

WINIFRED MARY BOSSEN, NEE BARTRAM

1910 - 2011

MEMORIES OF GRINDLEY AND UTTOXETER

1910 - 1949

INTRODUCTION

I first got to know Mrs Winifred Bossen, nee Bartram in 1990 when at the age of eighty she had just researched, written and published a small book entitled "A Peep into the History of Hilderstone." The book was a great success and Mrs Bossen was able to raise nearly £1,000 which she donated to NCH - The National Children's Homes, a Methodist Charity founded to provide Children's Homes for homeless children. It is now known as Action for Children and is concerned with the welfare of children in disadvantaged and vulnerable families.

I first spoke to Mrs Bossen on the phone when she told me she was born in 1910 at Meadowhurst Farm, Grindley a mile from Grindley Station on the old Stafford Uttoxeter Railway line. Their nearest neighbour was 150 yards away and there were no other houses for another mile. At that time I was collecting people's memories of the old railway line and Mrs Bossen promised to write down her childhood memories for me. Within what seemed a very short time she invited me to visit her at her home at Home Farm, Hilderstone where she presented me with a delightful hand-written account of her childhood at Grindley, her long walks along country lanes to school three miles away at Stowe by Chartley, the antics of her very eccentric head teacher, trips to Uttoxeter Market in a pony and trap, journeys on the old railway to Uttoxeter Girls' High School and touching and sometimes amusing glimpses of a simpler world that is in sharp contrast to the world we live in today. As Mrs Bossen's story covers more than just her memories of the Stafford Uttoxeter Railway line I thought it should be reproduced here in its own right.

Jim Foley

2014

WINIFRED BOSSEN'S STORY



Winifred Bossen on her 100th birthday August 7th 2010
Photo courtesy Mrs Ruth Smith, Winifred's daughter.

My name is Winifred Mary Bossen, nee Bartram. My father Enoch Bartram was a Methodist preacher. It was at the time he was conducting the services at Acton Gate Methodist Chapel, Stafford that he met my mother Louisa Mary Symcox whose family worshiped there. Mary, as she was called, was the eldest daughter of William Symcox of Gate Farm, Brocton, Stafford. Gate Farm stands at the entrance to Cannock Chase on the Stafford-Cannock Road. The road was later called Brocton Gate and may now have another name.

My parents' wedding which took place in November 1905 at Wesley Church, Stafford – now long gone - did not pass without a hitch. My father had made a special request of his bride-to-be – "Please don't be late". But my mother arrived very, very late, the wheel having come off the bridal carriage and as though that was not enough it arrived at Mother's home at Gate Farm drawn by two black horses instead of the greys which she had ordered.



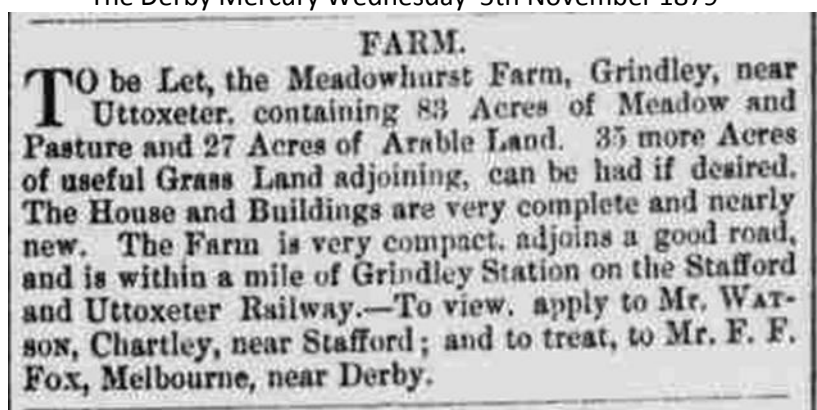
Enoch Bartram

Louisa Mary Bartram, nee Symcox

The year 1910 was of some importance. It was the year George V came to the throne and more importantly for me it was the year that I was born. I arrived at Meadowhurst, Grindley near Uttoxeter on a beautiful Sunday morning on August 7th or so they told me. Trains have played quite a part in my life- even in my birth. The first train from Stafford to Uttoxeter used to arrive at Grindley Station at 9.20 a.m. I, too, arrived at 9.20 a.m. When the maid was allowed upstairs to see my mother and the baby she returned saying the things which women usually say about a baby – “Isn’t she lovely, isn’t she tiny and what a lot of dark hair she has”. “Yes”, said my dad jokingly, “she must have got it black as she came through the tunnel”. The girl made no reply but on her next visit to my mother’s bedroom she said, “Master says the baby got her head black coming through the tunnel. He must be wrong; the train had not reached the tunnel when she got off”. Was it innocence or what?

My great grandfather Sampson Bartram was a blacksmith in Carter Street, Uttoxeter and also had some land in Vanity Lane opposite the cemetery gates there. I was told that my great grandfather had helped to lay the rails on the Stafford Uttoxeter Railway line. In 1879 my grandparents William and Hannah Bartram, nee Sturgess came to Meadowhurst Farm when they rented it from the estate of Lord Ferrers of Chartley Hall.

The Derby Mercury Wednesday 5th November 1879



Meadowhurst, bounded on the eastern side by the River Blythe and on the west by the Drointon Road, consisted of a mixture of pasture, meadow and arable land over 104 acres. The farm also had its own orchard. A long drive led from the Drointon Road to the four bed-roomed farmhouse. Grindley Station, on the Stafford Uttoxeter branch of the Great Northern Railway, was about a mile away. The small market town of Uttoxeter lay five miles to the north. The village of Stowe by Chartley with the village school lay three miles to the south through the hamlet of Drointon. The County town of Stafford lay a further seven miles to the south.

Bordered by the River Blythe any summer visitors to Meadowhurst were taken down the fields on a favourite walk along the river bank to enjoy the sights and sounds there – the large patch of water lilies with their huge green leaf pads and golden yellow incurving flowers dispersed between them, the odd kingfisher flying over the water, the large pike lurking in the water and the shallow spot where the cattle would stand cooling themselves.



Cattle in the River Blythe near Grindley. Postcard courtesy Winifred Bossen

In 1904 Chartley Estate was broken up and sold off. Mr Jewell, a builder from Caverswall, bought our farm and became my grandparents' new landlord. It remained in his hands until he died at which time my brother William Sturgess, known as Sturgess, bought the farm. His son and grandsons are still there making it the fifth generation of Bartrams to live there. Our nearest neighbours were an old couple, Mr & Mrs Leadbetter, who lived a quarter of a mile up the hill from us towards Drointon and then it was a mile each way before there were any more houses.



The meandering River Blythe near Blythe Bridge, Kingstone. The sign reads Private Fishing. Photo Jim Foley 1993

LOT 7.

(See Plan No. 1.)

A HIGHLY DESIRABLE AND COMPACT FARM,

KNOWN AS

MEADOWHURST,

Situate in the Parish of Stowe, bounded on the East by the River Blythe, and on the West by the Drinton Road, while Grindley Station on the Stafford and Uttoxeter branch of the Great Northern Railway is about one mile distant. The Property comprises

A capital Homestead, with brick and tiled Dwelling House,

Containing Entrance Porch and Passage, Sitting Room, Drawing Room, Kitchen, Dairy, Pantry, Cellar, four Bed Rooms and Cheese Room; while adjoining, on the GROUND FLOOR, are Coal House and Churn House.

THE EXCELLENT BRICK AND TILED FARM BUILDINGS

Are conveniently situate adjacent to the House, and consist of three-stalled Stable; Barn with Loft over and Hay Bay; Shed fitted for six young cattle with Fodder Bin and Loft over; Cow Shed fitted for 18, and Mixing House at end with Loft over; Loose Box; two-bay Cart Shed; Trap House; Boiling House, and three Piggeries.

In No. 161 on Sale Plan is a brick and tiled three-bay open Cattle Shed.

The above, together with the excellent Pasture, Meadow and Arable Land, embraces an area of about

104 a. 1 r. 8 p.,

As described in the following Schedule:—

No. on Plan.	Description.	Cultivation.	Quantity.		
			A.	R.	P.
PARISH OF STOWE.					
142	Cow Hay .. .. .	.. Arable	5	3	3
143	Slang .. .. .	.. Pasture	2	0	30
151	Part of River Blythe .. .. .	.. Water	0	3	13
152	Blythe Meadow .. .. .	.. Meadow	5	0	21
153	Stony Brook Leasow .. .. .	.. do.	3	3	2
154	Meadowhurst Lane .. .. .	.. Pasture	2	1	27
155	Four Acre .. .. .	.. do.	4	0	17
157	Ditto .. .. .	.. Grass	4	0	12
158	Two Acre .. .. .	.. Pasture	2	2	5
159	Barn Croft .. .. .	.. Arable	2	2	4
160	Meadowhurst Lane .. .. .	.. Pasture	2	3	26
161	Blythe Meadow .. .. .	.. Meadow	14	0	33
162	Little Meadow and Pike Field .. .. .	.. Pasture	8	0	20
163	Meadow .. .. .	.. Meadow	1	2	9
164	Four Acre .. .. .	.. Pasture	4	3	28
167	First Top Moor .. .. .	.. do.	8	3	0
168	Second ditto .. .. .	.. do.	5	3	31
169	House, Buildings, Garden, &c. .. .. .	.. —	0	3	29
170	Pond, &c. .. .. .	.. Water, &c.	0	2	28
171	Blythe Field .. .. .	.. Grass	8	0	18
172	Pit Field .. .. .	.. Pasture	5	2	32
173	Ditto .. .. .	.. Rough Pasture	0	2	14
174	Barn Field .. .. .	.. Pasture	5	2	33
175	Third Top Moor .. .. .	.. do.	2	3	13
Total			A.	104	1 8

The above is let to Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM, under Yearly Lady-day Tenancy, at a Rental of

£104 per Annum.

The SPORTING over the lot is let, together with that over other Lands, to Capt. W. B. HARRISON, under Tenancy determinable at Lady-day, 1905.

The lot is subject to Tithe Rent-charge, amounting to £9 5s. 1d., the value for the current year being £6 9s. 5d.; also to Land Tax, which has been apportioned, for the purposes of this Sale, at the sum of £2 5s. 6d., both Outgoings being discharged by the Landlord.



Meadowhurst Farm in the 1960s.
Photo courtesy Richard Bartram of Meadowhurst Farm, Sturgess' grandson,
Winifred's great-nephew.

Many times during the winter months the Blythe was in flood and the bottom fields looked like a lake. In my early childhood the road from Grindley to Blythe Bridge, Kingstone, and eventually Uttoxeter could only be reached by driving through the river as there was no bridge. Lower down the river was a wooden footbridge but there was no bridge for carts or traps. When the river was in flood people had to use the main Stafford Uttoxeter road which we always called the 'top road'.

One Wednesday morning – before I was born – my father was unable to go to Uttoxeter to the market. So my mother decided to go alone to do the week's shopping. The river was in flood so she consulted Father about the advisability of going by the usual road by the ford at Blythe Bridge and Kingstone. He thought it would be quite safe so off she went. When she arrived in the middle of the river she began to get worried when she noticed water coming through the floor of the trap. To her consternation the trap started to sway from side to side, the wheels had left the bed of the river and the trap was actually floating. Fortunately, the horse continued on its way and pulled the trap and Mother safely to the other side. She said she had never been so frightened in her life. It goes without saying that she returned home by the 'top road' even though the river water would have gone down by that time. A bridge was built over the river in October 1914 and there is a plaque to this effect on one of the pillars. I was only four years old but I remember it well.



The bridge over the River Blythe at Blythe Bridge, Kingstone, built in 1914 to replace the ford here. Winnie's mother Louisa Bartram was nearly washed away while trying to cross the ford in her pony and trap circa 1911. Photo Jim Foley 1993

Another Wednesday Father and Mother were returning from Uttoxeter Market in the trap when they caught up with a woman they knew by sight and who they knew lived between Kingstone and the top of Blythe Bridge Bank. Father pulled up and offered her a lift. It turned out that earlier she had been on her way home with her husband on the horse and float when she had remembered that she had failed to buy a joint of meat. Instead of driving back to Uttoxeter her husband had made her get down from the float and return on foot. It soon became obvious that she had not only bought the joint but had oiled the way with a drink or two. The joint started off as a shoulder of mutton and then became a leg of mutton. From that day she was known in our family as the 'leg of mutton woman'.

The 1914-1918 War started in early August and I was just four years old on the 7th of that month so I do not remember a great deal of that time. I do remember the two German Prisoners of War we had working for us and who lived in the house. Teddy Kanaperath was a married man with children and was a lovely man. I often went into the kitchen and sat on his knee as he taught me how to count up to a hundred in German. It has all gone now except the first five numbers.

Gustave or Gus was very different. He was a very large man with a military bearing and single. He came from Prussia while Teddy came from Cologne. Teddy was gentle but Gus gave the impression of hardness. Once when an argument arose between the two, Gus was heard to grind out between his teeth, "You English" with a sneer on his face. All the same the family got on well with him. An English sergeant had brought the German soldiers to the farm and told Father that if they attempted to escape he must shoot them in the legs. There was more than a hint that it would not really matter where the shots landed. The men never tried to escape. These men were extremely capable with their hands. Teddy made me a very nice box and when Teddy accidentally got one of his feet scalded Gus made him a kind of sandal so that he could get about. It had a wooden sole with a band of felt to slip his foot into.

Meadowhurst Farm was well known for growing mushrooms and people even came out from Uttoxeter to pick them for sale in the town. My father regularly sold them there. One day he noticed a man picking mushrooms quite close to the house and went to stop him. It was part of our livelihood and it was on our land. The man objected and started to show fight. Mother saw through the window what was happening and spoke to urgently to the Prussian soldier, "Gus. Go to the Master." Gus was a very large man and as soon as the trespasser saw him approaching he turned quickly and made tracks off the farm.



Mary and Enoch Bartram with their children William Sturgess and Winifred circa 1912. William was known as Sturgess, the family name of one of his ancestors.

Photo courtesy Mrs Ruth Smith, Winifred's daughter.

Another natural food was watercress. Stoney Brook ran through our land and emptied into the Blythe. On our land here was a very small tributary running off the brook and where it widened out there was a lovely bed of watercress. Unfortunately the Smithy Laners – now Smithfield Road –knew about it and often got there before us. The worst of it was they pulled it up by the roots so that the bed got smaller and smaller.

Mother bottled plums, damsons and blackberries and we even picked hazelnuts to put in our cakes. We were hardly self-sufficient but we were certainly heading that way but it did make a lot of work. Not many would do it today.

I well remember the little ploughed field being planted with potatoes and at Mother's suggestion broad beans were also planted in one ridge because we were all so fond of them. They did so well that we found ourselves eating them at nearly every meal. Even so, we still remained fond of them.

There were no freezers in those days so kidney beans were salted in very large brown jars. A layer of salt went in first, then a layer of sliced beans and so on alternately salt and beans up to the top and finishing with a layer of salt. Eggs were 'put down' in isinglass which we bought from the chemist. It looked like colourless treacle. It was mixed with water and poured over the eggs often in an enamel bucket. These were then put on one side ready for the time when the hens decided to take a rest.

When I wasn't at school breakfast consisted of porridge – lots of it for the men, followed by bacon. At midday we had dinner with meat, usually beef, and two vegetables followed by pudding of plain suet or Spotty Dick served with syrup or jam. Sometimes it was Jam Roly and custard, steamed fruit pudding or apple pie or jam turnover. A normal tea was bread and butter and various jams held down with a slice of cake, bottled fruit on Sunday and or the occasional tin of salmon. There was always supper of bread and cheese. At other times for meals we had poultry, rabbit and eggs from our hens. Most vegetables we had were grown on the farm.

The only thing I remember about the 1914-18 War was when a huge airship came over the farm one evening. Everywhere was well lit up, both the house and the buildings for milking had just finished. The sheds were lit up as the men were clearing up for the evening. Everyone rushed out to see this wonderful sight – the airship, too, was lit up. One of the family remarked, "My word, we shall show the Germans what for with this!" It was not until the following day that we learned it hadn't been one of ours. "German Zep, over Britain" the papers cried referring to the Zeppelin airship we had seen going over our farm.



**Enoch and Mary Bartram with their children
William Sturgess and Winifred circa 1916.
Photo courtesy Mrs Ruth Smith, Winifred's daughter.**

I did not start my education until 1916 when I was six years of age. I was considered too delicate to walk the three miles from our home at Meadowhurst to the school at Stowe by Chartley and back again at night. Even then I was boarded out for the first six months with people my parents knew in the village Mr & Mrs Middleton who lived in Stowe Lane. The school master in my day was Mr Daniels – ‘Daddy’ Daniels behind his back. My first teacher was Miss Jones who lodged with Mrs Green in the village. I think someone once said her home was in Manchester. She was rather a plumpish lady and in my childish eyes seemed rather old-fashioned. I don’t know why I thought this. Perhaps it was because the other teacher, Miss Collier, was so young? Miss Jones wore a striped blouse and a skirt down to her ankles. She had an idiosyncrasy which I remember well. Our lunch, which consisted of sandwiches we had brought from home, was eaten in the Infant Room. Miss Jones also brought her sandwiches and a piece of cake. Each bite which she took was closely examined. She did not open the sandwich but looked at the place where she had taken the bite from. I often wondered what she hoped or feared to find there. The only other memory I have of Miss Jones had to do with her love of warmth. In the Infant Room there was an open fire in the corner bounded by a good strong fireguard. This had a fairly broad steel band round the top and Miss Jones’ greatest pleasure seemed to be to perch on the guard. I can see her now in my mind’s eye perched on the guard looking for flies in her cake. Children don’t miss much.

When I went into the big room my teacher was Miss Collier, always known as “Teacher May”. I believe she was uncertificated. It would not surprise me to find out that she had come straight out

of top class to help with the teaching and gradually taken over the job. Whatever her qualifications she was very popular. Her pupils loved her and were therefore ready to listen. She was young and nice looking with fairish hair with red lights. Naturally all this helped. Miss Collier had a sister Ivy and at least two brothers, Eric and Edward, all with red hair.



**Stowe by Chartley School on the right and the headmaster's house.
Postcard courtesy Colin Deaville.**

On a Friday afternoon the last lesson was story time. Teacher May would start to read a story to us and then would ask for volunteers. There was no dearth of candidates and my memory takes me back to how I stretched my arm nearly out of its socket in my effort to be noticed for with the arrogance of youth, I thought I could read better than anyone in the class, if not the school.

My brother had been taught by Mrs Daniels who was always known as The Governess. She had retired before I started much to my parents' sorrow. She was known for her kindness.

Boys used to wear trousers – shorts – cut off somewhere about the knee with jerseys and sometimes a waistcoat. Few of the poor children wore jackets but those could afford it wore a type of Norfolk Jacket with a half belt at the back or sometimes all round. No shoes, the boys wore strong boots while the girls wore a lighter weight boot, usually laced up, but some were buttoned. These came a good half way up the leg. In the winter many children, both girls and boys, wore clogs. I think all the children who had to walk any distance wore clogs and I can assure you that they were grand when snow was on the ground. With care one could get about with six inches of snow attached to the clog tips and it was great fun like walking on stilts.

All the girls wore an all-enveloping frilly pinafore, white mostly. Strange to say, I cannot remember ever wearing one. I used to wear what had been my best dress which had come down in the world. Later, of course, it was school uniform.

I only lived with Mr & Mrs Middleton and their grown up daughter for six months because the big boys frightened me. Had it not been for a silly incident I should probably have stayed longer. The children seemed to go to school in a gang, often splitting up into two groups – one of girls and the other boys. In the spring someone found a bird's nest and everyone was interested in watching the progress and counting the eggs as they were laid. One night, on the way from school we looked and the nest was empty. When the boys saw this they said that the girls had stolen the eggs. The made such a hullabaloo over the matter that I was afraid and for no reason whatsoever felt that they were accusing me. At the weekend I pleaded with my parents to allow me to come home and walk to school with my brother Sturgess. I never let on why I was so desperate. By such small threads is life woven.

I don't recall doing much playing at home. The reason for this was because I was virtually an only child. I had no sisters and only one brother Sturgess who was four years older than me. There was always something going on in the farmyard and when I was very small Mother often lifted me onto the large sink, really a large red tiled platform where the wash-up bowl stood. There were two iron stanchions in front of the window opening and I stood gripping these watching the goings on outside.

Of course like any self-respecting girl child I played with my dolls and there-on hangs a story. It was approaching Christmas and I had made my wishes known. I had even written to Santa Claus, Lapland, Artic Ocean. I had set my mind on a really big sleeping doll and I can assure you that everyone knew it. I was going to stay with my Newcastle relatives, the Lindops, for Christmas and Mother decided to break the journey and take me to the doctor as I wasn't too well. The result was that Mum decided I should be best at home but with Christmas was upon us all my presents were at Newcastle. What could Mother do? Should she put whatever bits and pieces in my stocking-pillow case or do nothing? In the end a letter was written by a friend saying that all my presents had been left at Newcastle and signed by Santa Claus. Can you imagine what my Christmas morning was like? I was so upset but tried not to show it and it didn't end there. At night we went to a Christmas Party at Carters at Chartley Park. Everyone was asking me what Santa had brought me and I had to smile and explain about the letter he had sent me.

A week or so later one of my mother's cousins came on a visit. After tea I went into the kitchen but soon Mother called me into the dining room. I just got through the door and saw sitting on my father's armchair the most beautiful doll I had ever seen. I was overcome, astounded. At last I turned to Mother and said, "Oh! Mother. Oh! Mother." I think she was repaid for all my miserableness.

At school running games came before all other games. The means of choosing who was 'on' was interesting. The girls would stand in a circle in the playground with one hand out, the judge in the middle and would then go round and touch each hand as she chanted "One potato, two potato, three potato, four. Five potato, six potato, seven potato, More. O.U.T. spells out" and that girl was then 'On'. Another one that was chanted was "Mrs M, Mrs I, Mrs S S I. Mrs S, Mrs S, Mrs IPPI". At any rate it taught us how to spell the word. Skipping was always popular as well as hop scotch. Ball games were much to the fore while boys had hoops and top and whips and FIGHTING.

My first friend at Stowe School was Hilda who was about the poorest child there. She lived just opposite the Middletons in Stowe Lane so I suppose it was inevitable. No one said a word against

our friendship. When I went back to living at home in Grindley the friendship inevitably waned and Nellie Armett of Chartley Manor became my friend. She was a dear sweet child, rather small with flaxen curls. I did not know it but she had TB – tuberculosis and to me it seemed that one day she was there and the next she was gone. I missed her for a short time but children soon get used to things even death when it is not in your family.

My next friend came from the same area, in fact Frances' mother worked for Mr Armett and they lived in a house on Castle Bank. You may think I was not very lucky in my choice of friends when I tell you my Frances' story. Frances and I had become good friends so I asked Mother if I could invite her to come and stay for the weekend. Mum agreed so on the Monday at school I asked her to speak to her mother about coming. The next day I was all excitement and anxious to know if she had permission to visit me. I need not have worried, everything was going to be fine and I started to look forward to the weekend. On Friday we walked to my home together, had tea and then Frances wanted to go to bed. It was before my bedtime but I had Frances so what did it matter? Mother thought it rather strange a child wanting to go to bed, but if that is what the child wanted so be it and off we went to bed. Upstairs and getting undressed we chanced to look out the window and saw a man coming along the drive on his bicycle. Frances said, "It's my dad." The next thing we knew was when Mother came into the room to tell Frances that her father had come for her. Mum pleaded with Frances' father to let her stay at least till the following morning but he was adamant.

It turned out that Frances had not mentioned the proposed outing to her mother and they had been worried to death when she did not arrive home from school. In the end they found a school child who was able to tell them that Frances had gone home with me. When the dust had settled I got mother to write to Frances' mother to invite her again. We got no reply and Frances never came. I often wonder about Frances and why she didn't tell her parents about coming to stay at my house and why her mother never replied to my mother's letter. Was there something wrong with us?

Mr Daniels had some strange methods of discipline. I loved him but by the time I left to go to Utttoxeter High School people were beginning to make fun of him and his ideas. What present day folk would have thought of him I dare not contemplate. Let me tell you two stories to demonstrate his ideas. While I was still in the Infant Room Mr Daniels had cause to punish my brother. Suddenly the door of the classroom was thrown open and my brother was thrust inside wearing two large white, frilly pinafores – as worn by most girls. He was wearing one at the back and one at the front to form a sort of dress. The master said that if my brother acted like one of the babies he must come and join us. He then started the children laughing at him. Turning to me he asked if I did not think my brother Sturgess was a baby. I spoiled the show by crying in sympathy with my brother. The second story concerns myself. The master caught me talking and called me out to the front of the class. He told me to give myself three stripes with the lolly pop – a piece of wood with felt on one side which was used for cleaning the blackboard. I hesitated but was again told to hit myself. At last I did so. I was not hurt but my feelings certainly were. I never felt such a fool in my life. I also remember Sturgess coming home from school one day with a fantastic story Mr Daniels had told him. He said that the day would come when if Winnie (me) was in America, Sturgess my brother would be able to speak to me and also to see me. My parents were most amused and made great fun of the very idea saying it was one of Mr Daniels' brainstorms. My brother left Stowe by Chartley School in 1918. In those days it did seem like a myth but how many years is it now that we have been able to telephone abroad from our own homes and with television sending pictures all round

the world how long will it be before the rest of the prophecy comes true. It's incredible to think that our teacher Mr Daniels predicted these things all those years ago.



**Stowe by Chartley School group with teacher Miss May Collier.
Photo courtesy Arthur Robinson of Stowe by Chartley**

As I said earlier I started to sing in my cradle. Of course, my family said it was crying. I was the only one who knew the difference. When I went to school they soon found out that I could sing and although I was very shy I was always ready to sing at the drop of a hat. Naturally when the time of the school concert came round I was expected to perform. Mr Daniels wrote the words of a song for me and Lady Congreve of Chartley Hall composed the tune. I am amazed to think that my parents did not keep a copy of the song. I can only remember the first verse which was as follows:

You see I'm little Winnie
I go to school at Stowe.
I do my sums and reading
And quite a lot I know.
From Grindley is a long way
I'm sure you all must know
But Sturgess guards me on the way
As we go, go, go.



Chartley Hall.

The Hall dates from 1847. Two previous Halls were burnt down in 1781 and 1847. Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned in the original Hall from December 1585 to September 21st 1586. Elizabeth 1 stayed at Chartley Hall for a week in August 1575 and went on to visit Stafford. At that time it was the residence of the Earls of Essex. When Winnie was a little girl in the early 1900s the Congreves lived here.

The Congreves – General Sir Walter and Lady C- took a great interest in Stowe School, giving a helping hand at any school event and then gracing it with their presence whenever possible. For another concert Lady Congreve roped in three of her nieces and her youngest son Christopher to take the leading parts in Red Riding Hood. Some of the school children took minor parts while Enid Robinson, Salome Wilson and myself were wood fairies, Rose, Violet and Primrose. Her Ladyship bought silver lame in London and our mothers made the dresses. I know I felt like a princess clothed in this lovely material brought from a faraway wonderful city. After the concert there was a fancy dress parade for the children. My brother won the first prize as an archer and I came second as Little Miss Muffet. My mother always thought that Hilda Robinson who wore dress made completely of Sunlight Soap wrappers ought to have won the prize.



Stowe by Chartley School Red Riding Hood cast, circa 1916. Little Winnie is seated on the right. Postcard courtesy Mrs Ruth Smith, Winifred's daughter.

I don't know exactly when the famous wild cattle were taken from Chartley Park but I do know they were still there in 1905. My parents were married in 1905 and it was after this date that my mother saw a cow and its calf drinking at the water which was just over the fence from the road, near the Chartley Park gate.

While my father was still single he went to visit some friends at Hilderstone for the weekend. On the Monday he had to make his way home on foot and to make the journey shorter he decided to cut across the fields which necessitated walking across 'The Park'. The story he told was that he was strolling blithely across the grounds when he breasted a little rise in the ground to find himself face to face with the herd of Chartley Wild Cattle. He did not know what to do. It was useless to run back for there was nowhere to run to, there wasn't even a tree to climb – what could he do? Desperation usually finds a way and this was so in Dad's case. He threw his arms into the air and bellowing at the top of his voice rushed towards them as fast as he could go. Fortunately they were more afraid than he was and they ran away with their tails in the air.



Chartley White Cattle at Chartley Park
Postcard courtesy Colin Deaville.

The herd decreased to a very few through inter-breeding and would have died out altogether had they remained at Chartley. They were moved to Chillingham Park in Northumberland. I believe they are now known as the Chillingham Wild Cattle but it was thought the induction of the Chartley cattle which saved both herds. They are still white with black horn tips, hooves, noses and tail tips. A preserved Chartley bull's head was given to the council school by the Congreves when the estate was sold. When the school finally closed the bull's head was given to Stowe Village Hall where it is still on the wall to this day.

Local tradition has it that the fate of the Ferrers of Chartley was bound up with the fate of the wild cattle. The birth of a black calf was supposed to mean the death of one of the family. A black calf was always killed at birth to ensure the purity of the herd. The colour of the cattle was white except for the Muzzle, ears and tips of the horns which were jet black.



**Preserved Chartley Bull's Head from the Chartley Herd at Stowe Village Hall.
Note the tips of the horns which are black. Photo Jim Foley 1993.**

All this brings me to Chartley Castle. I used to hear people say that Mary, Queen of Scots was imprisoned there but that it not true. She was kept prisoner in Chartley Hall near by not the present building but a former structure on the same site. I believe the old building was burned down and only the kitchen end was left. Mary was brought from Tutbury Castle where she had been captive because her host there was much too lenient. I don't think she was too badly treated at Chartley. One day she was on her way for a day's hunting at Tixall with her retinue and her jailers when she was stopped by a group of horsemen. Soon after she was taken to Fotheringay where she was tried and executed.

Back to the castle – this played quite a part in my young life. Of course, there was no television in those days, no wireless, no motor cars to run around the country, or very few, so one had to make one's own entertainment. Every summer our family used to take one or two picnics within the confines of Chartley Castle. The arrival of visitors during the summer months was always enough excuse to plan such an outing. At that time Mr Wilfred Carter was farming Chartley Park and the castle was on his land. Considering the fact that the Carter family and ours were great friends it only needed a word to one of them to arrange things and so on a given date the two families plus visitors would meet there. At the back of the ruins there was a field gate and inside was a very pleasant circle of grass and shrubs where we hold our picnics.

Sticks and wood were gathered to make a fire and the large cast iron kettle was placed on top to make a welcome cup of tea. Everyone enjoyed the food and then the adults talked and walked round the battlements while the young folk scrambled up the scree to the walled-in pit at the top. In my childish eyes the pit seemed as large as one of the ruined towers. I don't know if it was true or not but we were told that it was cockpit and that cockfighting used to take place there. There appeared to be no means of entrance and no one was brave enough to jump down among the brambles and greenery. Having looked our fill we would rush down again and dash across the grass to the archway on the opposite side of the towers. By this time everything had been packed up, the fire safely put out and the journey home commenced by horse and trap naturally with all the picnic stuff under the seats.



**Chartley Castle seen from the Stafford Uttoxeter Road. Chartley Hall is a short walk to the left.
In 1545 the castle was already a ruin 40 years before May Queen of Scots was imprisoned in the Hall.
Photo Jim Foley 1993.**

I was a very poor eater and didn't take much interest in food. I had a little breakfast of porridge and brought most of my lunch back home. At night I would pick at the hot dinner which my mother had waiting for me and then leave most of it. Mother became so worried that she threatened to write to Mr Daniels and ask him to see that I ate my lunch. She must have thought that her ploy had borne fruit but little did she know that most of my sandwiches went over the hedge on my way home.

In 1918 when he was nearly twelve years old my brother Sturgess left Stowe School to go to boarding school. At the age of eight I had to walk the three miles to school for a mile of that on my own before joining up with other children. There was just one house about 150 yards up the road from us and then it was a mile before there were any more houses. The Williams family lived in the first house in Drointon on the left. The house had formerly been a pub called The Plough. The eldest girl had left school but the other three all walked the two miles to school with me, Adie (Adela), Ena and Ethel who was much the same age as myself. Quite often on my way home from school I would stay at their home playing for a short time before setting off on my own to Meadowhurst over a mile away. One evening it became dark and it started to thunder. We all took shelter in one of the cowsheds. We sat on one of the cow troughs in front of the open door when suddenly I saw a great ball of fire fall out of the sky some distance away. When told my mother said, "You have seen more than I have – it was a light bolt." Mr Williams, the girls' father, sold his milk to United Dairies at Weston and sometimes gave us a lift to school squeezed in between the milk churns. At the other end of Drointon lived another Williams family, cousins of the other Williams, the fathers being brothers. That Mr Williams took his milk to Chartley Station to go on the Milk Train to London. I often got a lift with him and his two daughters Mary and Doris. Mrs. Williams, who was a Londoner, was in the habit of calling her daughters 'my two dears.' Of course, they were always known as 'the Dears'.

We were not large corn growers, so threshing usually took just one day and that was quite enough. We knew a very busy day lay before us as soon as we heard the big steam engine come lumbering along the drive dragging the threshing machine behind it. During the World Wars when we were compelled to grow more corn the threshing took two days and that was much more than enough. At the first sight of the engine the hurry and bustle began, if not before. The threshing machine usually arrived the previous evening ready for an early start the following morning.

In the house we would start peeling potatoes, carrots or swedes or preparing whatever the second vegetable was to be, then fruit pies would be made ready to warm up again next day. There was no time to do all this on the day because the engine driver and his mate would be in the kitchen for a very early breakfast, then our own men had to be fed and the engine would often start before 8 o'clock. Outside the men folk had been just as busy. The cows had to be fed, milked and cleaned out. Several churns of water had to be taken round to the stack-yard ready for the engine's boiler. Everything had to be done before breakfast so that the day could be free for the big job in hand. Back into the house and the usual and the extra washing up had to be done as well as the general tidying round. The very large iron kettle was put on the fire in the kitchen range to boil great jugs of tea to be carried out to the men at about 10.30 a.m. The engine was stopped during refreshments for about ten minutes. Then Mother would say, "They've started again," for everything was timed that day by the starting and stopping of that engine. A little later Dad would run in and say, "They will be stopping in about half an hour." Then it was hands to the pump. All must be ready for about eight big hungry men and remember all had to be done on an open fire in big heavy iron saucepans.

Suddenly the noise of the engine stopped and in a few minutes we were invaded by a horde of ravenous wolves or so it seemed. While they washed their hands with hot water from the boiler in the range Mother was serving up the dinners – as much as would go onto a plate for they all had good appetites and the workman was worthy of his hire. We always had beef for threshing day and I remember one man saying to Mother, "Eh, I'm glad to see some beef. I've eaten rabbit until I am beginning to grow fur." As soon as the food was eaten, the driver, who was also the owner, would push back his chair. That was quite enough for the others, out they traipsed and a few minutes later we would hear the engine start up again. There was a sigh of relief. Now we could have our own dinner and then prepare for the afternoon jugs of tea but with the feeling that the worst was over. I must say that about half a dozen of the men were borrowed from other farms. The farmers all helped each other. Colin Deaville's father sent his man Smith. There were often two from Grindley Farm. Mr Allen came himself and then when they did their threshing we paid back with our men. It was just very unfortunate if one farm followed another with their threshing day.

If I was born singing my brother must have been born trying to get out of the cradle to run the farm. Wherever the men were Sturgess could be found. He learned to milk by hand at a very early age and in later life said it was the worst thing he had ever done for he could not get away from it. Having learned to milk of course he must have a milk coat or milk-slop as we called it. Mother could not find one small enough and in the end she had one made for him by Geo Ormes Men's Shop in Uttoxeter. He went with Dad to Grindley Station to take the churns of milk to go on the Milk Train to London. Another small boy, seeing Sturgess' white coat, wanted one too. So Ormes got another order for one.

The men of the Bartram family have always been fond of horses. My great grandfather Sampson Bartram and his son William, my grandfather, must have had a certain empathy with horses probably because they had both been blacksmiths. I will speak of that which I really know from personal experience and state that my father and brother were absolutely mad about horses. Most of the horses on the farm were home-bred and there was nothing they enjoyed more than braking in one of the young ones. After the work was done they would take the horse out into the field with a strong rope fastened to its head collar. With the rope end in one hand and a whip in the other the horse was encouraged to run round in a circle. The whip was not to hit the horse with as the loud crack of the whip being cracked was usually enough and quite quickly the young horse would learn what was expected of it. Sturgess thought he could do anything with a horse and he wasn't far wrong. We had a foal which he called Trigger. Mother asked him why he called it by that name. His reply was, "Because it keeps triggig after me." It still followed him like a dog when it became a big colt.

When Sturgess first left school he was rather small and chubby. One day all the horses got out and Sturgess was sent off to look for them. Eventually he went to our neighbours, the Guntrips, who were new to the area. He knocked on the door and asked Mrs Guntrip if she seen the horses. She looked him up and down and said, "They went off down the wood, but can you manage?" The reply which she never forgot was, "It's just a matter of knowing where they are. I'll manage them." Years after this he was sent to Uttoxeter in the horse and trap to collect the meat from John Copes the butcher and to fetch some bags of cattle food from Woolliscrofts in Church Street. He was told to pull up outside the butchers and Mr Cope would bring out the parcel of meat to him and then go to Woolliscrofts. All went according to plan. When Mother went into the butchers the following Wednesday Mr Cope said to her, "I don't know how you dare let that little boy come alone into town. If only that great horse knew its own strength !" Neither Father nor Sturgess could make a horseshoe. They hadn't the tools but if a horse cast a shoe on the farm it would be found and either of them would nail it back on.

In the summer we sometimes had a small barrel of cider, really for the use of the workmen. They were not as fond of tea as we were. I imagine that it must have been a poor summer for when the hay harvest was over there was still cider in the barrel. One morning my brother was going to cut corn and decided to take a drink with him. By this time the cider had gone flat so Sturgess practically filled a bottle with the liquid and filled it up with sugar. He placed the bottle under the hedge and got to work. Much later he decided to stop for a drink so he sat down on the hedge bank to rest and drink. Sometime later he looked up and saw that the field was full of horses and binders. He thought he'd better sit still until there was only one pair of horses and one binder in the field.

Our week was dominated by two events – Chapel on Sunday and Market Day on Wednesday. Everything else happened before or after Sunday or before or after Wednesday. So let us go shopping. First was the journey in the horse and trap to Uttoxeter and getting nearer the town meeting up with other farming families making for the same destination. We slowed down on the hills and the farmers called to each other about the state of their crops. The journey took the best part of an hour. Having arrived in town the horse and trap was left in the White Horse yard while we made our way to the Co-op Yard in Carter Street with our large market basket full of eggs for Market Day was about selling as well as buying. The packers were waiting for us in the yard. Eggs were sold in scores – twenties and the packers handled them in five – three in one hand and two in the other.

This meant four lifts to a score and at the end of each score the packer called out the number. The packers were usually women but we were paid by a man. Some farmers sold their eggs and other produce – butter and garden produce – on the ‘Stones’ which was the pavement at the far side of the Market Square. Two shops down from the crossroads in the Square was Salter and Salters shoe shop and this was where we and three or four other people left our large baskets and then sallied forth with a small hand basket which was filled and then emptied into the large basket. All our family and our workforce bought their footwear from this Salter and Salters. Mr Lister, the manager, and Miss Hammersley, his assistant were real friends to us all. Father used to draw money from the bank for shopping etc and if he was tardy we could always borrow from Mr Lister until Dad came. Sometimes Dad would leave money with Mr Lister for Mother.

I loved going with my mother to Byatts grocery shop at the top of the High Street. When she went in Mother was greeted by name by Mr Byatt. She would seat herself on a high chair by the counter and would proceed to tell him what she wanted and he would write down the order. It was a bit of a routine more like a ceremony. It would go something like this. “Which rice would you like? There is this or this other which is very good.” The end of the packet would be opened and Mother allowed to make her choice. Then it would be “Which peas would you like?” Again various packets were produced. I remember Mother saying “Which is which?” Mr Byatt pointed out that it said Petit Pois on one packet and that was small peas in French so you see Mother had a French lesson as well as ordering her goods. When she returned to the trap at the White Hart the goods would be in the trap, beautifully packed and parcelled. It was always fun going round the stalls looking to see which one offered the best and freshest-looking goods and which was the best price.



Uttoxeter Market circa 1908 Postcard John Woodward Collection.

We always had refreshments while we were in town and this itself was something of a party. It was always arranged that we meet our friend Mrs Carter from Chartley Park Farm and sometimes her daughter. At one time we would meet at Parkers in Carter Street. They only provided light snacks but as they had no objection to customers adding something of their own we would meet there. Either Mrs Carter or Mother would go to Farmers Pork Butchers shop in the High Street and buy a piece of a large pork pie. They would ask them to cut it into the required number of pieces and take it to Parkers. We'd eat it with the bread and butter provided, held down with cake and washed down with tea.

Sometime later Mother joined the Co-Op. It came about in this way. Mother was making cheese instead of selling the milk because of a dispute with the buyers about the price for milk. Father sold the cheese to the Co-Op and the manager said to him, "Your wife is not one of our customers. Do you think it is right when I am buying your cheese?" He didn't leave us much choice. Mum didn't like the bacon from the Co-op so she went to Melias for that. I laugh now when I see the thin slices of bacon we buy which burn before they cook unless one stands over it. Mother used to say, "So many pounds of bacon of size eleven please." You knew you had bacon on your plate in those days.

I said earlier that we went to Uttoxeter to sell as well to buy but I forgot to mention the rabbits. Sometimes my father, and brother when he was old enough, would have a rabbiting day – always on a Tuesday so that they could be sold the following day at the market. I have seen them fastened together by the legs and hung in pairs all along a broom stake. Once we arrived in town there seemed to be dealers everywhere and often the rabbits were sold before we left the White Hart yard.

One Wednesday a certain Mr Smith known locally as Mudman Smith was seen walking through the town with a pair of rabbits hanging from his hand. A dealer accosted him saying, "I'll give you so much for your rabbits," naming a price. "That you won't," replied Mr Smith and hit the dealer round the head with the rabbits.

Sunday was a very full day in our life. It was three miles to the small Methodist Chapel we attended at Hixon so it meant an early start to get to the 11'clock service on time. Everything had to be done before we left – cows milked then fed and cleaned out, the milk cans washed and put away and a hundred and one other jobs. After that it was a rush to get changed and into the trap for the journey. I so well remember being in the chapel and standing to sing the first hymn. I was unable to read but I did need a book. Mother noticed the omission and passed me a Bible. It looked just like the hymn books but I knew the difference and was most awfully insulted, how could I sing from a Bible!

Home for lunch afterwards and in summer outside to play quietly or in the winter look at the beautiful coloured plates in the large family bible. Then tea and milking time again and another rush for the men to change again for a repeat of the morning exercise. When the evening service was over and the talking all done it was into the trap again for home. As soon as we left the village behind, Father, who had a good voice, would begin to sing a hymn and all the family joined in and so we sang our way home.

Sometimes Dad would call to see one of the members of the chapel who was poorly. This did not matter in good weather but in the cold weather we used to be quite sure that Dad had forgotten us

poor folk freezing outside. There was a very large umbrella for rainy days but Mother said she would rather get wet than hold it as it was so heavy. We children snuggled down under the trap rug. On one side it was thick waterproof and on the other a thick woollen tartan. There was a steel ring on the outside and a strap ran through this and round the back of the seat to keep it in place.

One Sunday evening Sturgess did not want to go to Chapel and was using every effort to explain why he should stay at home. Mother looked at him and said, "But Sturgess, you must go. Your father is preaching tonight." "I know," was the reply, "and he always preaches as long as he blooming well can!"

When I was a young girl I spent many holidays with our relations, the Lindops, in Newcastle. Mother was usually too busy to accompany me. She found out that the 'sweet woman' from whom she bought our sweets at the Market came from Longton. Mother asked her if she would be kind enough to take me with her to Longton where it was arranged that one of Mother's cousins would be on the platform to meet me.

On one occasion when a trip to my cousins was planned the "sweet lady" didn't turn up. Imagine my tears. Nothing daunted, my mother took me on the train to Uttoxeter Station, bought my ticket and pinned it onto my cloak. When the train came in she approached one of the carriages and asked if there was anyone going to Stoke and to please see that her daughter got out at Longton Station. Can you imagine that happening to-day?

When I was eleven years old in 1921 I left Stowe School and started at Uttoxeter Girls High School. It took me twenty minutes to walk the mile to Grindley Station. I used to catch the 9.20 a.m. train to Uttoxeter arriving at school in time for the second lesson. School closed at 4 p.m. and the train girls had twenty minutes to stretch their legs and then back into the classroom to do homework until twenty minutes before the train left. I was one of the last to leave at 5.20 p.m. to catch the 5.40 p.m. train arriving at Grindley at 6 p.m. This was fine in the summer but frightening for a nervous child during the winter months.



Grindley Station on the Stafford Uttoxeter Railway Line where Winifred caught the train to Uttoxeter.
Postcard courtesy Jim Foley.

Let me tell you about an experience I had. I was returning home from school in Uttoxeter one dark night. I had got off the train at Grindley Station and had left all the houses behind me and had arrived at Grindley Corner where the turning was for Blythe Bridge. There were no street lights so everything was in darkness. I was about to continue towards Drinton when I looked up and saw something white standing on the far side of the road. I stopped and looked but it did not move – neither did I, I didn't dare. At last I decided to retrace my steps and ask Mr Smith, one of our farm labourers, to go with me but with my hand up to the door to knock I hesitated. He would think I was a fool and laugh up his sleeve so again I returned to the corner. The thing was still there but this time I noticed that it had its arms stretched out to catch me so back again I went to Smiths but again I could not bring myself to knock on the door. Once again I walked to the corner where it was still waiting for me. What was I to do? I stood and looked and decided I could not stay there all night so gathering my courage in both hands I rushed past as fast as my legs would carry me. Next morning I had to go to school again and retrace my journey to the station. The 'ghost' was still there with its outstretched arms. While I had been at school the previous day the Council had erected a beautifully white six foot high signpost where there had never been one before. That which was supposed to be helpful had nearly frightened me to death.

When I started to use the train daily on my journeys to and from Uttoxeter High School I began to feel I had shares in the railway. I felt very proud when I was presented with my first season ticket between Grindley and Uttoxeter. Little did I know what the buying of that ticket would let me in for. In those days the journey to Uttoxeter by horse and trap took the biggest part of an hour so shopping visits there were restricted to once a week on Market Day. At other times if my parents ran short of anything Winnie was sent on the train to Uttoxeter to get it. I have to confess it did not always suit me.



Uttoxeter Girls' High School, Dove Bank, 1928.
Photo from a UGHS brochure courtesy John Woodward of Fole.

One Saturday Father ran short of petrol to run some farm machinery so naturally I was sent to Uttoxeter to get some. "Go to Harris's – the ironmongers –" I was told, "and tell Mr Harris that it is for Mr Bartram". I did as instructed only to be told by Mr Harris that I could not carry petrol on the train. "But Dad needs it", I said. Mr Harris wrapped the petrol can up in brown paper with plenty of string and instructed me to carry the 'parcel' in my arms. The ticket collector and porters were so used to seeing me that they didn't spare me a second glance as I sailed by with my burden.

I made good use of the train. Catching the train was rather a hit and miss affair as far as I was concerned but I don't remember ever actually missing the train. On the other hand it was often done by the skin of my teeth. Fortunately when you were at the bottom of the station bank you could hear the sound of the train as it was coming along 'the Moss' – Chartley Moss – and you knew that it was time to get a move on. Sometimes I walked and sometimes I cycled – when I hadn't got a puncture. It took twenty minutes to walk the one mile to Grindley Station and half that time to cycle. More than once I threw my cycle against the wall at the station where the three fire buckets hung and dived into the waiting train. I have a feeling that the Station Master, Mr Barratt, and the Train Guard usually glanced up the road to see if there were any late-comers before blowing the whistle.

One Saturday, an uncle who was staying with us decided to go to Stafford and to take me with him. As soon as we went through the drive gate we saw Lizzie Williams from Drointon in front of us. We had not gone far when my uncle said, "My word, she is legging it!" She was and I knew that if she was 'legging' it we had to do the same for I knew she wanted to catch the train to Stafford as she usually did at this time. As we rounded the corner and started down the station approach we saw the train coming in. "Run", said my uncle, "and ask them to wait." I did as bid. The Station Master and the train Guard were stood by the Guard's Van stood. "Please will you wait a minute or two?" I gasped out of breath. "My uncle is coming." In unison they replied "A MINUTE or TWO! "Well, a second or two?" I panted as I almost fell into the compartment. Of course they waited. Life was different then.



Winifred Bartram in her Uttoxeter Girls' High School uniform circa 1921
Photo courtesy Mrs Ruth Smith, Winifred's daughter.

I must tell you a little story about Mr Nuttall who lived at Park Hall, Chartley on the Stafford Uttoxeter road. Whenever he used the train, he was driven to the station by Mr. Lindsey who was

his coachman, valet and general dogsbody. On this particular occasion Mr Nuttall was returning from Uttoxeter and alighted at Grindley Station where there was a porter who was always known by his nickname which unfortunately I have forgotten. Mr Nuttall had no such problem. He had already walked across the line to the other platform when he turned and called to the porter – “Here, I do, Fido, Fol-de-diddle. Hi. Do bring my bag.”

While I was still at the High School in Uttoxeter a new face was put on the roadway in Carter Street. I don't know what it was but it was very smooth like glass. The farmers were completely unprepared for this and when they drove along Carter Street for the market on Wednesday trotting along as usual their horses went down like nine pins. I often went home with my parents on Market Days after school but I was so frightened of slipping that I walked towards the railway level crossing at The Hockley rather than ride in Carter Street. In the end Dad started to put the horse up at The Greyhound in Balance Street. Eventually the council resurfaced the street.

In 1925 when I was about fifteen years old I was to be bridesmaid at the wedding of my mother's cousin in Newcastle. Mother and I were to go on the Saturday before the wedding on August Bank Holiday Monday. As things turned out I was unable to go on the Saturday so Mother went alone and I was to follow on the Sunday evening after deputising for the organist at Hixon Chapel. I was to travel from Hixon to Stoke and change there for Newcastle. All went according to plan until I alighted at Stoke Station. I crossed to the platform where the train should have been standing only to find no train there. Other travellers were already asking where the train was and at last the news came through that there would be no train that evening. No reason was given that I can remember. I felt as though the ground had been taken from under my feet. I had been on Stoke Station many times but had never got off it and had no idea of the way to Newcastle nor were any taxis in those days. Remember, young people were not so sophisticated in those days. Well, I thought, I must follow the others – down the steps, along the subway and up again on the other side. As I walked along the subway I found a young woman by my side. She asked me where I was making for and I said “Newcastle”. “Oh!” she replied, “that is where I am going. We can walk along together.” Praise be, I was saved! As we walked and talked she asked me what part of Newcastle I was going to. I replied Liverpool Road. She said she knew that road well and might know my friends. I said I was going to stay with Mr & Mrs Lindop. “Why,” she said “I deliver milk to their house every day. “In that case,” I said, “I once kicked your milk can over as I came flying through the house.”



A pony and trap in Carter Street, Uttoxeter. Winnie and her parents came to the market on a Wednesday in their pony and trap. Her great grandfather Sampson Bartram had a blacksmith's shop further down. His son, Winnie's grandfather William followed him as a blacksmith but in 1879 became a farmer at Meadowhurst Farm, Grindley.

Just before I finally left school I was walking round the stalls when I saw a very nice table bell. The price was right so I bought it intending to give it to my mother as a Christmas present. I had heard her say a number of times that she needed a bell. The maid, Emily Kirby, ate in the kitchen with the men and whenever anything was needed in the dining room Mother had to call her. I had arrived home before I remembered that Emily would in fact be leaving us when I left school and I was not prepared to sit in the kitchen so that Mum could ring the bell. The stall-holder kindly took it back the following week.

Shops were very good in those days for allowing people to take articles on appro. – on approval. I recall at seventeen being unable to make my mind up between the merits of two dresses and I asked if I could take them home for Mother to see. Mum said they were so nice and so cheap I had better keep them both. One was pale pink and cost 15/- or 75p. The other was blue stripes and cost 18/6 or 92.5 pence. I still have the belt buckle from the pink dress. It was made of brass and inlaid with enamels. I think it would be worth quite a nice sum of money today.

Before I was born and probably for some time after our post was delivered from Uttoxeter. It is only now when I am going to record the fact that I wonder if I misunderstood. Surely the man did not walk six miles from Uttoxeter delivering letters and then walk another six miles back to return his bag. I know people walked great distances in those days and thought little of it but this really seems too much. Were the letters perhaps brought to Kingstone Post Office to be delivered from there? I shall never know and in any case it makes little difference to my story. All the same I am pretty sure my mother said he walked from Uttoxeter.

Meadowhurst was the last call on the postman's round and to shorten the distance he used to take to the fields when he had crossed the river at Blythe Bridge and eventually came through the orchard to the back door. One day he handed the post to my mother and then started to tell her as politely as possible so as not to upset her sensibilities, that there was a cow in the field giving birth. "Oh," my mother said, "we were expecting a card to tell when it should calve." The cow had only

recently been bought. "Yes," said the postman, "you've got it there in your hand. I've just brought it!" Another day he delivered the post with a great grin on his face. As he went thought the door leading to the orchard he turned and said, "You tell that Miss Lily that I'll give her what for." Mother could not understand what had got into the man until she began to read the post. In it she found a postcard from a cousin written in mirror writing and along the bottom in ordinary writing she had put – "I have written it like this so that postie can't read it!"

Eventually the powers that be decided that we should receive our post through Stafford so from that time the letters came from Stowe Post Office and that meant we had a new postman. His surname was Causer and I think most people called him by that name but of course I am looking back about seventy five years. He must have had a Christian name but I don't remember hearing it. He lived as a lodger with a Mrs Barber in Stowe Lane, I think. Mr & Mrs Ferneyhough lived next door and their daughter Violet worked for Mother at one time.

To return to Causer the only memorable thing I remember about him was his death. On that day he came around and delivered his letters – again we were the last place and he usually had a cup of tea before making his way back to Stowe. While drinking his tea he asked me how much he owed me for my Missionary Box. He used to give me one old penny per week and he had missed two or three weeks. He paid up, wished us good morning and left us. We were very grieved to learn the following day that his body had been found at Callow Hill, a small road, off Blythe Bridge. He had gone there and cut his own throat. I think the trouble was lack of finance. He owed nothing but only coppers were found in his pocket. I believe the Post Office did not pay very well and there wasn't much time left after delivering the post for other odd jobs.

We next had a post woman a Miss Jefferies from Hixon and when she gave up the job it was taken on by Mr Roberts from Amerton. I think he was a good postman but followed the Post Office rules to the letter. One day my brother had been to a sheep auction away from our area and had bought a fairly large number of sheep. The previous owner was left to load the sheep into a railway waggon and it was arranged that a telegram would be dispatched giving the time of the arrival of the wagon at Grindley Station. We hoped the telegram would arrive in the late afternoon but when milking was over and it still had not arrived we became worried. Sturgess decided to walk down to the road to meet whoever brought the message. Meadowhurst stands back across two fields. He hadn't been waiting long when Mr Roberts arrived. He greeted Sturgess with the words, "I have a telegram for you." "Thank goodness," said my brother, "I have been waiting hours for it." "I can't give it to you here," was the reply, "I have to deliver it to the house." "But," said my brother, "it is addressed to me and I am here" and still Mr Roberts hesitated. Sturgess told him about the sheep and the need to get them out of the wagon and home. The postman did not like it one bit but in the end allowed himself to be persuaded. Surely that was taking his duty a bit too far.

The last postman I remember was again a woman Mrs Farmer who was the sister of Tom Whittaker one of our labourers. In those days there was no restriction on turning your bull out free in the field with the herd so, of course, ours ran with the cows. I don't know if it was a nasty bull or not. Every farmer will tell you that his bull is quiet and all of the womenfolk will tell you to take no notice of the farmer. This bull had never shown fight but it was a terror for roaring. It seemed to take a dislike for the post woman. The bull would wait at the middle gate across the drive and roar at her. The upshot

of this was she refused to deliver the letters unless the bull was chained up. I don't blame her. From that time on a post box was placed at the road gate.

In Jim Foley's book, *The Road to Chartley Part 2 Chartley to Weston*, mention is made of Mr Fisher who died at Burndhurst Mill and John Bull of Leese Hill who were both friends of my father. John Bull was bestman at my father's wedding. When Mr Fisher died and Mrs Fisher moved to Haywood to be with her children it seemed to be the natural thing for Dad to offer employment to the daughter Gertie. Our maid had just left so the arrangement suited both parties. Gertie was a great talker and was always known as a chatterbox. My father went further and was always teasing her about the size of her mouth. Gertie's duties were of course to help my mother plus joining the men at milking time – the milking being done by hand. One day Gertie said to my mother, "Mr Bartram says he knows where there is a bird's nest but he won't tell me where it is." A day or two later she came in from milking and said to Mother, "I know where that nest is. I watched the boss and I noticed that he always started to talk about it while we were milking. I watched to see where he looked. It's in the tree by the yard gate. Will you hold the ladder for me when he is not about?" Later that evening Father went down the fields and quickly the ladder was put in place. Mother and I were interested spectators as Gertie climbed up to a hole in the tree. Arriving there she turned to mum and myself with a look of horror on her face and said, "Oh Mrs! I don't know what it is, but it has a mouth as big as mine." It turned out to be a cuckoo and was being fostered by a pair of wagtails. Poor Gertie never lived down her own estimate of her mouth.

Of course, my mind is quite clear concerning events pertaining to the Second World War. I was twenty nine at the time and was on holiday in Blackpool during the final days leading up to the announcement that Britain was at war. For several days it was obvious that the general public were becoming worried especially the visiting public and gradually people were making for home. It became a common sight to see families with their luggage making for the railway and bus stations. We stuck it out until the Saturday evening when we travelled home in a coach driving on side lights and the inside of the coach completely blacked out. It was an eerie experience. On the Sunday morning September 3rd 1939 came the announcement that we were at war. A few minutes later and the first air-raid warning went and we certainly felt at war. Again it was very strange feeling.

I shall not forget being in Uttoxeter when the air raid warning went. We had been issued with gas masks and given instructions on what to do when a warning siren went. I was among the stalls when this happened and stood still to see what people would do. They did not do anything different. The stall holders continued to call their wares, the people kept on walking and doing their shopping and so after a little hesitation I did the same.

During the war as far as food was concerned we were well on the way to self-sufficiency but we could not grow tea or sugar. The milk was sold so we could not make cheese. The result was to make weaker tea and no sugar in it. We preferred to keep the sugar for cooking. It became a joke in the family to say, "You'll find the cheese under the spoon in the pantry." Anyone who was able could rear, fatten and slaughter two pigs during each twelve months but you needed a licence to do this. This provided meat, some of it pickled, and bacon. From the bacon we got bacon fat and the pork fat was rendered down to make lard. I can still taste in my imagination the beautiful ham we cured.

The war had not been in progress very long when one of our workmen, Reg Wheat, left us. He had come to us straight from school and was between twenty and thirty years old when the war started. He was so afraid of being sent into one of the services that he made himself ill. My brother assured him that in farming he was in a reserved occupation but to no effect. Sturgess even took him to see the doctor who told him how fit he was. Again, it was no use. He would not work and after hanging about the farm for a week or two he finally left us. He ended up in Cheddleton Mental Hospital near Leek and later died there. Only a week or two after Reg had left we had a tragedy on the farm. One of our workmen, Tom Whittaker, was loading manure and taking it out into the field. He had a habit of sitting on the cart shaft as he went from the yard to the field. My brother Sturgess had told him that it was not safe and said he must walk by the horse's head but poor Tom was not good on his feet and therefore did not take heed of this good advice.

On the day in question my cousin who was in W.A.A.F. and stationed at Hixon airfield was visiting the farm in her time off and had been joking with Tom about the smell he was creating. A short time later she saw something which she knew wasn't right and called to my mother saying, "Auntie, the horse and cart have just come into the yard and Tom isn't with them." My mother said, "Go and get Sturgess, quickly. Something is badly wrong." My brother ran down the field and found that the cart had run over a hump shaking Tom off the shaft and the wheel which had a rubber tyre had pushed him along the ground before going over him. Seeing the state the young man was in my brother went to the nearest phone two miles away to phone for the doctor and an ambulance at the same time assuring Tom that he would not be long. Meanwhile my cousin went to Tom and stayed with him until help arrived. She said it seemed like hours and it certainly would not be quick. Tom died in hospital the same evening and a pall of gloom settled over Meadowhurst. I was away from home while all this happened but I had the unenviable task of breaking the news of Tom's death to his mother.

My brother Sturgess applied for two Italian Prisoners of War to come and help us on the farm but this took quite a time. Before the men were allowed to come the authorities had to be satisfied that we were suitable people to have the care of their prisoners. The bedroom, which they were to occupy, had to be examined. My mother felt very insulted when the examining officer said to her, "It's rather small." "It's always been good enough for two Englishmen," was her reply. Before leaving the farm this officer said he would like to see my brother so Mother directed him to the hayfield where Sturgess was loading hay with the help of Mr. Will Allen, one of our neighbours. Mr. Allen was on the load and looking down on the officer he asked, "When are you going to let him have 'em? Have you got to go to Italy and catch 'em first?" At last the Italian war prisoners arrived and they proved to be good workers. They said they were Sicilians and were orange growers. They also said they were cousins but the English officer said that all Italians were cousins and so we were left somewhat confused.

One day while they were with us we had a stack of corn threshed in the field. Later in that evening my brother came in and said that the chaff was on fire and would I go with him and help to put it out. This was most important with German planes regularly flying over. They might think our field was something worth bombing. We thought that a spark from the steam engine must have started the fire so off we went with forks to beat out the flames but as quickly as we killed it in one place it burst out in another.

The Government tried to tell us that it was impossible to tell German planes from our own but you can tell that to the marines. The engines of German planes had a distinctive beat which was easily recognised and I know it did not feel comfortable standing in the middle of a fire and those planes throbbing overhead. On our return to the house when we had finally managed to put out the fire as we passed through the kitchen the two Italians stopped me and asked what was wrong. When I told them they asked, "Why boss not ask prisoners to help?" I couldn't tell them it was because they were the enemy.

My brother and Tom Whittaker joined the Home Guard when it was known as the L.D.V. short for Local Defence Volunteers. Sturgess often laughed about spending nights on the top of Stowe Church tower looking out for invaders. They never saw a single one.



William Sturgess Bartram, known as Sturgess
Photo courtesy his grandson Richard Bartram.

One evening after most of us had gone to bed, the Home Guard were called out. No reason was given and after Sturgess had gone we began to feel a little concerned with our only protector gone. Still we settled down for the night and we were just on the verge of sleep when we began to hear strange noises and rustlings. Silently we rose from our beds and without making a sound we crossed to the window. It was quite dark but we could see strange dim figures flitting from tree to tree in the orchard. We were terrified and didn't know what to think. What could we do? We were three women alone in the house with two sleeping children. After watching for quite some time we crawled back into bed, just hoping everything would be alright. The following day around lunchtime a large lorry load of soldiers drove into the farmyard. Two of the men came and asked if we would please boil them some water to make some tea. While waiting for the water to boil Mother talked to the men. Suddenly she said, "Was it you lot in our orchard last night?" "Yes," said the man grinning, "it was us playing soldiers." That was the only explanation we got for that night.

The war ended in 1945 but in 1949 when I got married we were still suffering the effects of it. Food and clothing were on still on ration and many other commodities were very difficult to come by. My

wedding ring was bought from Allports in Uttoxeter. As soon as my mother saw it she said, "You can't get married in that thing. It looks like a curtain ring and in any case you need a 22 carat wedding ring." Next day I went off to Allports and told them the tale. The assistant looked at me in something like horror and said. "That is the best we have. We haven't got a 22 carat ring." "But," I replied, "My mother says etc. etc. In the end another assistant came from the other end of the counter and said very quietly to the first man, "We have got that second hand one in the workshop." I didn't care if it was second or third hand so long as it was 22 carat and fitted me. It did fit and after a little polish it was handed over. I am still wearing it today.

The wedding was held in Hixon Methodist Church where I was christened and which I had attended all my life. The reception was held in Hixon Memorial Hall and we ourselves did the catering. That did not pass off as smoothly as we would have liked. While I was at Hixon the night before arranging the flowers – scabies and wild parsley – at both venues Mother was cooking the ham and tongue which she had persuaded the butcher to let her have. When they were part boiled she found by the smell that the ham had not been properly cured and of course this had tainted the tongue. Fortunately we had another ham so Mother had to start all over again. We ended up with plenty of ham but no tongue. I can't imagine where the dried fruit for the cakes came from. Probably all the friends and relations gave what they could spare. I do not know who made the three-tiered wedding cake. I know my niece iced it some of the sugar being put through the mangle to make it into icing sugar. On July 16th 1949 when all the kaffuffle was over I found I had lost a name but gained a good husband in John Bossen from Home Farm Hilderstone.

Mrs Winifred Bossen died in her own home on July 20th 2011 just a couple of weeks short of her 101st birthday and was buried in Christ Church Churchyard, Hilderstone.

FOOTNOTE

In the 1818 Directory Winifred's great grandfather Sampson Bartram is recorded as a shopkeeper in Carter Street, Uttoxeter. In the 1828 Directory and later Directories up to 1862 he is recorded as a Blacksmith in Carter Street. In the 1868 and 1872 Directory Sampson's son, her grandfather, William Bartram is recorded as a Blacksmith in Carter Street.

The death of a Sampson Bartram is recorded in 1863 aged 73 and William Bartram's death is recorded in 1905 aged 74.

Winifred's father Enoch Bartram died on February 4, 1931.

Winifred's brother William Sturgess Bartram married Constance Guntrip in 1930.

Winifred's mother Louisa Mary Bartram died in 1949.

A headstone in Stowe cemetery marks Postman Causer's last resting place with the words 'Ernest Causer of Stowe 12 March 1924 aged 38'. May he rest in peace.

William Sturgess Bartram, Winifred's brother died in 1990.