundry back, or something like that. I was sent once to tell some Toc H ladies we couldn't go to the pantomime, but got lost, so I didn't go again. This resulted in us all being sent to bed after tea as the girls had also been larking about.

Molly relates that she started to get fed up at the home, but her friend Lotte who went to the home at the same time became employed as a staff member, but didn't like it as she felt she didn't get respect as she had been one of the girls previously. Anyway, Molly let it be known that she wanted to leave, and she let it out that she was going to run away. The Matron came to see me and said "I thought you was happy here Molly". Molly said, "don't you think I have been here long enough? I didn't come here as a naughty girl". So, Matron said she would see what she could do.

MOLLY MEETS SADIE

The interview became quite complicated at this stage and it is only because of the author's own local knowledge that it has been possible to make sense of her oral account.

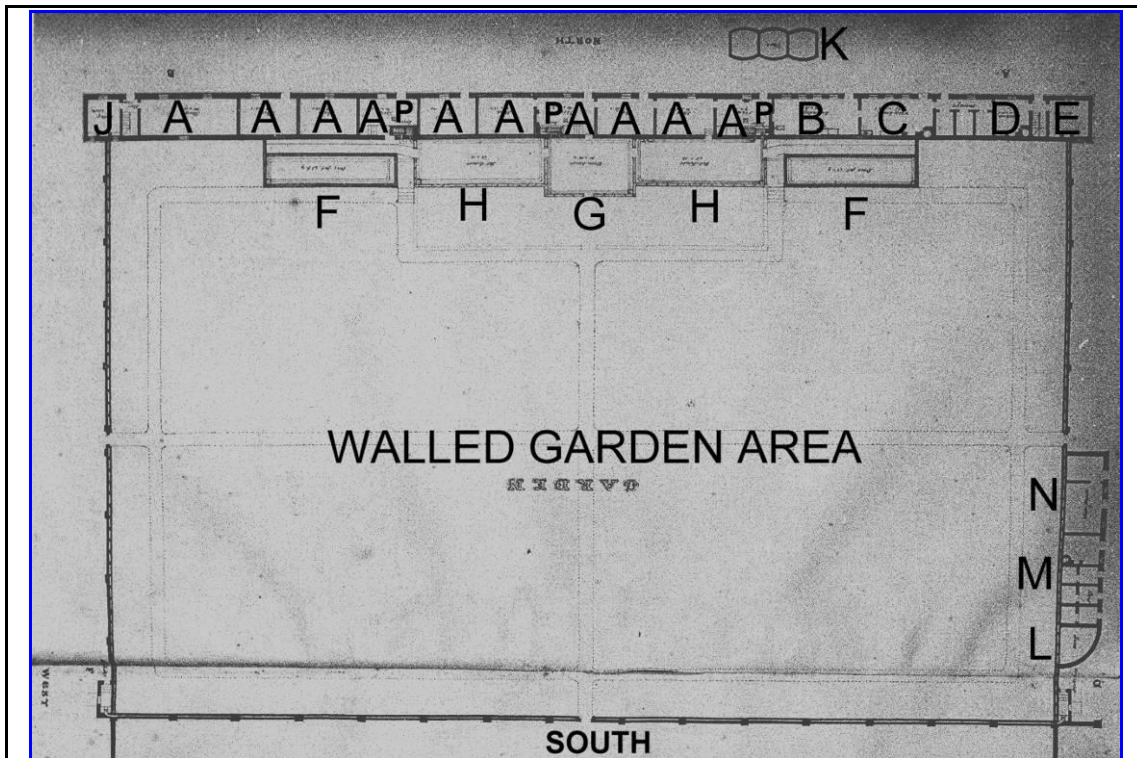
Within a matter of months of Molly informing Matron at the Lincoln Girls Home that she wanted to leave, she was found a position at Coleorton Hall to work in the laundry, which is when she met Sadie, who was running the laundry at the time on her own.

Molly came by train from Lincoln and was met at Leicester, London Road, railway station by Sadie with Bernard Leedham from Swannington in his car. (*Bernard Leedham used to live down the hill besides St. Georges Church with his wife. They had twin girls and Bernard used to run a taxi service*).

Sadie was married to Albert Copestake and they lived in the Laundry accommodation, which is where Molly lived with them also.

Molly explained that Sarah Twigg who worked with Sadie in the laundry had got married and she was having a baby so she left her employment and Sadie requested a replacement which is how Molly came to get the job.

"I think I was 18 or 19 years of age when I came to Coleorton Hall" said Molly.



Key

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------|
| A | Sheds (9). Although termed as sheds, they were much more than this as described later. | C | Wash-House |
| B | Laundry | E | Laundry-maids house |
| D | Kitchen | G | Green House |
| F | Pine Pit | L | Dung Store |
| H | Hot House (2) | | |
| J | 1 up / 1 down gardener's house with stairs to bedroom (adjacent shed marked A used as seed and store room) | | |
| K | Tanks | | |
| M | Four pig-sties | | |
| N | Cow House (between the cow house and pig sties there is a toilet) | | |
| P | Boilers (3) | | |

The above is a plan of the northern part of the walled garden at Coleorton Hall designed by Robert Chaplin, which shows the laundry, wash house, kitchen and laundry maids house where Sadie and her husband Albert and Molly lived. A housing estate was built on the walled garden area a number of years ago.

The author has a record that Sadie Copestake was originally employed by Mrs. Abel-Smith, who with her husband leased Coleorton Hall from Sir George Beaumont from 1903 to 1924. Mr. Able-Smith died in 1908, but Mrs. Abel-Smith continued with the lease till 1924, when she moved to the Manor house at Ashby, and the Beaumonts moved back to the hall.

Molly must have come to the hall after 1925 when Sir George (11th Baronet) and Lady Beaumont were back in residence there after the Mrs. Abel-Smith left in 1924, as she only refers to the washing being done for the Beaumonts'.



Sarah (Sadie) Morris as a young lady

We can see from the writing on the photograph that Sadie had a sister. Sadie's mother was called Saran Morris and she lived in Nottingham and is recorded in the 1901 and 1911 census

There is nothing in Molly's oral recording to suggest when either she or Sadie and Albert left their employment at Coleorton Hall, however, we do know from the 1939 register that Sadie and her husband Albert were married and still living in the laundry accommodation at that time. There is no record of Molly. Sir George, 11th Baronet died in October 1933 and on October 26th 1934, Lady Beaumont (Renee Muriel) married Sir George's horse trainer, Capt. Oswald Marmaduke Dalby Bell (Ozzie) of Lambourne, Berkshire. At some point she went to live at Lambourne but little is known about what the situation was at Coleorton Hall between the death of the 11th Baronet and when it was leased by the NCB in 1947 and subsequently purchased by them in 1948.

**1939 REGISTER
THE LAUNDRY, COLEORTON
Albert Copestake - b. 27th February 1902 - married
Sarah Copestake - b. 5th March 1899 - married**



**Sadie's husband Albert on his first AJS motorcycle
The author recalls that his father purchased Albert's AJS from him.**

Albert worked at New Lount Colliery when Sadie and him were at Coleorton Hall.

In the 1921 Spring Polling Register for Worthington, Albert's mother and father Jane and Joseph Albert are living in a cottage at the Outwoods. From the author's memory this was just before the Lower Moor Road met the Rempstone Road on the RH side down a drive and Albert and Sadie went to live there at some point.

One of the first thing that strikes the author from Molly's interview regarding the laundry at Coleorton, designed by Robert Chaplin in 1830, is that it was antiquated compared to the one she worked in at the Girls Home in Lincoln. She describes the rinsing tubs and washing machine as being sawn off barrels (*like large wooden beer barrels*), which they had to scrub out on Sunday's (she refers to as "Bingeing"?) in preparation for Monday's wash day. One of the rinsing tubs was a blue tub as described at the Girls Home in Lincoln. Molly describes a long wooden tub and they used them to bath themselves in this as well as rinsing the washing. There is some confusing discussion about the emptying of this tub by tipping it up which had to be done properly or the rats would get in. *A lot of water would have to be removed from the wash house, so it is assumed it was done via this long tub, perhaps through a pipe in the wall ?*

There was one huge copper boiler which you had to light a fire underneath, and this was for boiling the whites in, sometimes before and after washing. There was a small boiler to help pre-heat the water from the cistern. They used to have to hand pump the water up from the cistern for the boiler and the rinsing tubs etc, as this was soft water, and they were not allowed to use the hard mains water. The water in the cistern came down from the lead spouting around the roof of the hall.

The washing machine was a big wooden tub with a handle on the top which you had to turn manually. A scrubbing board was also used to get the washing clean. They had to get the washing finished on Monday night, and sometimes it was 8 o'clock by

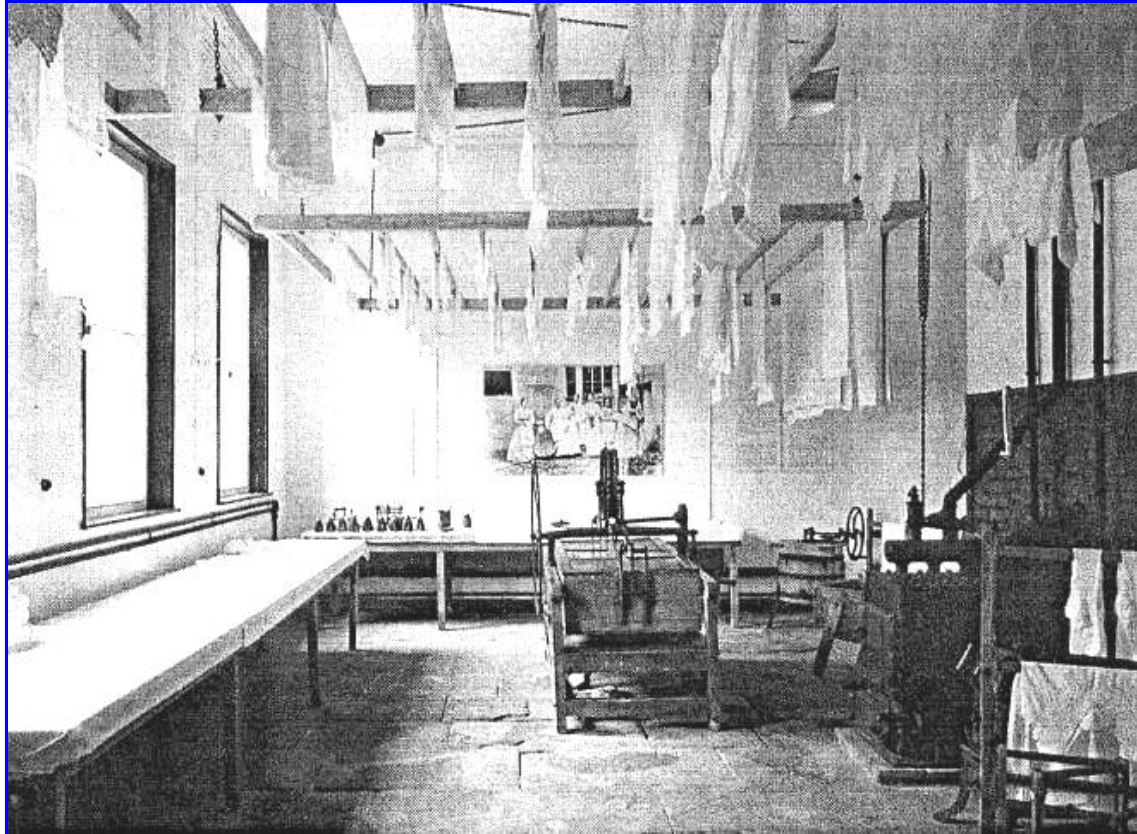
the time they were ready for something to eat and then it was off to bed. Sadie didn't want to have to do another wash on the Tuesday so you had to work till it was finished. Tuesday and Wednesday were folding and ironing days whilst the washing was were still damp so it gave a good shiny finish with no creases. Most things had to be starched. They had a range of irons (cast iron) from small to large for ironing the clothes which were pre-heated on a range. She had to spend some of her time polishing the sole plates on these to stop them dragging on the clothes. The largest were 8 pounders and 10 pounders which were used for the sheets, presumably.

The washing was mangled first to get as much water out as possible but it was a nightmare to dry it in the winter or on wet days and they had racks which came down on a pulley from the ceilings to help dry the clothes on as shown below. Molly talks of hot sunny days when the sheets would be laid out on the hall lawns to bleach them, which would help to remove any stains. For non sunny days they had three long clothes lines to hang the washing on over the lawns.

She describes the servants uniforms at the hall which they had to wash and iron (pinafores with a white head cap) in addition to Sir George's shirts, table napkins, pillow cases, damask table cloths etc. Sadie always looked after Sir George's & Lady Beaumont's washing and ironing and the children's and the Dowager Lady Beaumont's things. Molly specifically makes the point that she didn't remember having to wash any underclothes for the girls at the hall (servants) and she thought they took them home for the mothers to do as they lived local. Molly describes the Dowager Lady Beaumont's white night dresses as being beautiful and like a shroud after they were washed and ironed. The Dowager Lady Beaumont lived at Swannington House, Swannington of course and employed her own staff there. The servants there were named Stacey but they didn't wear any uniforms.



The above photograph of servants at Coleorton Hall, although taken from an earlier time, provides an example of what the ladies uniforms would have been like.



The above photograph shows a typical laundry scene of the period, with a stone box mangle in the centre. Note the various flat irons on the bench at the rear and also on the pre heated top of the range on the right hand side. In the RH corner is a wooden barrel washing machine, much as described by Molly. The ironing and folding table is on the LH side. Washing is drying on the ceiling pulley racks. This would be much the same as the Laundry at Coleorton Hall.

Molly said that she told them when she was 21, and was very upset when they didn't buy her a present or celebrate it. Apparently Albert asked her in the morning why she had been crying during the night. He said he was sorry, but no more was said.

Molly said that she didn't mix much with the others at the hall, but said she always had Sadie for company who had a little girl named Megan who she used to pick up from Canterbury Lodge and take her to school and back after calling at Albert's parents "at the Outwoods" and having a cup of tea with them occasionally.

Molly related that a gentleman by the name of Mr. Whitehouse who sold jewellery used to visit Sadie at the Hall, and Molly told Sadie that she would love a little gold ring, so Sadie said "well, I'll get him to bring you one me gel". It was a guinea, and I paid sixpence a month for it and my granddaughter still wears it.

Molly confirmed she earned 10 shillings a week plus her keep, the latter being worth a lot in those days. She walked about more times with holes in her shoes than good soles. They always had to wear plimsolls except on wash days when they wore clogs.

The author remembers as a little boy, Mr. Whitehouse, that Molly refers to visiting his Mum and Dad at their house "Cwm - Rhondda", in Stoney Lane, Coleorton, and being fascinated by the boxes of jewellery and pocket watches he used to bring. He

used to offer a repair service for watches as well. It is thought he came from Long Eaton way, and he was basically a travelling salesman, but presumably had a shop in town as well.

Molly related that Albert was part of a small band and he played violin. Sadie used to make Elderberry wine and they used to have a sing song with Albert's band mates playing their instruments on Sunday tea times. Albert played his violin and somebody called Stacey from Swannington played the piano and somebody else from Shepshed a silver trumpet. There was also a chap from Whitwick but she couldn't remember what he played. Sadie used to sing, and according to Molly, she had a lovely voice. Albert apparently used to drink too much, and on one occasion, he had stopped in bed the next morning. They sent for him from New Lount as he was urgently needed in the pit. Molly did well to recall that it was Banborough who sent a note for him and the author has been able to confirm that it would have been J. Banborough, who was under manager at New Lount from 1924 to 1933..... "Happy days" said Molly!

Molly related that they were kept very busy with a combination of the laundry work, housework at their accommodation, and sewing etc. Sadie went to do any shopping at Coalville or Ashby that they needed but she occasionally went to Mrs. Kidgers (presumably the butchers in School Lane at Pegg's Green to fetch some meat). Molly didn't buy any clothes, as Sadie's kept her going with her cast offs. Molly said she didn't have any spare money to go out with but she recalled purchasing a bit of chocolate from old Bentham when he came round with his cart sometimes. She related a story about a day when she hadn't been there very long and she was doing potatoes in one of the wooden washing tubs in the laundry, and Mr. Bentham came in and put his arm round her waist. She immediately showed him her displeasure and removed his hand. Sadie then came through and warned him that he must not do that again as this "gel" has led a sheltered life and isn't use to that sort of thing.

When Radfords, the bakers, opened at Coalville, Sadie would give her some money and tell her to get her coat and hat on and send her on the quarter past nine bus to get a dozen cream cakes and a loaf of bread, and tell her if she made haste she would be able to catch the quarter past ten back. *Try doing that nowadays !!!*

She occasionally went to the pictures at Coalville but didn't like coming back in the dark up to the hall. She remembered going to some lovely dances at Coleorton School but couldn't remember who played for them.

Sadie sang in the choir at the Coleorton Methodist Chapel and Molly used to go there to listen to them, and remembers them singing the "Messiah". They also filled in their time listening to the radio which Albert and Robert Lord (*a local amateur expert*) from the Woolrooms made. They had to get accumulators charged up for this to work.

Continued over page

Molly recalled the tennis courts at Coleorton Hall, although she never played.

The author's father used to play tennis with Sadie at the hall.

The following advertisement appeared in the Leicester Evening Mail -
Wednesday 13th May 1936 :-

COLEORTON HALL - PRIVATE GROUNDS

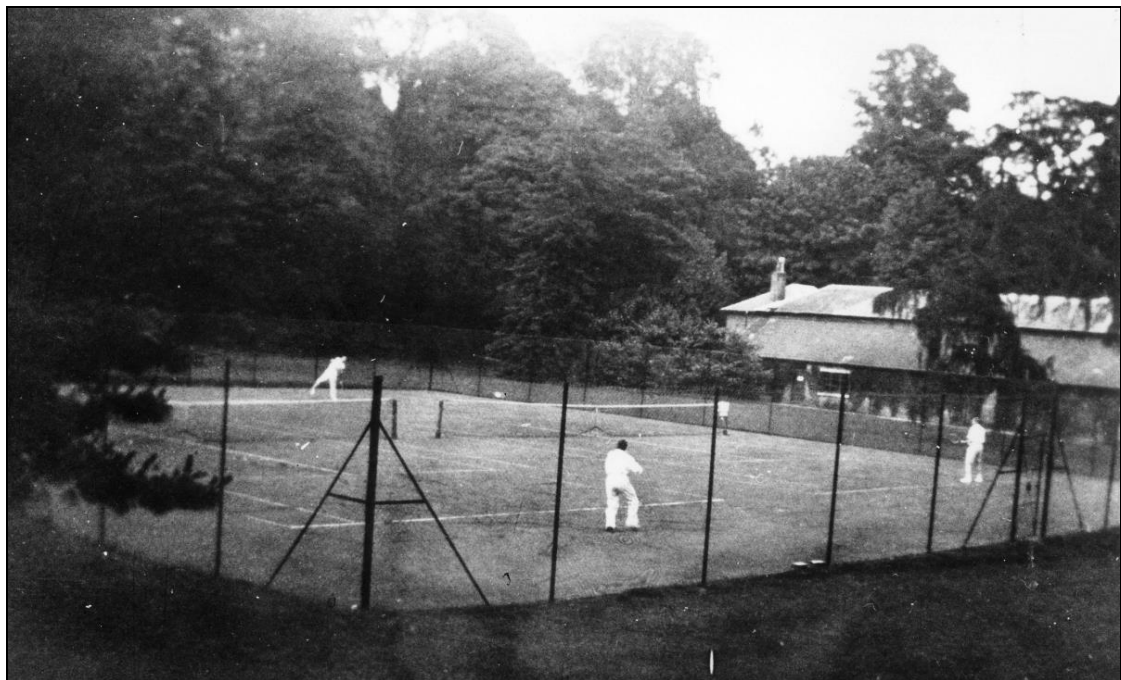
**HARD TENNIS COURTS & MINIATURE GOLF COURSES NOW OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC**

TENNIS 1/6 HOUR, JUNIORS 1/- HOUR, GOLF 3d FOR HALF AN HOUR

REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED

ADMISSION TO PRIVATE GROUNDS 6d EACH

PARTICULARS AT HALL



THE TENNIS COURTS AT COLEORTON HALL