

# DOWN BY JACOB'S LADDER

**My Early Childhood in Walton on the Hill, Stafford in the early 1900s  
and the start of my Working Life in Stafford**



**LAURA HUSSELBEE (nee DUTTON)  
1902-2001**

**"In my dreams I was always flying over the housetops around the village and no one would catch me".  
Laura Dutton aged 8**

All unknown the future lies  
Let it Rest  
God who veils it from our eyes  
He knows best  
Ask not what shall be tomorrow  
Be content and  
Take the cup of joy or sorrow  
That is sent.



The path across the fields down to Jacob's ladder

## FOREWORD

Mrs Laura Husselbee, nee Dutton, 89, was one of the people who responded to a letter in the Staffordshire Newsletter from Year 10 pupils at Walton High School, Stafford inviting local people to a Down Memory Lane morning at the school on March 27th 1990. Such interesting memories were shared by many of the older people present that they were asked to jot them down on paper whenever they had a spare moment at home. Mrs Husselbee must have been waiting for this moment all her life for the words just flowed and in the end she sent in a 40 page hand-written script. Her story is pure nostalgia of a world long gone and anyone reading it will find it very hard to put down.

Laura Husselbee's memories in *Down By Jacob's Ladder* published in 1991 were the inspiration which led to the publication a number of books of local people's memories: *Before The Houses Came*, Marjorie Knight, 1992; *Down Memory Lane, A Collection of Memories from Brocton, Milford and Walton*, Jim Foley, 1994; *Letters to Audrey, Memories of Brocton*, Marjorie Jeavons, 1996. Laura's book also led to the setting up of Berkswich Local History Group in 1992. Alf Middlefell as first chairman of the group then in his 80s wrote a series of local history books on Stafford and the parishes of Berkswich and Castlechurch which were published by the new society. Berkswich Local History Group continues to flourish and over the years has published a number of books recording local history for posterity.

Over the intervening years since *Down By Jacob's Ladder* was first published there have been many changes in the area around Walton. Baswich House, once the family home of the Salt family, was demolished in March 2009 by Staffordshire Police Authority, despite its unique heritage and despite a huge public outcry locally. Berkswich History Society's book *They Pulled our House Down* describes the history of Baswich House and its sad demise. Laura's old school in School Lane is still standing and is now a nursery school. Walton Bury, the one-time home of the Allsopps, a nursing home in 1991, is now divided up into up-market flats. A private housing estate has been built on a field opposite The Crescent, Walton on the Hill.

With the help of Laura's son Philip Husselbee I intended to republish *Down By Jacob's Ladder* and add additional material from Laura's life after leaving Berkswich School to include her work life up to the time of her marriage in 1927. Philip lived a long way from his mother in Nottinghamshire but managed at least once a week to visit her. During that time if there was nothing urgent to do he would sit down with his mother and a tape recorder and would later transcribe her memories from the time she started working in Stafford at the age of thirteen. He also arranged to make copies of Laura's old photographs. Philip told me that many of the photos were taken by family friend and neighbour John Beech, butler to Lady Salt.

Sadly Philip Husselbee died after a short illness in 2000 aged 70 and the project was put on hold. The advent of personal computers, personal scanners and the great strides made in digital photography means that a document can now be edited at home in minutes, converted into a PDF and emailed as an attachment to anywhere in the world in seconds. No longer do we have to wait to have a story typed first on a typewriter, for a film to be developed or for a local printer to set the pages, print them and then bind them. I'm sure Laura Husselbee would have loved our digital age. She was a woman ahead of her time. In her story Laura has left a wonderful personal family history for her grandsons Martin and Michael Husselbee and their children and for their descendants and a wonderful record of social history for the people of Walton and future generations yet to live there.

Jim Foley 2014





## WALTON VILLAGE



Walton Village with St Thomas' Church. The Duttons' house was on the right.

I was born on the 20th December 1902 and named Laura, the only child of William and Winifred Dutton. We lived in a cottage in Walton village, in the Parish of Berkswich, near Stafford. Our cottage was just a few yards below the village pinfold. Any stray animals found wandering were brought to the Pinfold, usually young cattle or sheep, occasionally a donkey, until they were claimed. The busy village smithy was opposite the Pinfold. St. Thomas' Church was just a short walk down the lane. My father, William Dutton, worked as a bricklayer for W C Pemberton & Co. a building firm in Stafford. My mother Winifred, maiden name Bayliss, was cook-housekeeper for the Fairhursts who lived at the big house nearby known as Walton on the Hill.



Laura Dutton aged 2 years and eight months with her doll's pram, a gift from the Fairhursts.  
Photo Laura Husselbee

In the cottage next door to us lived the village blacksmith, Thomas Fletcher and his wife. Mr Fletcher and his stepson Joe, also named Fletcher, but not a blood relation, worked with him. It was the only smithy in the parish, so horses and ponies were brought there from all around. The cart horses were docile creatures but some of the ponies were difficult to deal with - kicking out in all directions when being shod. On the other side of our cottage was a very old cottage standing alone where Old Mrs Trundley lived with her son Jim.



Thomas Fletcher outside his blacksmith's shop with Walton Post Office in the thatched cottage behind.  
Photo courtesy Mrs E Giles.

Next to the blacksmith's shop was the village Post Office. Mrs Woods looked after it while Mr Woods delivered the Walton letters and parcels. If you wanted to send a telegram you had to walk over a mile down to Milford Post Office. Mr Woods also ran a small decorating business and a son worked with him.



Walton Post Office. Courtesy Harvey Woods, Walton on the Hill.



The Burton family lived almost opposite the Post Office at Congreve House where they had a small farm. Every day I collected our milk from their farm. Mr Burton had a small builder's business with a workshop on the Milford Road not far from Walton School.

Mr Keeling, sexton for St. Thomas' Church, lived at Wisteria Cottage below Mr Fletcher's cottage opposite the village well and pump. We children played around it but could not draw up water. The slabs around became loose and so it was dismantled and filled up level with the surrounding bank.



Mr Keeling outside Wisteria Cottage just down the road from Mr Fletcher's house and opposite the village pump. The house lower down the lane was called The Springs. The Torvell family lived there. The lane led to fields where a path led down to Jacob's Ladder. The gate to the Old Croft was to the right of The Springs. The Post Office had at one time been located at Wisteria Cottage and then The Springs before moving to Woods' thatched cottage further back.  
Postcard Jim Foley

Miss Tagg, assistant to Miss Goldsmith, the Infants Teacher at Walton School, and looked after the starters, lived with her mother in the cottage nearest the pump. Mr Bennett, gardener for Mr Morgan of Walton Lodge, lived in the cottage next door. Further down from Wisteria Cottage and the village pump was a cottage called The Springs where the Torvell family lived. Mr Torvell was a coachman for Captain Alsopp of nearby Walton Bury. The Torvells had two daughters Lucy and Annie who were fortunate in having a small but very pleasant playroom branching off the sitting room. I often went to play with them in the winter and was sorry when the family left the village. The Burton family lived almost opposite the Post Office at Congreve House where they had a small when I was eight.

At The Springs the lane divided into three. The lane on the left went down to School Lane; the middle lane led to some fields and the path to Jacob's Ladder; the lane on the right took you to the gate to a very large field called the Old Croft and the start of



Brocton Lane on its left where the Northwood family lived in a cottage on the left. Going down towards School Lane immediately on the right was the entrance to Walton Lodge. Further down on the left at the top of School Lane was the drive to The Vicarage. Rev Inge was Vicar of the parish and had been for many years. He had no family and lived with his wife in the vicarage. He had a curate, the Reverend Capel, followed later by the Reverend D'Ombrai.



The Vicarage Walton. Photo Jim Foley 1993

A few steps down from The Vicarage was the Parish Room. The Mothers' Union held their meetings here and sometimes dressmaking classes were held.



The Parish Room on the left with the cottage adjoining where the caretaker and his family lived. This at one time had been an Infants School. Photo Jim Foley

There was a caretaker's cottage adjoining The Parish Room where a family named Chester lived. When Mrs Chester died the family moved away. Mr Pierce, who was

gardener for the Rev Inge, became caretaker of the Parish Room and lived with his wife in the cottage adjoining. The Dawsons followed the Pierces as caretakers of the Parish Room. Mr Dawson worked at the Water Pumping Station at Milford.

At the bottom of School Lane on the left by the main Stafford to Milford Road you came to Walton School or Berkswich Church School where children from Walton, Milford, Brocton and nearby farms and hamlets were taught. To the left of the school on Milford Road was the School House where the head teacher Mr Longson lived with his wife who was also a teacher at the school. On the opposite side of the road was Grey Gore Lane.

Back in Walton by The Springs the middle lane took you past the entrance to Walton Lodge where Mr Morgan, a solicitor with the Stafford firm of solicitors Hand, Morgan & Co. Solicitors, lived with his son Wilfred. Further down on the left was Walton Farm where Mr and Mrs Malpass and their daughter Marjorie lived. Mr and Mrs Malpass had a herd of cows, a poultry farm and a shire horse called Bonny. She was lovely. I really loved her. My father helped Mr Malpass at haymaking time. I would be watching them and when the hay-cart was loaded I would ride on it. It meant that I was allowed to hold the reins when going back to the hayfield. Later on Bonny had foals, which won prizes at the Agricultural Show.

The lane continued past the back of Walton Bury, the big house where Captain and Mrs Allsopp lived, and ended at a gate into a large field near a large hay barn on the left belonging to Walton Farm. From here a footpath led downhill through a field until you came to a stile, which took you to a lower field. You crossed a low bridge over a fast-running brook with a sheep dip on your right. A short distance beyond you came to a very large oak tree and by its side a wooden series of steps called Jacob's Ladder which took you to a higher field. Mr Tilstone, the gamekeeper for the Levett family of Milford Hall lived in a cottage on the right with his family.



The path through the fields down to Jacob's Ladder.  
Photo Jim Foley 1993

The footpath continued through the field beyond onto the road to Brocton. Brocton Lodge was on the left. A footpath to the left of the Levett's gamekeeper's cottage took you down to the Milford Road.

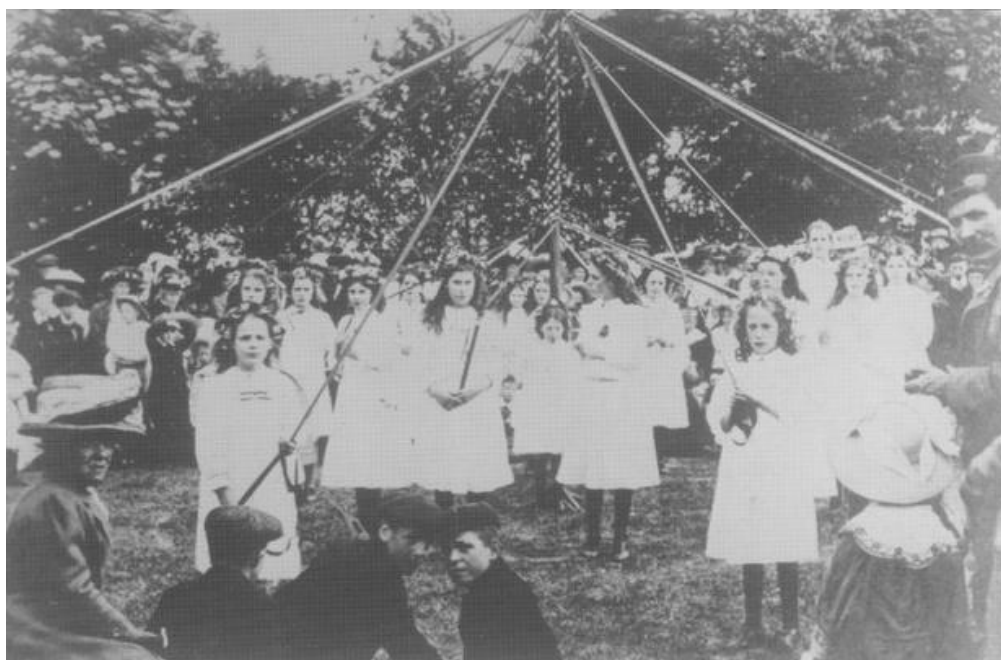
Returning once more to The Springs the lane to the right took you to Brocton Lane and to the very large field called the Old Croft. There was a gate into the field for carts and wagons to go through and a Kissing Gate nearby which led on to a foot path across the Old Croft to Walton Cricket Ground. Mr Northwood, who was gardener for Captain and Mrs Allsopp at Walton Bury nearby, lived with his family in the first cottage on the left in Brocton Lane. A little bit further along was the drive to Walton Bury and after that there were no other houses on Brocton Lane until you came to Brocton village.

The Old Croft stretched behind Mr Fletcher's field and orchard as far as New Lane, now Oldcroft Road, and up to the grounds of Walton Cricket Ground. In the Old Croft, not far from New Road, was an unusually large oak tree. The base of the old oak was about four feet high and it then divided into two large trunks big enough for a number of people to sit between them. The tree was still there in 1995 in the back garden of a house at the corner of Oldcroft Road and Anson Drive.



The old oak tree in the Old Croft. The fields behind are now covered with the houses of Anson Drive and Cedar Way. Photo courtesy Marjorie Jeavons.

In the left hand corner of the Old Croft was a gate to a field where the parish celebrations for the 1910 coronation of King George V were held. I remember it was a sunny day and the event was well attended by parishioners. There was a beer tent, refreshments and a few stalls. Races were held for the children. We girls from the school danced round the Maypole.



Maypole Dancing in the Oldcroft to celebrate the coronation of King George in 1910. Maypole Queen (standing by pole) Annie Torvell, May Pierce, Olga Smith, Lucy Torvell, Violet Tilstone, Olive Mahon, Laura Dutton (just visible in photograph on left), ? Hawkins. Postcard courtesy Laura Husselbee.

A footpath from the Kissing Gate led across the Old Croft to Walton Cricket Club ground and pavilion. Cricket was popular with the young men in the parish. When the 1914-1918 War started the young men had to join the Armed Forces and it brought



cricket at Walton to an end. Crossing the next field after Walton Cricket Club brought you out on Bridle Lane a long narrow lane, which started in New Road and came out in Brocton close to Brocton Hall. Returning to The Springs and going back up past the pump, the Pinfold and the Post Office you came to a big house on the right just before the top of Walton Bank. Mr and Mrs Fairhurst lived there. Lady Salt moved into it soon after her husband Sir Thomas died in 1904. The house is now gone but was situated where Village Gardens is today.

In my early childhood there were no houses along New Lane now called Oldcroft Road. It was all farming land and there were fields on both sides of the road. All the fields were for grazing or making hay. One field was sown with turnip seed. When the turnips were pulled up we children would follow the cart and if any dropped off we would take one home to be cooked. The farmer didn't seem to mind. In 1913 a house was built on the corner of Mr Fletcher's field nearest to New Lane. It faced the drive of the Fairhursts' house. Mr and Mrs Warrilow and their daughter Alice lived in the new house. New Lane eventually brought you out on the Cannock Road.

On turning left into Cannock Road, after about a mile, you came to The Seven Stars Inn. It was considered that by crossing the fields it was the nearest public house to Walton. There was a public house at Milford, The Barley Mow, and one on Radford Bank, The Trumpet Inn, now named The Radford Inn. If you turned right from New Lane into the Cannock Road towards Stafford almost immediately on the left you came to a cottage on the corner of occupied by PC Scott. A little further on was Hazelstrine Lane. There were two houses at the top of the Hazelstrine Lane and further down on the right there was a sheep dip and two more cottages. On the left was a wood and a brick making works with a meadow by the side of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal.

On returning back up New Lane to Walton village and going down from the pinfold towards St. Thomas' there were two houses on the left. The Farnsworth brothers, who were gardeners for Lady Salt, lived in the first house and Mr Wall, who was also a gardener for Lady Salt, lived next door. Continuing on down to St. Thomas' Church you arrived at Kitlings Lane on the left. In Kitlings Lane there was a field on the right stretching across to School Lane below the Vicarage and the Parish Room. There were no houses there. There was a large field on the left of the lane and lower down were six houses known as The Oaks. At the end of Kitlings Lane you came to the Walton to Milford Road where there were two houses. After the First World War the Pierce family built two houses here on the right. Back up Kitlings Lane on the right opposite the church was the village shop, which was kept by Mrs Holdford in her semi-detached cottage. She sold general groceries and sweets, pear drops, acid-drops, lucky bags and straps of liquorice etc. Continuing down the lane and a little way past the church you

came to School Lane with The Vicarage on the left and then the Parish Room. Walton School was on the left at the bottom of School Lane.

On the other side of the main road nearly opposite Kitlings Lane you found Grey Gore Lane, also known as Green Gore Lane, with fields on both sides. The lane led down to a field beside the main London to Manchester railway line. The upper part was hilly with a few trees but mostly covered with gorse and bracken. Mr and Mrs Deakin, nee Shroebridge lived in a railway cottage right next to the railway line at Town Hills. Mr Deakin worked on the railways and worked as a linesman for that stretch of the railway track. The Deakins later moved to Queensville in Stafford. Mrs Deakin became godmother to my son Philip. Mrs Deakin's father old Mr Shroebridge was Lady Salt's trap driver. When Lady Salt bought a motorcar he was no longer required and Mr and Mrs Shroebridge became caretakers at Stafford Girls' High School.

Following the footpath to the left beside the railway line you came out onto Stockton Common where there were two cottages on Stockton Lane. A railway linesman lived in the lower cottage. Stockton Lane came out on the Walton to Weeping Cross Road.

Going back down Stockton Lane there was a footpath on the left, which went along the right side of a field and led across Stockton Common to Baswich Lane and Baswich Church. There were only a few cottages between Stockton Lane and Baswich Lane with the fields going right down to Baswich Church. There were a few cottages and garden allotments below the church. There were no other houses on Stockton Common between Stockton Lane and Baswich Lane. Back in Stockton Lane on the left there was a large field and a farmhouse. By crossing this field, the road and a path at the side of a field, you came to Walton Bank, now called The Rise.

When I was a child Baswich Lane was a narrow lane and there were no houses on the right side as you walked down to Baswich Church. Weeping Cross Farm was on the left and further down there was another farm before you came to Baswich Church. Lower down across the main railway line and the canal there were a few cottages and a little further across the River Sow was an old mill by the river. This area was called St. Thomas'. Children who lived there attended the village school at Walton. It was quite a long walk for them.



Baswich Lane looking towards Baswich Church with Weeping Cross Farm on the left.  
Photo courtesy Edwards family and Alf Middlefell.

Returning to Stockton Common and going under the bridge carrying the main railway line there was an open well on the left side of the embankment from which the cottagers had to fetch their water - an uphill task! A short distance ahead was a bridge over the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal and another cottage close to the canal footpath. Walking along the canal footpath to the next bridge and taking the cart track you came back to Milford Road. A short distance below was the Coffee House. Mrs Dodd had lived there for many years. The Coffee House was a place where people could meet and have coffee rather than go to a public house. My parents said that in the latter part of the last century (1890's) it was a popular place for Walton and Milford people to meet, have coffee and a chat. At the rear of the house was a large room where dances were held and that was how my parents first met each other.



Mr Dodd with his wife and daughter outside the Coffee House, Main Road, Milford.

Lower down on the left was Levett's Dairy Farm and the cottage opposite was known as Dairy Cottage. Levett's Dairy Farm consisted of all the fields from Grey Gore Lane in Walton, behind Milford Lodge to agricultural buildings on the left of Milford Road and the Dairy. My grandmother Harriet Dutton, nee Price, at one time looked after the Levett's Dairy and my grandfather James Dutton was an agricultural worker for the Levetts. My father William Dutton was born at Dairy Cottage. When I was a child Mrs. Humphreys lived there and looked after the Dairy while her husband worked on the farm. Lower down near the Barley Mow were some more cottages, Milford Post Office and Milford Common.

Going back up Milford Road past the Coffee House, on the left hand side was the drive to Milford Hall the residence of Captain and Mrs Levett. Further up on the other side of the road was the drive to the Levett's Laundry and Milford Lodge, a gatehouse to Milford Hall. There were two cottages for their workers.

Further up the road towards Walton on the right hand side were some cottages and Miss Birks' detached house. Mr Osborne, a local builder lived in the end cottage nearest Walton, and had a builder's yard behind. Mr Burton, who lived near us at Congreve House, had a joinery shop there. Mr Weatherer, who had worked for Lady Salt and lived in the bungalow at the top of Walton Bank, moved to the second cottage there when he retired. Mr. Weatherer's daughter Mary, later known as Win Weatherer, remained in the cottage until she died. Mr. Wright, who was booking clerk and platform attendant at Milford Station, lived in the end cottage nearest Milford.





Cottages on Milford Road, Walton. Mr Osborne lived in the cottage on the left and had a builder's yard behind. Mr Weatherer, Lady Salt's chauffeur, retired to the middle cottage and Mr Wright, booking clerk at Milford Railway Station lived in the end cottage. Photo Jim Foley.

In my early childhood there were no houses on the Milford Road between Miss Birks' detached house and Grey Gore Lane. The fields there were used for young cattle to graze. A short distance further along from Miss Birks' house was Berkswich School in School Lane. The lane took you back up to the village church.

## MY FAMILY

My grandfather James Dutton was born at Dutton's Barn Farm, later called Barnfields Farm on 25th April 1837. As a young man he was an agricultural worker for the Levett family of Milford. My grandmother-to-be Harriet Price looked after Levett's Dairy in Milford. When she married James Dutton my grandparents lived at Dairy Cottage, Milford opposite Levett's Dairy where my father, William Dutton, was born on 21st August 1871. He was the second youngest. The other children were George, the eldest, Thomas, who died at the age of seven, and Lizzie who later married William Bott. Lizzie and William lived all their married life at Church Cottage, Bednall. They had four children.



Dairy Cottage, Main Road, Milford where Laura's father William Dutton was born. Levett's Dairy was opposite.  
Photo Jim Foley 1993

The fields of Levett's dairy farm extended from Grey Gore Lane in Walton to the agricultural buildings below Milford Lodge and Levett's Dairy. Granddad Dutton rented a field at the back of the dairy from a farmer from Brocton who had owned the field for some years. The farmer offered to let Granddad Dutton have the field in exchange for a cow because it was the only piece of land the farmer had left in Milford. This was accepted and the exchange took place with a handshake. Unfortunately there was a dispute over the ownership of the field. There was uproar over it but there was nothing the farmer or my granddad could do about it and the deal fell through. Soon after that Granddad and Grandmother Dutton left the service of the Levetts and took similar employment with Mr. Patterson of Acton Hill where they lived in one of his cottages at the top of Hazelstrine Lane.

My father did his apprenticeship in the building trade, eventually working as a bricklayer for Messrs W C Pemberton & Co., Timber Merchants, Builders and Funeral Directors of Wolverhampton Road, Stafford. The firm closed following the death of the principal partner. My father had worked for them for over thirty-six years. He then worked for some years for Stafford Gas Works.



My parents William and Winifred Alice Dutton, nee Bayliss in 1918.  
Photo courtesy Philip Husselbee.

Grandmother Dutton was a very industrious woman who would not gossip unless she went back into the house to fetch her knitting. She died on 29th September 1889. She was giving a helping hand to a neighbour who had two children with typhoid fever, contracted it herself and died leaving three children of her own. There were no isolation hospitals for fever cases in those days. The disease spread quickly and there were many deaths, some families losing three or more children.

Thus, my father William Dutton lost his mother at the age of eight. This no doubt contributed to his rebelliousness, which led to him being expelled from Walton School at the age of eleven for pulling the schoolmistress's hair.

Granddad Dutton died on 8th February 1909. I can still remember the sacrifices our family had to make in cutting back on food and going hungry and doing without other necessities to pay for his funeral and for a headstone for his grave. Both my grandparents are buried in Baswich Churchyard.

My grandfather on my mother's side was Frederick Bayliss. He had a painting and decorating business in the High Street, Henley-in-Arden and in the early days of gas he was a gas fitter too. My grandmother Louise Bayliss, maiden name Knight, looked after the clerical side of the business and also ran a meetinghouse for the Cyclists Touring Club when twelve or more cyclists would arrange to have a rest and meal there. Wash and brush-up, towels supplied, was 2d. each. Fried ham and egg was 1s. 6d. including bread and butter and jam and slices of slab fruitcake was 6d. They had nine children, my mother Winifred being the eldest. She was trained for cookery and eventually was cook-housekeeper for several wealthy families before moving to Walton where she worked for the Fairhursts at the big house called Walton on the Hill. It was while working for the Fairhursts that she met my father William Dutton. By a strange coincidence my future husband, Jack Husselbee, was later employed at the same big house as a footman to Lady Salt who followed the Fairhursts. By an even stranger coincidence my great grandmother Knight, later in life after the death of her husband, married Robert Manning, nephew of Cardinal Manning. Cardinal Manning was Lady Salt's uncle and a frequent visitor to Sir Thomas and Lady Salt at their Baswich House home in Weeping Cross. It is now the Staffordshire Police County Headquarters. So, my great grandmother Knight was married to Lady Salt's cousin, her grand-daughter, my mother Winifred Dutton, later became cook-housekeeper for Lady Salt and I eventually married Lady Salt's footman, Jack Husselbee. Three sons in the Husselbee family over the years had been footmen for Lady Salt.



My mother's parents Frederick and Louisa Bayliss, nee Knight in 1910.  
Photo courtesy Philip Husselbee.



My father was considered a good workman at his trade and often the builders he worked for would ask for him to be sent to do the work. It seemed to please him that his work was appreciated. On one occasion he was sent to do an extension to the home of Mr Copeland, the principal of Copeland China Works, who at the time lived at Colwich. After a fortnight a joiner was sent. The work completed, Mr Copeland told them he was most pleased with the work and as a thank you he would ask his firm to send them a few crocks. A few weeks later a card came from Milford Station that there were goods were to be collected. Father went to collect the parcel but discovered it was quite a heavy crate. He came back for the wheelbarrow. On arriving home all he wanted was a few cups of tea and ten minutes rest. Newspapers were put on the kitchen floor and the crate opened. My mother was elated. There were six cups and saucers in a blue blackberry pattern, six cups and saucers in a mansion design, three jugs, three basins, two vegetable dishes, dinner plates and two meat plates. I was eight years old and wondered where we would put them all - this amused my parents. The return of the crate was also paid for. The joiner had a similar crate of crocks, which pleased his family.

My parents had never been to the seaside or expressed the wish to go. My father would not have enjoyed it if he had gone. He would go with us to my Grandmother Bayliss' home at Henley-in-Arden. They had an annual festival usually held in October, when an ox was roasted in the main street and there would be a fair too. Otherwise a picnic on the Chase suited him when we would all pick enough bilberries to make a tart and walk home across the fields. During the school summer holiday in 1913 mother and me went for a week's holiday to Blackpool. On arrival we saw notices around that on the Tuesday the gas supply in the town would be turned off from 1.00 - 4.00 p.m. during the visit of the King George V and Queen Mary. In the local paper it stated their drive would be along the shore side of the promenade and spectators were to assemble on the residential side. It was a nice dry day with a calm sea. There were enormous crowds as far as you could see on each side. I imagined half the people in England had come to see them. On arrival Queen Mary sat up in the open carriage as straight as a poker acknowledging the cheers of the crowd. The King appeared to be more relaxed. Next day it was reported in the paper that their visit had taken place without any annoying situation. When we went back to school after the holidays my friends were telling one another of the treats they had during the holiday. I said we had been to Blackpool and that one-day the King and Queen visited the town while we were there. They looked at one another and said, "Oh no, they wouldn't go to a place like Blackpool". One said, "They are locked up in Buckingham Palace and if they go out all the soldiers and police in and around London have to guard them. You must be mistaken, Laura". I could not convince them so said no more.

In 1919 we were visited by my mother's brother, my favourite uncle William Bayliss. He had just been discharged from the Army having survived the First World War, seven

months at Gallipoli and three years on the Somme. He endured a long period of unemployment and needed much help and support from my parents.



**Winifred Dutton with her mother Louisa Bayliss, and her brother William Bayliss circa 1919 in John Beech's back garden. William was Laura's favourite uncle. The steeple of St Thomas's Church is visible in the background.**

**Photo courtesy Philip Hesselbee and probably taken by John Beech, Lady Salt's butler.**

# WALTON SCHOOL



Berkswich or Walton School, School Lane, Walton soon after its closure when it became a children's nursery. Photo Jim Foley 1991.

I started at Walton or Berkswich School, School Lane, Walton in September 1907 where Mr Longson was the head teacher. His wife Mrs Longson was also a teacher at the school. Miss Goldsmith was the headmistress of the infants. At first we had to make letters and three letter words on slates with slate pencils. It was horrible. The first little verse we learned was:

The pot once called the kettle black,  
And so they both fell out,  
The injured kettle turned around,  
And proudly curled her spout.  
'Tis envy, Sir', she said  
That makes you treat me so,  
But you are just as black  
As other folk I know'.

And a little song performed with hand motions was:

Oh! Black pig, Oh! Fat pig,  
Oh! Pig with the curly tail,  
Why did you stuff  
When you had had quite enough  
And leave me your fate to bewail?

Miss Goldsmith, who lived at Rickerscote, was a splendid teacher who devoted all her working life to teaching infants. Keen for the girls to learn knitting she would enter items we made in competitions run by the Nestles Milk Company. When we were six years old we had knitted pink vests and several of us won very nice storybooks.

Miss Goldsmith had a sister who lived with her who taught infants at Rickerscote. Neither of them married. Miss Tagg, assistant to Miss Goldsmith at Walton School who looked after the starters, lived in the cottage next to Walton village pump. Mr Longson the Headmaster and his wife lived in the School House adjacent to the boys' playground. In the summer holiday of 1908 the big school was divided into three classrooms by two sliding partitions. Miss Marshall took Standards One and Two. Mrs. Longson, wife of the Headmaster, took Standards Three and Four and the Headmaster took Standards Five, Six and Seven. Miss Marshall lodged with Mrs. Coates the school cleaner in a cottage on Stockton Common. Morning assembly for these classes started with a hymn and prayers. Mr Longson was a strict Head Teacher and used the cane.

There was a gardening class for boys and a sewing class for girls. When the 1914-1918 War broke out boys helped us girls to unravel and wind wool sent for us to knit mittens and body belts for soldiers to wear in the trenches. We often took the work home to do. Winter weather was usually very severe. Snowstorms soon blocked the lanes if there was a high wind. Pupils were unable to get to school for a couple of weeks and it would be closed until there was a thaw. In fine weather we enjoyed playtime when we played games like 'Oranges and Lemons say the Bells of St. Clements', Tick and ball games. By the school entrance there was a large flat stone, which was good for a game of Five Stones.

I had the cane once for taking a bite out of a little apple during a lesson. When I showed my mother the blister she was upset. I think it was because I had not been in any trouble all through my school years and in Standard Seven got the cane. I didn't get it again and a few months later I had left school and was working.

The two Gardiner boys who came from Tixall were often caned for being late when they joined the big school. Caned on their hands it did not appear to upset the handicapped one at all. We were sorry for his brother who had to care for him and try and get him to school on time. Mrs Longson was always glancing around the pupils at assembly. If you were not singing the hymn she would enquire if you were well and if you were not, she would take you to her home, the School House, adjoining the boys' playground, give you a cup of cocoa and put you to rest on the sofa. For those who had perhaps walked two or more miles to school it was appreciated. We all went to her if anything went wrong at school.

Mrs Longson had a niece, Eva MacDonald, who looked after their house while they were in school. One day there was a scare in the village. Eva had developed diphtheria. This worried everyone in case it caused an epidemic among the pupils at the school. Dr Elliott's advice was that Mrs. Longson should fold a piece of paper, put a good teaspoonful of magnesia on it and blow it on to the back of all the pupils' tongues. She spent the whole of the day doing this. We continued to attend school but it scared parents and children. There was much talk about deaths that had occurred in the last



century from fevers of one sort or another. After a week, to the relief of everyone, no further cases occurred. Eva recovered and carried on working.



**Berkswich School Class 4 1908 with Mr William Longson, Headmaster and Infants Teacher Miss Goldsmith.  
Photo Laura Husselbee, nee Dutton.**

**Top Row left to right:**

**Unknown, unknown, Lucy Torvell, Beatie Groucott, Lillie Boyles, Winnie Edwards, Violet Tilstone, Georgina Bagley, Lizzie Shelley, Eleanor Kent, ? Snelson.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Row:**

**Dick Marshall, Tom Johnson, Ken Richards, Willie Bennett, Jack Burgess, Reggie Allcorn, Billy Richardson, Annie Chillingworth, Violet Barker, Billie Chillingworth, unknown, Jack Simcox.**

**2nd Row:**

**Annie Torvell, Angela Elkin, Laura Dutton, Gladys Humphreys, Vera Cook, Marjorie Pierce, Elsie Marshall, Beatie Marshall, Jenny Boyles, Mary Weatherer, unknown, unknown.**

**Front row:**

**Harold Foster, John Hodgkinson, Percy Roper, Reggie Roper, Jack Boyles, unknown, unknown holding chalk board, Vincent Gardiner, Vernon Gardiner, Lennie Allcorn, Willie Gestterfelt.**



**William Longson, Headteacher Walton School with his wife Annie also a teacher at the school.  
Photo courtesy Lucy Torvell. Mrs Longson was Lucy's godmother and after they left Walton the Torvells kept in touch with the Longsons until they died.**

Unfortunately there were a few pupils who died while I was at school with one thing or another, which upset us all. Teddy Mahon died of a kidney complaint. One of my close friends, Violet Tilstone, died of diphtheria contracted while in Stafford General Infirmary following an operation for appendicitis. It was a big blow to me as all through our school years we had been close friends. She and I with my other friend Marjorie had spent many happy times together in the summer down by Jacob's Ladder. Wilfred Dodd who lived down Radford Bank died following a fall at school. The classroom partitions in the big school had been drawn back and all the pupils were having drill and games. He fell during a rope jumping game and struck his head on the partition rail receiving a deep gash. He was treated in hospital but sepsis set in and he passed away. We children were all very shocked to hear of his death, as were our parents.

Friday afternoon was silence time in the upper classes when Mr Longson made up the register of the week's attendance of pupils. In a cupboard there were a few dozen old Teachers' Journals, which we would choose to read. It was most boring stuff to read and all of us hated those journals. Mr Newman was the School Attendance Officer employed by the Stafford Education Committee. He visited the home of any pupil who was away from school, if only for a couple of days, to enquire why a child had not been at school. Truancy was not heard of then.

Sunday School was held in the school at 2 p.m. and was mostly made up of Walton and Milford children. Miss Tagg who helped Miss Goldsmith in the Infants' School took the small children's class. For many years she did a lot of work in connection with the church. Miss Birks took the older children's class when we were expected to know the Collect for the day. Then we would all go to 3 o'clock service in the church. Miss Birks played the harmonium. Babies were christened at this service. If a baby screamed through it all the godparents looked flustered and it amused us.

Walton village school was used for all village activities including school concerts, whist drives, lectures by educational demonstrators and also dances when most of the school desks would be put out in the playground.

Mr Wilmot Martin, a farmer from Hixon, had a concert party of about six who performed at all the villages around Stafford. They came to Walton several times and did humorous sketches and Mr Martin dressed like Sir Harry Lauder and sang his songs. The last song was always, 'Keep Right On to the End of the Road', when we would all join in. He became known as the Staffordshire Harry Lauder and raised thousands of pounds for charities, especially for the Red Cross. The real Sir Harry Lauder was so impressed they became close friends and once he stayed at Mr Martin's home in Hixon for a few days. One year school pupils were in a concert that was held for three

consecutive evenings and was well attended and enjoyed. A rummage sale was held each year. The children's Christmas party and singsong was always popular and each child received a gift, usually something to wear. Every year we had a Mr Sant Wright to give a talk about the abuse of alcohol. I think the Temperance Society employed him. He gave the same talk each time and it became quite amusing after the story was first heard, you knew exactly what the next sentence was going to be. He was a pleasant man and when he retired he had a house built at the corner turning for Milford Station. Sometimes we had the Curate to ask us answers to Bible Studies or to read aloud a few lines from the New Testament.



Laura Dutton aged 8  
Photo Laura Husselbee, nee Dutton.

Every summer a family named Phillips, who lived at Baswich House, where Staffordshire County Police Headquarters now is, gave a treat for children attending the school. Mr Longson and a teacher would lead us along the road. On arrival we would have to wait in the drive until they were ready for us to sit down. A barn would be spruced up for this. There would be bread and butter, ham sandwiches and fruit slab cake and what tea you wanted to drink. Afterwards we had games. Mr Longson would then be handed a large box of coloured sugared sweets and throw handfuls out on the lawn to be scrambled for. I only joined in once, got my fingers trodden on and the three sweets I managed to get were dirty and could not be eaten. At following treats there I did not join in the scramble; Mr Longson saying to me, "I cannot understand Laura why you don't join in the sweet scramble.' You may guess what I thought of replying but dare not voice. As we left we were given a currant bun and an orange.



Baswich House, Weeping Cross one-time home of the Salt family. When Morton Philips lived there the pupils from Berkswich School were taken there once a year as a treat and Laura had her fingers trodden on. Years later it was used as a boarding school and latterly as Staffordshire Police HQ. Despite its fine character as a building, its historical importance and a local outcry it was demolished in 2009 after the Police HQ moved to Weston Road, Stafford.

I started to have music lessons in Stafford when I was eight and a half years old and was allowed to leave the lesson at 3 p.m. so that I could go. A second-hand bicycle was bought for me soon after. The frame was really too big for me so learning to ride was difficult. The number of times I landed in the hedge up New Lane was countless. I succeeded in the end.

The Stafford Education Committee in 1913 was giving free tuition and a grant to two girls from a rural school. Mr Longson was asked to send to them the exercise books of two girls for inspection. Unknown to Marjorie Pierce and myself or our parents, our books were sent in and as a result places were offered to us. Marjorie was having treatment for a defect in her spine and was to have plaster fixed so couldn't go and besides her parents did not want to favour one in a family of six. My parents did not want me to go, and said, "What about your music exams and going away from your school friends?" I wanted to go so it was a big disappointment to be told to forget about it. It took many weeks for me to forget and it disappointed my grandmother too.

When I was eleven years old I was a keen cigarette card collector and playtime for me was swapping cards with the boys. I still have the album with seven complete sets.

During the First World War there was a cookery class on Fridays held in the Parish Room at the top of School Lane. We made wholemeal bread and took ingredients from home to make cakes or scones. Sometimes we made dinner for some younger pupils and ourselves, lentil soup or rissoles, vegetables and milk puddings. The charge was two pence each.



## CHILDHOOD PASTIMES AND SAYINGS

Children played games in the road - Hop Scotch, Spinning Tops, Bowling Hoops, Skipping, Hide and Seek and many more. As we got older there were tasks to do at home before we were allowed out to play - washing up, sweeping the yard, collecting the eggs or weeding. Most children had a small patch in the garden where they grew small vegetables like lettuce, radish, and shallots as well a few flowers.

As we grew older our mothers expected us to tell them where we were going to play. If they said we were to be home by a certain time we would be. We did not have watches, of course, but we were aware of time passing and would be back on time.

When there was a spell of hot weather two of my school friends, Violet Tilstone and Marjorie Pierce and I would arrange to meet at the brook near Jacob's Ladder to have a paddle. It was a narrow stream coming out of a wood, across the fields and into another wood. The water was always very clear and rippling along. Off would come our shoes and stockings and for half an hour or more we would paddle about. We'd go a few times under the low bridge or just stand and enjoy the cold water going over our feet.



Laura Dutton

Marjorie Pierce

Violet Tilstone



The stream near Jacob's Ladder where in the summer Laura and her friends would play and dream.  
Photo Philip Husselbee.

Then we would sit on the bank and perhaps make daisy chains or talk about our hopes for the future - what work we would like to do when we left school, the kind of man we wanted to marry, how many children we wanted. We were not going to hit our children. Sometimes we talked about our dreams. Marjorie said she could not understand her dream - in it she was running and no one could catch her. Violet said in her dreams she was always lost and there would not be anyone about to ask the way home. In my dreams I was always flying over the housetops around the village and no one would catch me.

Relations or friends who came to stay with us were always taken to see Jacob's Ladder, every visitor saying they had never seen such a thing like it and the oak tree by it looking so splendid. My son Phillip took a photograph of it in July 1990. It is still there and the oak tree is now huge and thriving.



**Jacob's Ladder by the old oak tree. The old wooden steps leading to the top field are nearest the tree. The replacement concrete steps are to the left of them. Photo Jim Foley 1993.**

Children did not get but a few coppers a week as pocket money. I had three pence a week. One penny had to be put in my moneybox, leaving me two pence, which I spent, on acid drops. As I got older I was given a penny extra to pay for a children's magazine called *St George's Magazine*, which we could get, from school. It was good reading and I liked it.

In most families indoor games were played in the winter evenings. Tiny children liked Strip Jack Naked or Snap. Older children favoured Dominoes, Whist or Draughts, which was our favourite. Children went to bed earlier in the winter so the time seemed to go quickly.

From an early age I disliked fairy stories so my mother made up ones to tell me, usually having a moral. I liked them but as time went on I think she must have run out of ideas for she started to tell me rhymes she had learned as a child. I've remembered a few:

‘Home not merely four square walls  
Though with pictures hung and gilded,  
Home is where the heart can bloom,  
Where there is some kind voice to cheer you  
Home and only home where the ones we love are near us’.

Another one:

'Waste not, want not is a maxim I would teach,  
Let not your watchword be desired,  
But practice what you preach.  
And never let your chances like the sunbeams pass you by.  
You never miss the water until the well has run dry'.

And

‘All unknown the future lies  
Let it rest  
God who veils it from our eyes  
He knows best  
Ask not what shall be tomorrow  
Be content and  
Take the cup of joy or sorrow  
That is sent’.

When I was six years old I was sent to do errands or something for some of the old people who could not get out. I was really nervous doing so. My early childhood had been, like that of many other children, one of, 'Children should be seen but not heard'. It was very bewildering to us. Later, I found the older people so interesting and amusing that I looked forward to seeing them. Their sayings were unusual:

She's got bees in her bonnet.

He always had his head well screwed on.

'That man is going round the bend', etc.

One old lady had one I often heard. If she or anyone had befriended anyone and then did not hear from them again she would say, 'Ah! eaten bread is soon forgotten'. She was very superstitious too. At home I often heard this quotation:

'Life is all froth and bubble

But there is one thing

That stands like stone

Friendship in another's trouble

And courage in your own'.

My father's favourite quotation was: "Work that is worth doing is worth doing well". If a group of children was playing and one was acting stupidly, one of us would say, 'Your mother is calling for you. She wants your boots'. To our delight, off the child would go. Most days a school friend and I walked home together. On parting we would say, 'So long' to each other and one of us would add, 'Steady past your granny's.' How that remark originated I cannot recall, for we did not have a granny living in the district, probably a 'be good' remark. One Christmas an aunt gave me an autograph book. I asked Mr. Longson if he would write something in it. He did; it was -

'There is so much good in the worst of us

And so much bad in the best of us

That it ill behoves any of us to find fault

With the rest of us'.

My class mates laughed at that. Walton housewives had many superstitions and sayings A few I remember are:

'Don't cut you nails on a Friday.

Never wash a blanket in May or you will wash one away.

If you want to thrive, let the spiders run alive.

Don't look at the new moon through the window, go outside.

If you spill salt, throw a pinch of it over your shoulder.

Don't turn the feather bed on a Friday'.

If you felt your ear burn, someone was talking about you.



It's raining cats and dogs.'

Someone would describe you as being, 'Bold as Brass.'

A girl showing a bit of her petticoat would find her father loved her better than her mother. If children complained of aching legs, they were told they had growing pains and nothing could be done about it. If you were thirsty you would be told, 'Turn the tap on and get some water.

Every year on 29th May, Oak Apple Day was celebrated. If you were not wearing an oak apple on entering the school playground boys would sting your legs with nettles. On 2nd November, All Soul's Day was celebrated. A group of children would visit some of the big houses and sing:

All Soul for an apple or two  
Got no apples, pears will do,  
Got no pears, money will do,  
Got no money, anything else will do.  
The cock sat in the yew tree,  
The hen came crackling by,  
I wish you a Merry Christmas,  
And a good fat pig in the sty.

## VILLAGE LIFE

All men in the village were keen gardeners. Six of them were employed as gardeners at large residences in the village: Mr Wall and the two Farnsworth brothers for Lady Salt, Mr Bennett for Mr Morgan of Walton Lodge, Mr Northwood for the Allsopp family of Walton Bury and Mr Pierce for the Rev Inge at Walton Vicarage. Most keen gardeners in the village had their own ideas of dealing with pests. Soot and lime were used a lot and a few lime-washed the trunks of apple trees or made grease bands to catch unwanted pests. When the 1914-1918 War started everyone was urged to grow as many vegetables as possible. That meant more potatoes and carrots or turnips would be put in frost-proof storage for winter use. Any rubbish that could not be burnt was disposed of by digging a hole in the garden path and burying it.

Most working men repaired their own everyday boots. Children's footwear would have metal protectors put on in places where most wear was noticed. These protectors could be bought in various sizes. As time went on you could get rubber ones. Boys who came to school in winter up muddy lanes or across fields would wear clogs and the girls would wear boots.

Housewives would be busy making jams, chutney, pickles and wine. In the autumn beef was pickled to eat in the winter and eggs put in isinglass. A good supply of flour was purchased in case the weather was too severe for the bread man to come.

Housewives in Walton were very thrifty. Girls' dresses were made with a couple of tucks above the hem to let down as you grew. Buttons, in good conditions, especially from men's clothing would be saved. Crochet lace and collars made, porkpie hats for school, but large straw or silk hats were bought for Sunday wear. Some women were good at smocking and embroidery on dresses. Muffs were made for girls. Stockings were knitted. Some made soap and I remember making a scouring powder of Hudson's soap and bath brick when I was about eight years old.

One man, who had a horse and float, went to Littleton Colliery near Cannock to collect coal and bring to the village. It was 12/6d for 12 cwt.

The fireplace in the living room of most cottages was the main feature that caught the eye. There would be a mantel clock, brass candlesticks or china Staffordshire dogs, a spill jar or snuff box etc. Hanging around the side there would be more brass ornaments, toasters, iron stands or horse brasses. On the hob of the range was a copper kettle kept bright and never put on the fire for heating water, enough to wash up. There would be a steel fender and stand which was useful for putting the Dutch Oven on. This was a tin affair with a back bonnet, a rod and hooks to put sliced bacon or meat to cook in front of the fire. There was the poker to poke the fire and make

the ashes fall into the grate or make the fire burn brighter and the tongs to move the burning coals to make a better fire. Irons to iron clothes and bedding were heated on a frame fixed on a bar. In 1913 all this changed when gas was brought to the village and made life easier for families.

We had a coffee mill, an oak saltbox with a spice drawer beneath and an assortment of iron saucepans - one of which was a large oval shape. A piece of meat would be put in to stew for half an hour and then a mixture of vegetables added. A jam or currant suet pudding tied in a floured cloth would be tied to each side of the handle just under the lid to steam while the stew cooked. It was one of our favourite meals.

There were stone hot water bottles for warming beds but several families who had a solid over-plate in the range would wrap it in a piece of old blanket and put it in the bed half an hour before going to bed. It was very comforting and kept warm all night.

There was no public transport from Walton village. You had to walk to Stafford. This was a big drawback for housewives. Around 1913 a grey bus service from Stafford to Milford started and was welcomed by all.



A bus coming up Radford Bank near Weeping Cross circa 1913. Walton villagers welcomed the arrival of the new service. It was a long walk from Walton to Stafford and on the way back you had to face the steep Radford Bank. Postcard courtesy Jean Wooster, nee Smith.

Many items like clothing for children had to be brought on spec. Fortunately most drapers were willing to exchange items. If your shopping bill came to, say  $1/11 \frac{3}{4}$ , your change could be a farthing or a small sheet of pins. Some prices I remember are: stewing beef at 6d. a lb., pie meat (a mixture of several kinds of meat) 4d. or 5d. a lb., sliced bacon 5d. or 6d. a lb., cheese 6d. or 8d. a lb. and two herrings cost 3d. Mr Young,

who had a shop and bakery at the bottom of White Lion Street in Stafford, sent out bread to the village twice a week by Mr Brown. He delivered groceries too if ordered. His arrival on Good Friday at about 6.30 a.m. with 13 hot cross buns for 1/- pleased we children.

Every Saturday afternoon, weather permitting, a man with a pony and small cart came to the village. On it he would have a tank full of paraffin from which he would sell to the villagers according to their needs. He would also have clothes pegs, mats, stales, step-cleaning bricks, grate polish and soap. If he did not have what you wanted it would be brought for the following week. He was well liked in Walton and did a good trade.

In the fine weather a middle-aged women came to the village every four weeks to sell pikelets she made. She lived in a cottage near Tenterbanks School, Stafford. This was before there was a bus service. She had a large butcher's type basket piled up with pikelets. Everyone was amazed when she said she walked all the way carrying the load herself up Radford Bank and Walton Bank. They were good pikelets costing 2d. each and she soon sold all of them. She said she like to come to Walton, as the housewives were so friendly.

Two or three times a year a Hurdy Gurdy man came on a Saturday to the village. He had a barrel organ on wheels and a tiny dressed-up monkey sat on top of the organ. It was the antics of the monkey as the music played that amused we children. It was really very funny. Even our parents used to laugh.



**Radford Bank on the road to Stafford.  
Postcard courtesy Jim Foley**



Most housewives in the parish would do their utmost to care for a parent or in-law in their own home, as well as looking after their own family. The Workhouse at Stafford did not have a very good name at that time so housewives at larger residences were able to keep elderly parents at home.

Then it was rumoured that Parliament was considering giving a small pension to elderly people. 'That will be the day', some said. 'Anyway, it is giving the men something to talk about'. It was some years after that it happened and even when my father retired it was only ten shillings a week.

When the First World War started most parents were busy making do or mending things. As the war progressed clothing materials in the shops became very poor in quality. Some women would wash, unpick and make up their winter dresses and made them look like new by reversing the material and adding different trimmings.

The Manchester and Bradford Warehouse, a drapery shop in Greengate Street, Stafford, ran a clothing club in several villages. There was one in Walton. When the card showed thirty shillings they added on an extra shilling. It was spent mostly on children's clothing - a winter coat or dress.

There was seldom news received in the village of happenings in other parts of England or abroad. Stafford newspapers would only have town and village news, Children's Corner or local advertisements. So for regional, national or world news my parents collected The Birmingham Weekly Post from a newsagent's shop on The Green, Stafford. They did this over thirty years because they liked the Midland news so much.

One day in April 1912 when Mr Fletcher returned from Stafford in his pony and trap he brought the dreadful news that the Titanic ship had been in collision with a large floating iceberg, which did extensive damage to the ship causing it to take in water and sink. This disaster was a terrible shock to everyone in the country. At the time it was thought over 1,300 people had gone down with the ship. The news spread quickly in Walton. A week passed before more details were received. It was the ship's maiden voyage bound for New York, Captain Edward Smith being the Commander. The ship was the largest that had been constructed with every luxury inside and a double bottom fixed which was thought would make the ship unsinkable. The Titanic was over 46,000 tons, had four funnels and was considered a masterpiece in shipbuilding. At Southampton 2,206 people were on board. The ship narrowly escaped trouble as it left her berth. A moored liner, the New York snapped its mooring ropes and was drifting. The Titanic was stopped until the New York was brought back to berth. The Titanic moved out into open sea on the 11th April 1912. It called at Cherbourg and then Queenstown in Ireland and headed out into the Atlantic. The sea was calm but the weather turned very cold on the 14th April and warnings of icebergs were received. A

lookout suddenly screamed, 'Iceberg right ahead'. Orders were given to reverse the engines, but it was too late. The ship struck an immense iceberg causing the ship to take in water quickly. Captain Smith ordered the radio operators to transmit messages for help from other ships. The S.S. Carpathia picked up the radio messages sixty miles away. At full speed it hoped to reach the Titanic in four hours. Meanwhile Captain Smith ordered the lifeboats manned by stewards to be lowered with the orders, 'Women and children first'. The Titanic was now sinking with every passing minute. The S.S. Carpathia raced through dangerous waters but could only rescue those in the lifeboats, which numbered 803 persons. The Titanic had already sunk. It was stated Captain Smith and his officers remained on deck until the ship sank and the ship's orchestra played, "Nearer my God to Thee", as it went down. 1,403 people were still on board, as it sank. I was nine years old at the time but remember well the sadness it caused. The general feeling in Walton and around was how dreadful it must have been for so many, knowing that they could not be saved. The music composer Haydon Augarde wrote a piece of music entitled The Wreck of the Titanic. As I was having piano lessons at the time a copy was bought for me, which I still have. It is to me an interesting piece of music. Although during my life the Titanic disaster has been mentioned many times in the press I have never seen the piece of music mentioned.

I do not remember hearing of any mysterious happenings in the village, but one day I heard three women talking about Kitlings Lane. Two of the women said they would not go down it if it was dark, as it seemed such a gruesome lane. One of the women added, 'Yes, you feel as if someone may come from the church grounds, fold their arms around you and not let go'. That ended the women's conversation with a laugh.

I remember when Captain Levett of Milford Hall died. The vault in St. Thomas' Church was opened and the Levett's gardener, Mr Pierce, a brother of Mr Pierce who worked for Rev Inge, decorated the space where the coffin was to be placed. My friend Marjorie, Mr Pierce's daughter, wanted to see the vault and as none of her brothers or sisters wanted to go she persuaded me to go with her to see it. It was beautifully done in white flowers and ferns. Coming away she said, 'I bet we will be the only two from school who will have seen it'. This started me asking elderly people in Walton for information about the church, when it was built, who paid for it and why only the Levett family were buried there. I did not find out anything. They did not know.

I have fond memories of Walton Church having been christened, confirmed and married there and my son also brought from Warwickshire to be christened there. I can remember the church spire being repaired. My mother told me it was being restored because it had been struck by lightning.

Sometimes on a Sunday if the weather was fine we would walk down to visit my Dutton grandparents' graves in Baswich churchyard. I was very taken by the inscription on a large tombstone nearby. It was sad to read what must have been a terrible grief for

the parents of a young family in Acton Hill not far from Walton. On the tombstone the following memorial was recorded, "In Sacred Memory of eight children of a family named Burton who lived at Acton Hill". It was said that Mr Burton was a farm shepherd. Four sons and one daughter died in March 1835 and three more sons died during 1838 - 1840. The tombstone was still there in 1995.

**Sacred to the Memory**

**of seven sons and one daughter**

**William Died Mar 8 1835 Aged 15**

**Charles Died Mar 11 1835 Aged 5**

**Joseph Died Mar 15 1875 Aged**

**John Died Mar 17 1835 Aged 17**

**Mary Died Mar 18 1835 Aged 7**

**Thomas Died Feb 16 1838 Aged 22**

**Richard Died Feb 28 1840 Aged 16**

**George Died Dec 23 1840 Aged 18**

**Children of Richard Burton, Shepherd at Acton Hill and Anne his wife.**

My parents used to be amused by the wording on a tombstone near the church porch. The inscription, which you could hardly read, went: "The light of my life has gone out" and then a later addition some years later: "But now I've struck another match."



The spire of Walton Church being repaired in the early 1900s.  
Photo Laura Husselbee

## VILLAGE PEOPLE

Mrs Fairhurst, who lived at the big house called Walton on the Hill, was the daughter of the Ansell Brewery family. My mother had been cook/housekeeper for the Fairhursts. When I was born their family pram and high chair were given to my mother for my use. The Fairhurst family left Walton a few years later. At that time Lady Salt and her husband, Sir Thomas Salt, lived at Baswich House, Weeping Cross that is now the Staffordshire Police H.Q. Soon after her husband died in 1904 Lady Salt decided to buy Mrs Fairhurst's house in Walton.



The large house known as Walton on the Hill where the Fairhursts lived and followed by Lady Salt.  
Photo courtesy Tony and Sue Pickerin of Weeping Cross, Stafford.

Lady Salt had a butler, Mr John Beech, who had worked all his life for Sir Thomas and Lady Salt at Baswich House. He was a bachelor and lived with them. He continued to work for Lady Salt at Walton on the Hill Lady Salt and lived in. Lady Salt had four indoor servants and four outdoor servants - three gardeners, Mr Wall and the two Farnsworth brothers, and a yard man, Mr Weatherer. He was also Lady Salt's chauffeur and looked after the engine that made the electricity for the house. He lived with his family in the cottage at the top of Walton Bank. Many years later the cottage became a Co-op, then Walton Stores and Post Office, more recently a showroom for designer fitted kitchens and in 1999 it became a Chiropractors.

Edward Husselbee, known as Jack, was Lady Salt's footman when she lived at Walton. We often met when posting letters but it was a few years after that we actually started walking out together.

Lady Salt later owned six houses in the village one of which was my parents' house. Rents were 3/6d to 4/6d a week. I never heard rates mentioned when I was a child so they may have been included in the rent.



Lady Salt

Photo courtesy Sir Michael 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Standon and Weeping Cross and Lady Salt

John Beech, butler to Lady Salt, had become our neighbour when Mrs Trundley died. Lady Salt had had the house built for him but allowed Mrs Trundley to live there until she died. John was a very dear friend to us. He never married and spent all his working life in Sir Thomas and Lady Salt's employment. He suffered a lot with asthma. He was especially fond of children and gave many gifts or pleasures to them. During the Second World War he had to let rooms to three American soldiers who were on the Army Camp at Brocton.





John Beech, Lady Salt's butler in his back garden  
Photo courtesy Laura Beech of Stafford, Mr Beech's niece

Mr Thomas Fletcher, the village blacksmith, and his wife lived next door to us. The Fletchers had both been previously married. Thomas was left with a daughter. Mrs Fletcher's first husband was also named Fletcher but as far as I know was no relation to Thomas. The first Mr Fletcher was resident policeman at Milford and left two daughters and a son Joe who later worked at Mr Fletcher's blacksmith's shop. Mr Fletcher and Joe repaired farm machinery and hooped cartwheels. About 1912 they fixed the iron railings around the playground at Walton village school. On slack days Mr Fletcher made sets of horseshoes for regular customers' horses. The shoes were hung on the walls. Sometimes he would make a mop nail for a housewife. Strips of cloth would be placed around a six-inch nail with a head the size of a penny and then driven into a stake to make a mop. Mr Fletcher was well known for curing warts. He would go into his garden and return with something green and well-bruised, rub the warts until they looked green and then say, "Go home and forget about them." No one found out what he used but it always worked. Mr Fletcher and Joe were always busy.

My parents' connection with the Fletcher family was one long happy friendship, helping one another in times of sickness or trouble. Mrs Fletcher was always thought well of in giving advice for illness to families in the village and was called on to lay out the bodies of anyone who had died. She worked for Lady Salt quite often doing the household mending and upholstery, which she did very well. She made draught screens for her own home, the final covering being pictures, which were then clear-varnished. A drainpipe with a connecting base was covered in the same way and was used as an umbrella and walking stick stand. I can remember a number of brass items round her living room fireplace and a copper kettle. When I was very small Mrs Fletcher looked after me whenever Mother walked to Stafford to buy dress materials or clothing. She

told me in later years that all she had to do to amuse me was to let me play with her brass letter scales and weights. When tired I would then lie on her sofa and have a nap, their collie dog Lassie at my feet. I remember the brass letter scales very clearly and also Lassie the dog. Mr Fletcher retired as blacksmith when he was over seventy years old. He had a long retirement, which he spent, in his garden.



Thomas Fletcher, village blacksmith, in his pony and trap with apprentice Ben Tooth outside his shop circa 1896. Photo courtesy of Mrs J Lawton of Wildwood, Stafford, Ben Tooth's daughter.

When Mr Fletcher was working he would fatten a pig in his pigsty by the road. In the autumn it would be killed - a day I dreaded when I was a child. They said it took four men to get it on the bench for the killing. It was the squeal of the pig that upset me, it seemed to last so long. Mr. Richards from Milford was the pig killer in the district.

Mr Fletcher had the field nearby which stretched to the corner of New Lane - Oldcroft Road to day. He had a shed for his horses, poultry pens and a barn there. Haymaking was a happy time for the village children, which we helped with. The attraction, I think, was that Mrs Fletcher gave us a tea party in the field when it was finished. I do not remember Mr Fletcher or his wife going to church. On some summer evenings you would see him walking across the fields to the Seven Stars Inn on the Cannock Road where it was said he had a glass of beer and a game of whist with some of the other men. At times in the winter he had neighbours in his home for a game. Mrs Fletcher nearly always spoke of her second husband Thomas by his surname. Mother and me were in the back garden one day when she beckoned me. "What do you think?" she said, "Fletcher has to-day bought a pony at a sale of ponies at The Sun Inn in Stafford. The pony has never been in a trap. If he thinks I am going with him

behind that he is mistaken." My mother replied, "Oh yes! It might not be a safe journey." The next week Mr Fletcher managed to get the pony between the trap shafts and set off intending to go to Stafford. Apparently all went well down Walton Bank - now renamed The Rise - but the pony refused to go on the main road at the bottom and started to be awkward, bucking and kicking out. The trap turned over and poor Thomas was thrown flying. The result was that he sustained a broken collarbone. Some of the men in the village teased him about the accident for whenever Mr Fletcher fixed shoes on ponies who were playing up he always got the upper hand. Needless to say the pony went back to the next sale of ponies. I remember Mr Fletcher recovering from his broken bone. On the brickwork at the left side of the front door every week he would mark with a piece of brick the height he could raise his arm. He persevered so much we all admired him. Mr Fletcher led a very simple life. His blacksmith's shop and work were his pride. He also liked gardening. A plot of land between the Pinfold and our front gate was always planted with potatoes and his back garden contained all sorts of vegetables. Mr Fletcher died at the age of 96 in 1939 and is buried in Baswich churchyard. His stepson Joe Fletcher took over a blacksmith's business at Willenhall having married Edith who was parlour maid for Lady Salt. Mr Giles who took over Walton blacksmith's shop lived in a cottage on the main road behind the Weathers' bungalow.

Mr Keeling had an orchard at the back of the blacksmith's shop and a very large garden where he grew a quantity of vegetables and flowers. He sold the produce from his garden and orchard to shops in Stafford. He also sold paraffin. For over forty years as sexton, Mr Keeling, looked after the clock, rang the bell and attended all church services at St. Thomas' Church.

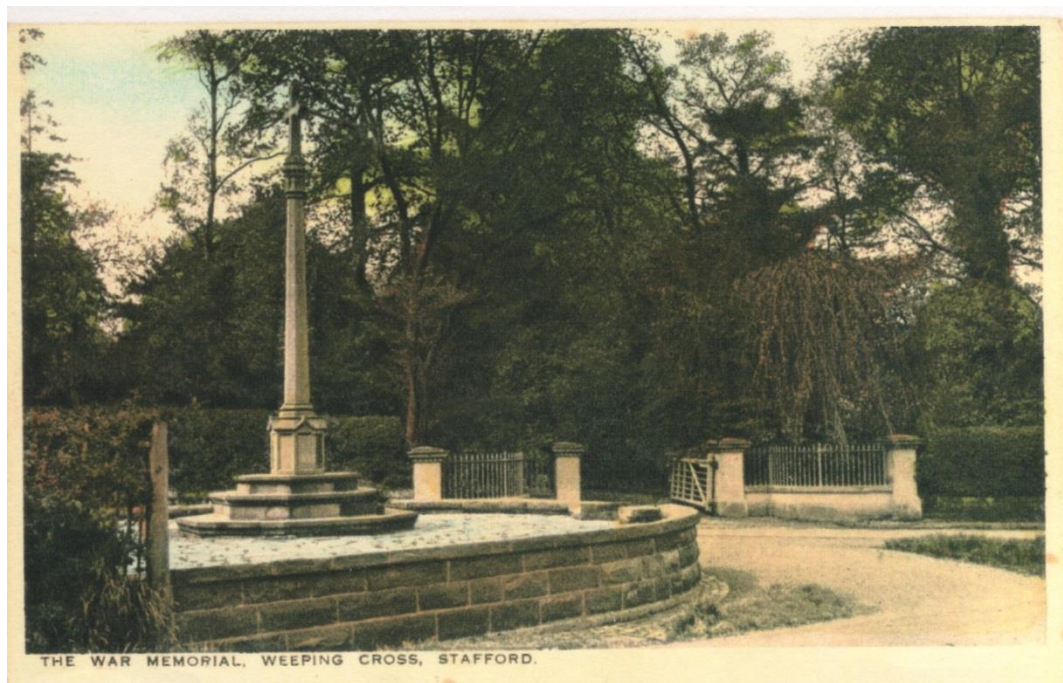
The Rev Inge was Vicar of the parish and had been for many years. He had no family and lived with his wife in the Vicarage behind the church. He had a Curate, the Rev Capel followed later by the Rev D'Ombrian. I cannot say I usually enjoyed Christmastime. Mrs Inge, the Vicar's wife, would deliver a wall sheet calendar and have a large basket of wrapped presents for children. Every year she would say to my mother, 'As you only have one child we cannot give her a present. They are for those who have more than one child'. When I did not get a present year after year because I was an only child it annoyed my parents and our near neighbours thought it was shameful to treat a child like that. One said, 'If that is her religion I don't think much of it'. My father met the Rev Inge one day and told him what he thought about it. The Vicar replied he did not have anything at all to do with the children's Christmas presents. The hurtful part for me was when other village children showed me their presents and asked me what I had been given. Some of the toys were mechanical and I thought they were wonderful. I think the men who were repairing the spire of St. Thomas' Church must have heard this story while lodging at my home. They asked me if I had a wish for any Christmas present. I replied that I would love a toy that you

could wind up to make it move about. The men bought me a white mouse with pink eyes which when you wound it up went round three or four times and then ran straight. To me it was wonderful and I treasured it for years. It made up for the hurt I still felt after all these years at not being given a Christmas present like all the other children.

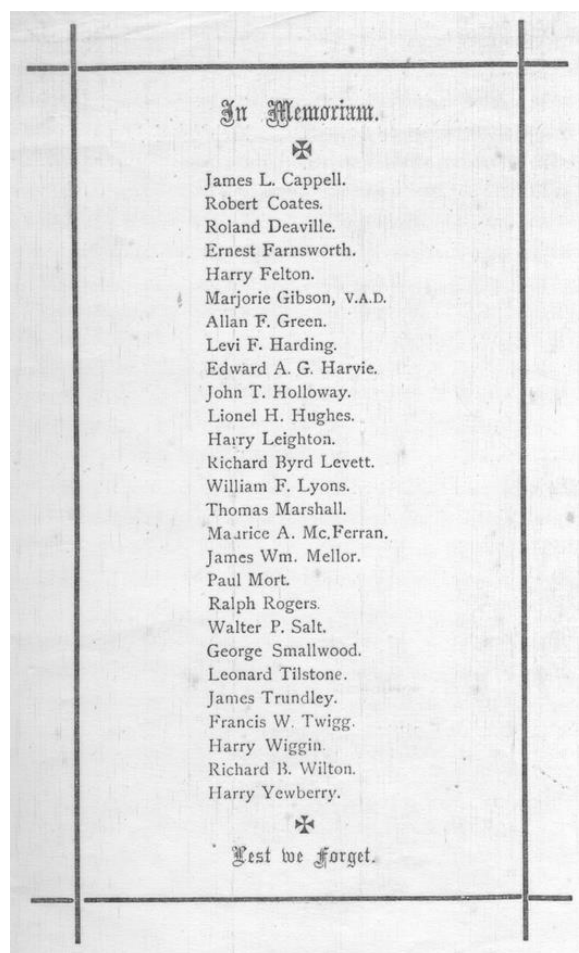


**Rev Inge, Vicar of Berkswich Parish and Mrs Inge**  
Photo courtesy Alf Middlefell

Our family did not have a Christmas tree but we did have a lovely dinner and tea. We also had another feast in February to celebrate my parents' wedding anniversary. In 1912 the Rev Inge retired and he and Mrs Inge went to live in Cambridge. He kept in touch with happenings in the parish and when the War was on he wrote to Mr Longson, the Headmaster of the school, saying he was distressed to hear of so many old pupils being killed and could he let him have a list of their names. I was chosen to write the list. I think at the time there were twenty or more names. I still have a postcard the Rev Inge sent to thank me.



The War Memorial at Weeping Cross. Baswich House was some distance back behind the trees.  
Postcard courtesy Jean Wooster.



List of men and one woman from the Parish of Berkswich killed in the 1914-18 War  
Laura wrote a list of the names to send to Rev Inge who had gone to live in Cambridge.  
List courtesy Alf Middlefell.



THE PARISH OF



BERKSWICH-WITH-WALTON.

JUNE,

1918.

Your Prayers are asked for the following, who are serving either at home or abroad:—

# Roll of Honour.

EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES  
ALKINS, THOMAS  
ANDERSON, DAVID S.  
ANDERSON, CHAS. TORR  
BAGLEY, ALBERT  
BAGLEY, WILLIAM  
BEAMAN, SAMUEL  
BEARDMORE, THOMAS  
BANCROFT, HENRY  
BARKER, CHARLES  
BOWERS, WILLIAM  
BUCKSTONE, GEO. MORETON  
BROWN, THOMAS  
BRADFIELD, HAROLD  
BRADFORD, JOHN *RIP*  
CHETWYND, CHARLES  
CHILTON, BERTIE  
CHILTON, SIDNEY  
CHESTERS, THOMAS  
COOK, ALWYN  
COOK, RICHARD  
DARLINGTON, CHARLES  
DARLINGTON, WALTER  
DARLINGTON, HENRY  
DEAVILLE, ROLAND *RIP*  
DIX, HARRY  
DALE, ERNEST  
DODD, FREDERICK  
EARLE, HUGH PERCY  
EDWARDS, WILLIAM  
EGAN, BERTIE  
FALLOWS, WILLIAM ARCHIBALD  
FALLOWS, BERTRAM  
FALLOWS, SIDNEY  
FINDLAY, CECIL  
FLETCHER, EDGAR  
FLETCHER, JOSEPH  
FELTON, HARRY  
FRADLEY, WILLIAM  
FRADLEY, FRED  
FRADLEY, ARTHUR  
FOSTER, ERNEST  
FERRIS, BERT  
GALLAGHER, JOHN  
GILBERT, CHARLES  
GILBERT, WALTER  
GORTON, HORACE, R.N.  
GREEN, GERALD DUDLEY  
GROUCOTT, ARTHUR  
GROUCOTT, FREDERICK  
GROUCOTT, CORNELIUS  
GROUCOTT, WILLIAM *RIP*  
GROUCOTT, SIDNEY  
GROUCOTT, CHARLES  
GROUCOTT, ALBERT ERNEST  
GARDNER, JOHN  
HARDING, FREDERICK  
HOOLEY, HARRY  
HILL, GEORGE ANTHONY  
HAWKINS, CHARLES  
HAWKINS, HARRY  
HAWKINS, FRED  
HAWKINS, ERNEST  
HAINES, FREDERICK  
HILL, ERNEST  
HILL, SIDNEY  
HINTON, JAMES FRANCIS  
HINTON, WILLIAM  
HALL, THOMAS  
HALL, ALFRED  
HITCHINGS, NEVILLE JAMES  
HITCHINGS, FRANCIS NOEL WELLS  
HITCHINGS, WALTER RICHARD  
HITCHINGS, RONALD, R.N.

JEUDWINE, WILFRED WYNNE  
JEANS, DUDLEY MARK  
JAMES, GEOFFREY  
JONES, JAMES  
JONES, FREDERICK  
JOHNSON, SIDNEY  
KIDWELL, HAVELOCK  
KIDWELL, GERALD GORDON  
KIDWELL, HENRY  
KIDWELL, WILLIAM  
LEIGH, CHARLES  
LEIGH, GEORGE  
LIDDERDALE, DAVID  
LEGGATT, HAROLD *RIP*  
LEIGHTON, HARRY  
LEIGHTON, JOSEPH  
MELLOR, JAMES  
MAHON, JAMES  
MAHON, MARTIN  
MARRIT, CHARLES J.  
MAYER, ARTHUR  
MORGAN, LAMBERT  
MORGAN, ERIC  
McFERRAN, CECIL *Mellor Ernest*  
MASON, WILLIAM  
MARSHALL, SIDNEY  
PHILIPS, HUMPHREY  
PIERCE, HARRY  
PODMORE, FREDK.  
PRICE, WILLIAM  
POWELL, JOSEPH  
PERRY, WILLIAM  
RALPHS, HERBERT HENRY  
RATCLIFFE, HORACE  
RATCLIFFE, THOMAS  
RATCLIFFE, ARTHUR  
ROWE, ERNEST  
SALT, THOMAS A.  
SALT, HAROLD  
SMALLWOOD, CHARLES  
SMALLWOOD, FRANK  
SMALLWOOD, JAMES  
SALT, JOHN  
SCRIVENER, EVELYN LEVETT  
SHELLEY, ALBERT  
SHELLEY, JAMES  
SPICER, FRED  
SMITH, CHARLES  
TILSTON, HORACE  
TILSTON, WILLIAM  
TWIGG, FRANK *RIP*  
TWIGG, CHARLES  
TRUNDLEY, WILLIAM  
TAYLER, JAMES RICHD.  
THOMPSON, EDMUND  
TITLEY, ALLAN  
VAUL, PERCY  
VAUL, ARTHUR  
VAUL, ALBERT ED.  
WATTS, GEORGE  
WEATHERER, ERIC  
WHITE, FRED  
WHITE, CECIL  
WHITE, WALTER  
WHITE, EDWARD  
WILTON, THOMAS B.  
WITHNELL, GEORGE  
WEISS, CHARLES  
WOODS, WILLIAM  
WOODS, GEORGE  
WALLS, ARTHUR  
VICKERSTAFF, JOHN  
YOUNG, SIDNEY

*Ball Wilfred*  
*Ball Walter*  
*Ball William*  
*Dickinson George*  
*Dickinson Bert*  
*Tilston Frank*  
*Tilston Thomas*  
*Till Charles*  
*Till Frank*  
*Wilton Clifford*  
*John C. Dawson*  
*William H. Bennett*  
*Shepherd Francis*  
*Knight William*  
*Hollingsworth Wilfred*  
*Bennett William*  
*Jones Thomas*  
*Vickerstaff John*  
*Baker Frederick*  
*Bradley Harold*  
*Hedgcock William*  
*Scouse John*  
*Cleaveland George*  
*Holford George*  
*Rogers Ralph*

Remember those who have laid down their lives for King and Country.  
1914-1918.  
1914.  
HUGHES, LIONEL  
1915.  
WIGGIN, HARRY  
1916.  
KIDWELL, OSMUND  
SMALLWOOD, GEORGE  
SITWELL, JACINTH WILMOT  
FARNSWORTH, ERNEST  
COATES, ROBERT  
YEWBERRY, HARRY  
HARVIE, EDWARD  
SALT, WALTER PETIT  
TILSTON, LEONARD  
*Gibson, Margaret V.A.D. 1917.*  
MARSHALL, THOMAS  
MORT, PAUL, R.N.  
LYONS, WILLIAM FRANCIS  
LEVETT, RICHARD BYRD  
GREEN, ALAN  
CLAYTON, FRANCIS  
TRUNDLEY, JAMES  
WILTON, RICHARD BIRKENHEAD  
1918.  
CAPPELL, JAMES LEITCH, C.F.  
HOLLOWAY, JOHN  
McFERRAN, MAURICE ANDERDON

Berkswich Roll of Honour June 1918 a list of men and one woman from the parish in the services. The war ended five months later on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918.

Jim Trundley has been killed. His name, crossed out, is given mistakenly as William in the main list but he is among those listed as dead in the right hand column. List courtesy Alf Middlefell.

Following the Rev Inge as vicar was a bachelor, Mr Busher. He kept company with a Miss Twigg, whose family lived at Weeping Cross House on the left of Radford Bank. After a couple of years they married and left the parish. The Rev Hitchings, also a bachelor, came next and was at Walton for many years before going to a small parish near Tamworth. He retired a few years after.

Dr Elliot was the doctor for most of the cottagers in Walton. He had a surgery in Wolverhampton Road, Stafford. He was seldom seen in Walton as he came on a bicycle and charged 12/6d. This was half most men's wages and couldn't be afforded. It meant that young parents would seek advice from older people first before asking for the doctor. For measles it was marigold tea, for sore throats or a head cold it was a few drops of eucalyptus on a lump of sugar held on the tongue until it dissolved, for mumps it was a flannel bandage around the throat and for chilblains a salt bath was recommended. Whooping cough treatment was to wrap the children up and take them to the top of Spring Hill at Milford and walk them around, a swab of brandy for a bad bruise, and for an upset stomach arrowroot and milk. Goose oil was rubbed on the chest and back and a sheet of brown paper put over them for bad cough. For ear ache a flannel bag filled with hot salt or a baked onion was held to the ear.

Lady Salt owned Mr Fletcher's and our cottage and Mrs Trundley's cottage a very old cottage that stood alone near our cottage. Old Mrs Trundley's son Jim, who lived with her, worked for the Burton family on their small farm just across the road from the cottages. I was very fond of Mrs Trundley. Her sayings and superstitions fascinated me and she often made me laugh. Mrs Trundley's father, Mr Legge, had been a funeral director in Tixall so she had many stories of people's deaths. One of the stories she told me was of a woman who had died during a very cold spell. After the funeral the gravedigger went to replace the soil. To his astonishment he heard sounds coming from the coffin. At first he couldn't believe his ears but when he kept hearing the sounds he ran off to tell the dead woman's father. They hurried back and, yes, every few seconds there was a sound coming from the coffin. With great haste they got the coffin up, opened it and found that the woman was still alive but half unconscious inside. Mrs Trundley told me that the woman lived for some years after this but was finally buried at the place. Telling this story to my mother, she said this sort of thing happened in the last century and a great uncle of hers was discovered to be alive in his coffin on the day of his funeral.

Later Mrs Trundley's sister, a Miss Legge, came to live with her. Miss Legge had been a dressmaker and although now elderly she still made blouses. She would often call me in for a chat. One day she wanted her button box turning out and the buttons sorted. This I did and threaded all that matched onto a length of cotton; she showed me how to tie a reef knot. I said, "I have started to have sewing lessons at school but I am no

good at making a knot in the cotton". She replied, "I'll show you how to make a knot whatever size you want". This done, she said, "Now, you make one". I did, and said, "Oh, that is easy". I have been making them her way ever since. Another day she said, "You are a good girl to listen to what I say and don't forget you can all through life learn something from the biggest fool". How right she was about that. She became very frail and died the following year. I was very sad. She somehow had taught me a lot.



Laura and her neighbour Mrs Trundley  
Photo courtesy Laura Husselbee, nee Dutton

Next to Mrs Trundley's there were two old thatched cottages. Mrs Mahon and family lived in one and Mrs Ball lived in the other one. When I was at school she was the oldest person in the village. Later her daughter, who had been a lady's maid, retired and came to look after her. I did errands for them until Mrs Ball died. The Dawson family lived in the end brick and tiled cottage until they moved to the caretaker's cottage at the Parish Room following the Chester family. Mr Dawson worked at the Water Pumping Station, Milford. Miss Ball moved into the Dawson's cottage. The Groucotts and a family who were new to the village occupied the two old thatched cottages at that time. Later the two old thatched cottages were pulled down and two bungalows were built in their place.



Photo of a painting of the two old cottages at Walton where Miss Ball and the Mahon family lived. From a painting owned by Marjorie Knight

During 1913 Lady Salt had alternations made to the rear of the cottages. Pigsties were pulled down, our larder was extended, a veranda, a new washhouse and a coalhouse built. A flush toilet was fixed. Lady Salt then wanted to pull down the old cottage occupied by Mrs Trundley and have a new house built to present to her butler, Mr John Beech, in recognition of his many years of loyal service to Sir Thomas Salt and herself. While it was being built Mrs Trundley and Jim moved to stay with the Smallwood family in Brocton. The work was given to two brothers named Potts who lived in the Haywoods. Mr Edwards was the labourer for them. The younger Potts brother and Mr Edwards had to leave the job for a time to do other peoples' repairs which left the older Mr Potts on his own working on the house. I spent all my spare time helping him. I carried water, mixed mortar, kept him supplied with bricks, took him drinks my mother made for him and talked to him when he ate his lunch. He said, "When the house is finished you will be able to say you helped to build it". I said, "That will be nice". It was 1914 when the house was completed.



Lady Salt had the cottage on the left built for her butler John Beech. It was completed in 1914 with a little help from Laura. The Duttons family lived next door and Thomas Fletcher the village blacksmith lived in the end cottage on the right. The cottage replaced an old cottage that once stood on its own to the left. Photo Jim Foley.

Mrs Trundley and her son Jim came back to live in the new house next to our house. The war had started. One day an envelope arrived addressed to Jim. When he opened it he found inside a white feather. It was a cruel thing to do. The sender believed Jim was a coward for not having enlisted to fight in the war. A few months later Jim was called up to join the Army and in a very short time was sent to France. A few months later his mother received notice from the War Office that he was missing. She came to my mother with the news and said, "I've a feeling Jim has been killed". Her feelings were confirmed a few days later when she received a letter telling her Jim had been killed in action. He was the first lad from Walton to be killed in the war. It was 1917. After Jim was killed my father did little jobs for her, chopping fire lighting sticks etc.

When I was fourteen years I received a very nice Valentine Card. Such loving remarks from XYZ, I could not think of anyone who admired me so much. At home a couple of years later they mentioned it was St. Valentine's Day. I said, "Do you remember when I received a Valentine Card when I was fourteen years?" My mother laughed. "He hasn't sent another one?" I said. "That card," she said, "was sent by Mrs Trundley". I had to laugh for she certainly had a sense of humour. My mother was very good to all close neighbours, in particular to Mrs. Trundley.

From the Prisoner of War Camp on Cannock Chase at Brocton well-behaved German prisoners were allowed out under guard to do work for those whose husbands and sons had been called up. Four German lads escorted by a British soldier were sent to Mrs. Trundley to dig the garden. She was making jugs of tea all day for them. Someone said to her, "I really don't know how you feel like doing it". She replied, "I cannot help but



do it. The German lads probably did not want to go to fight any more than my lad did". We all thought she was very brave over her loss when she said, "It had to be".

Following this Mrs Trundley was asked to let her sitting room and two bedrooms to a Camp Officer named Sandy who had three children. They were there over twelve months. When the two eldest Sandy boys became four and five years old I took them to the village school at Walton. It was discovered that their mother's father had been Stafford Education School Examiner. Mr Longson, the Headmaster was quite pleased about that. Mrs. Trundley continued to live at the cottage until she died.

About 1913 Mr Pierce, who had been gardener for Rev Inge and Mrs Pierce, who had been caretaker of the Parish Room, had two houses built at the corner of Kitlings Lane and Milford Road. When they were finished Mr and Mrs Pierce lived in one house and Mr. Everett, a decorator who worked for Mr Woods, lived in the other house. After the First World War ended Mr Pierce's son George opened a shop in one of them. Mr Pierce also owned two fields - one from St Thomas' Church to his house and the other along School Lane from the Parish Room. He also had a smallholding.

Lady Salt did not visit cottages in the village but in a quiet way was a splendid person. Her day started with prayers with the servants. She regularly attended Walton Church and every Sunday evening had the vicar and curate for dinner. She entertained quite a lot relatives and her family. Sadly she lost a son in the war. He had been friendly with Miss Cynthia Allsopp of Walton Bury. She lived there until she died and never married.

During the terrible 'flu epidemic of 1918 Mr Northwood, gardener for the Allsops, lost his wife Jane, leaving him with seven children, the youngest, twins Margaret and Ann, only two and a half years old. Mr Northwood devoted his time to his young family, doing the shopping etc. He was a really splendid man who, as I grew older, I admired very much. It was also sad to hear of so many old pupils being killed in the war. I frequently went with my parents to visit Baswich churchyard to care for the graves of my Dutton grandparents.

## MILFORD AND MILFORD COMMON

Milford Common was well known for the Easter, Whitsuntide and August Bank holiday weekend fairs. It was a busy weekend for villagers who provided teas for the visitors. Trainloads of people would come from Stafford to Milford Station. Lots of people would walk from Stafford. At the fair there would be swings, coconut shies, a large roundabout with a deafening musical arrangement, a smaller roundabout for children, gingerbread stalls, roll-a-penny stall and novelties for the kids.

Sometimes gypsies would settle on Milford Common for a few weeks and at times would come round the village selling clothes pegs, lace or artificial flowers. They could be very annoying, as also the occasional beggar could be. They would be dirty, perhaps wearing two or three jackets and, as many remarked, not looking under-nourished, they would ask for cheese or meat sandwiches. Jam or butter ones were not wanted. When the war started a lot of this kind of thing faded out.



Milford showing The Common and the Barley Mow Pub. Note the thatched cottage on the corner.  
Postcard Jim Foley

The Sister Dora Convalescent Home was behind Milford Common and was approached from the Brocton Road. Further up on the left was Milford Golf Club where Mr. and Mrs. Hutchinson were the caretakers. It was an impressive looking house constructed of wood with a thatched roof. It came to a sad end later when a spark from the chimney set fire to the thatch and it was burned down to the ground in a very short time. The general comment was, "What a shame but it is not surprising. The thatch

was of dried heathers". About the same time the Chetwynd family of Brocton Hall had died out. There had been a large sale of furniture and the house was empty. A golf course was made and so the members from Milford Golf Club moved there and it was then named Brocton Golf Club.

At the beginning of the century an auctioneer from Cannock had a large tent erected on the corner of Milford Common and held a sale of second-hand furniture occasionally. Customers had to stand. I remember my father buying an upholstered basket chair there. We had it for some years. Many years later when I mentioned where it had been bought my parents were surprised and said at the time I was barely two and a half years old.

There were some cottages close by The Barley Mow. One was occupied by P C Batkin. On the right side were cottages and Milford Post Office. At the corner a Miss Alderson had a small shop selling general groceries and sweets. She also looked after the bicycles of day-trippers who came to relax at Milford Common or walk on Cannock Chase.



Jenny Alderson's cottage, Milford at the corner of Main Road and Brocton Road. Across the road was the Barley Mow pub. Milford Common and Cannock Chase are in the background.

Several cottagers provided teas for these visitors and others who came by train. There was a large building used for concerts or dances. When the 1914-1918 War started and men were on the army camp at Brocton it was used mostly for refreshments and teas for soldiers. I remember a house being built facing Milford Common where later teas were provided and holiday guests accommodated. Turning left into Station Road you came to a row of railway employees' cottages and Milford Railway Station. The water pumping station was opposite the railway cottages. Mr Rowson was at the time Water Controller. Higher up the road was the Lodge, which led to Lord Lichfield's residence - Shugborough Hall.



**Milford Railway Station**  
Postcard Jim Foley

In 1915 we were invited by friends living in one of the railway cottages at Milford to have tea. On our arrival the friends said, "In a quarter of an hour we are expecting a train load of wounded soldiers travelling straight from the trenches. We have not been allowed to talk about it as a crowd is not wanted." Several Army and Red Cross Ambulances were already there waiting beside the railway line with about a dozen people standing around. When the train arrived, work began immediately transporting the wounded soldiers up to the camp hospital at Brocton. They were mostly stretcher cases. I thought, "If this is war how terrible it is." A lady standing next to me said, "Of course, we do not have to be upset. There is a war on". I replied, "I know, but they are someone's son or father". I was just thirteen years old.

Going back up the Milford road towards Walton past the Barley Mow you eventually came to Levett's Dairy Farm on the right and Dairy Cottage opposite. Further up towards Walton on the right hand side was the Coffee House run by Mrs Dodd where my parents first met.





**The Coffee House, Main Road, Milford where Laura's parents first met. It is now split into houses. At one time it was Dame School run by Mrs Betty Dean. Photo Jim Foley**



## BROCTON AND THE ARMY CAMP

Brocton was a smallish village with a post office and a shop. At the Mission Room meetings and church services were held. There were several small farms and cottages scattered about. The district nurse lived there. The area altered very considerably when World War One started. The Army authorities decided that Cannock Chase would be suitable for a soldiers' camp and the first hut was erected near the village. We went one Sunday to see it. The next Sunday when we went there were thirty huts. After that there were countless huts all over the Chase. An army hospital and a camp for prisoners of war faced Satnal Hill. A railway cutting was made from the railway line at Milford to Brocton Camp so that food and supplies could be taken from Milford Station. It was a terrible place for men in the winter of 1918 when 'flu spread rapidly and caused many deaths. A military cemetery was consecrated for burials on Cannock Chase for soldiers from Commonwealth countries and German prisoners of war who had died.



The Green, Brocton

Families around the villages were asked to entertain some of our own countrymen. We had a Corporal and a Sergeant for one evening a week. In civilian life the Corporal was a coachman to a family living in West Ealing. The Sergeant said he worked in Hartley's jam factory in London and that he made the wooden pips they put in the raspberry jam. We didn't believe him, but that was all we could get from him about his job. The Corporal wrote after the war to say that they had both survived and that they were back home and at their old jobs.

Route marches for the soldiers on Cannock Chase took place during the summer months. On these marches the soldiers would cover ten or twelve miles. An army vehicle would accompany them in case any fell out from exhaustion. Outside our house was a favourite place for the officers to choose for a fall-out session for twenty or thirty minutes. In full uniform with rifles and backpack the soldiers certainly needed a rest. We kept a new bath ready to take out, filled with six gallons of water and a few cups so the soldiers could help themselves. They were certainly thankful, as there would be another three or four miles to march back to Brocton Camp. It all seemed stupid to me. Winter activities for the soldiers were held on the Camp. Mock fighting they called it, and it took place from about nine o'clock at night to three o'clock in the morning. It was a terrible noise, the whole area would be alight, guns going off and bangs of one sort or another. It was impossible to get sleep.

At one stage of the war there was a queer lot of New Zealand soldiers on the Camp. They would go to all the pubs in the evenings, turn the landlords out and drink all the beer. The military police and our police were hopeless trying to deal with them. The New Zealanders also had gambling sessions on the lower part of Milford Common. Women were afraid to go out. Everyone was most thankful when they were moved on. There were other New Zealand soldiers who came later and who were better behaved.

## MY FIRST JOB

### Working for Mr R W Hourd of the Staffordshire Newsletter

In 1916 after the school summer holiday I returned to school and went into Standard Seven. I was thirteen years old and doing more or less the same lessons I had done the year before. I decided to start evening classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Stafford Technical College, to learn Pitmans Shorthand, typewriting and business methods. During the third week I was approached by the business methods teacher who said that Mr Hourd of the Stafford Newsletter had asked him if he could recommend an office girl. He suggested that I go along and see him there and then. Mr R W Hourd offered me a job at 5/- a week starting on Monday. The next morning, a Friday, I told Mr Longson, the head teacher who said he was sad to see me go. He would have liked me to have taken further school examinations. But I was bored with the repetition at school and the idea of earning money was a great attraction.

The following Monday I was at work. With the war being on and Mr. Hourd losing men who had to join up, it was amazing how he survived in business. Thus at thirteen years old I began the daily round of cycling from Walton to the office of the Staffordshire Newsletter in Mill Street, Stafford. Being inexperienced I had not fully enquired what duties were to be but I knew that Mr Hourd had lost most of his workers when they called to service with the Armed Forces. I was firstly sent to see a doctor in Lichfield Road to be examined to see if I was fit for factory work. Glancing at the book of forms, I thought to myself that office girls must also be covered by the factory regulations. The doctor asked me what illnesses I had suffered as a child and I replied whooping cough and measles. He later signed the forms that I was fit and I returned to the office.

The first task I was given was to perforate some raffle tickets for a charity and then number them. I soon learned to deal with the people coming in to the office with their advertisements for the Newsletter and handling replies received to box numbers. Sometimes I had to run errands like fetching pots of glue from Dales Ironmongers shop in Greengate Street. On Fridays there was the folding of the Newsletter to be done. The normal print run was seven thousand copies. In those days the Newsletter was a free paper and eight boys made deliveries to every house in the town and some were also sent to outlying areas. The delivery boys came for their bags full of newspapers on Friday evenings and again on Saturday mornings and were paid two shillings each for the work.

Mr Hourd had originally worked for the Staffordshire Advertiser and later started his own printing business and then production of the Staffordshire Newsletter, a free newspaper financed by its many advertisements. After the War broke out in 1914 many

employees of both the newspapers were being called up for service in the Armed Forces. As things got more desperate Mr Hourd found it necessary to co-operate with the Advertiser management and they shared the reporting of local events, council meetings, court proceedings etc. Shortly after I joined the Newsletter two employees Mr Tunnicliffe and Mr Watts left for the Army leaving only Mr Clay and Mr Hourd to keep the business going. They both worked very long hours and I did my best to assist them. Mr Clay was exempt from being called up. He was an excellent all round worker who could tackle any type of printing work. Sadly in 1916 Mr Clay was taken ill with a very bad type of flu that was going round in 1916. Pneumonia set in and he died. That left Mr Hourd and me to carry on the business.

With the mounting loss of lives on the Western Front the mood of everyone was changing. At this time Mr Hourd wrote a hymn for an Intercession Service to the tune of "O God our help in ages past." This hymn we printed and distributed to local churches including St Thomas's which Mr Hourd attended and sang in the choir there. Mr Hourd tried everywhere to get help. Most men had been called up or were engaged in work that was needed to help the war, factory work and farming, and his own children were too young; his son A E Hourd who later became mayor of Stafford was still at the Grammar School. Eventually, he employed a boy who had just left school named Bob Bennett who lived in Tenterbanks and trained him to do some printing on the small machines.

One day I was busy in the office when suddenly Bob shouted out "Laura, Laura. Come here, come here." I found him in the printing room sat on a bale of paper with blood pouring from his right hand. He had caught his hand in the printing machine and it was cut in all directions. I raced upstairs to tell Mr Hourd and he shouted "Get some water, Laura". I thought he wanted to clean up Bob's hand to see the extent of the injury. I came back with a bowl of water. Angrily Mr Hourd shouted "To drink. To drink" and was very cross so I fetched a glass of water for Bob. This was the only occasion Mr Hourd ever got cross with me. Bob was taken to Stafford Infirmary where he had his hand stitched. He was off work for a long time as it was his right hand that had been injured.

Mr Hourd put me on the printing machines to take Bob's place. My mother was very annoyed when I told her and was worried I might be mutilated in some way. I was only fourteen. She said I should look for another job. My working hours were from 8.45 a.m. until 6 p.m. and on Tuesdays and Thursdays my evening classes at the Technical College were from 7 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. In the winter in the dark my cycling journeys home to Walton were quite frightening. I was frightened especially going past the Radford Inn where often soldiers from the Brocton Army Camp were outside drinking and made remarks as I went up Radford Bank pushing my bike up the steep hill. On

several occasions we heard that they threw the landlord out and took over the pub for the night and no one seemed to be able to do anything about it.

The winter weather was very severe in those days, especially the deep snows we had. My father often woke me at 6.30 to say, "Get up, you have to walk to work this morning, there is six inches of snow". That did not please me, having three miles to trudge through it with a bitter wind too. I often said, "Why can't we go to live in the town?" It was about this time I got to know Edward Husselbee, known as Jack, who was Lady Salt's footman when she lived at the big house in the village known as Walton on the Hill. We often met when posting letters when he was sixteen and I was fifteen. It was some years after that we started walking out together, a seven year courtship.



Edward 'Jack' Husselbee, Lady Salt's Footman, aged 16 at about the time Laura right aged 15 started going out with him. Photo courtesy Laura Husselbee, nee Dutton.

One day Mr Hourd asked me what time my evening classes started. When I replied that it was 7 p.m. he said, "Oh well, we will read the proofs between 6 and 7 p.m". No mention was made of any extra hours pay above my five shillings per week. There was only one chair in the office. He sat on the chair with the newly printed sheet and I leaned against the office partition holding the written script. I would verify what had been written and he would check for mistakes and omissions. So these were my extra tasks on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I did feel sorry for Mr Hourd struggling to keep his business going during the Great War. I often did not tell my parents about the tasks I had been asked to do. They frequently pointed out that there must be other office



jobs I could get. From my five shillings per week I kept one shilling for myself usually to spend on stockings and the rest I gave to my mother.

When young Bob Bennett returned back to work he was put to printing the Newsletter on the big printing machine but was not very reliable and frequently inattentive to his work. On one occasion I remember he was slopping on the printers ink in great uneven blobs. I remonstrated with him that this would cause dark patches in the printing and he replied that the rollers would spread it which plainly was not true. He would not co-operate and told me to feed in the paper while he worked the machine. Some time afterwards I shouted to him "Stop. Stop. You are printing the same page of the newspaper on both sides of the sheet." Hundreds of newspaper pages were ruined. Mr Hourd could hardly trust him to do work properly. He showed little interest in learning to do the job correctly which meant I often had to leave the office room and do the printing work for Mr Hourd in the machine room.

Eventually after two years at the Stafford Newsletter office I became fed up and began to look for another job.

One day Mr Clarke, chief clerk at the solicitors firm Hand, Morgan & Co. in Martin Street came into the Newsletter office to place an advertisement in the paper for a junior clerk about sixteen years old. Although I was only fifteen at the time I told him I would like to apply for the job. He said I should come along to his office for an interview and to submit a written application. This I did in my lunch hour and a week later I learned I had got the job at twelve shilling a week. Thus it was I left the Staffordshire Newsletter. I was replaced there by Miss Weatherer whose father had been driver for Lady Salt at Walton on the Hill.

By this time I had become very proficient with the typewriter and my attendance at Evening Classes had given me a good knowledge of modern office procedures. Very soon in my new post I progressed to being asked to type wills, court documents, copying letters, deeds, and covenants, affidavits etc. On learning what the male clerks had been paid before they were called up for War Service I asked for an increase in wages and was immediately put up to sixteen shillings per week. Bliss. I could now afford to purchase good quality clothes to wear at work and for Sunday best.

There were advertisements for polling clerks and vote counters for the 1918 elections. I wanted to earn extra money so I asked Mr Clarke if he would put my name forward as I had learned what pay was offered for acting as Poll Clerk and for counting the votes. Although I was only fifteen years old he agreed saying that I was quite capable of carrying out the duties. So on Election Day I cycled early to Cannock and acted as Polling Clerk. I was paid £3 for the day and on the next day earned another £3 for sorting and counting the voting papers and dealing with the postal votes of servicemen

who were away from home. I was very pleased and bought myself a very good costume that lasted me for four years.

In 1920 a Mr Lewis returned to work in the office of Hand, Morgan & Co. having been away as an officer in the Royal Navy during the war. Shortly afterwards he told me that he wanted to set up a private typewriting school business while he still continued to work at the solicitors firm. He asked me if I would like to manage it and the pay would be thirty shillings a week. I gladly accepted as that was nearly twice as I was earning at Hand Morgan & Co. It was the best time of my life.

There were servicemen returning from the Forces who had had previously worked in offices but had no experience of typewriting or the use of other new office equipment which had been developed while they had been away. They were very keen to learn. Businessmen also came to select suitable typewriting machines for their businesses. Frequently I had to travel by rail to Birmingham to select and buy suitable machines from a large wholesaler there. I would return loaded up each time. The business prospered for a couple of years but then a severe depression hit trade. Mr Lewis moved my assistant Winnie and myself to an office above a tobacconist shop. Steadily the turnover in the shop declined and as the general slump got worse Mr Lewis advised me to look for other employment. I went for an interview with an accountant in Martin Street but made the mistake of not showing enough enthusiasm for figure work so I didn't get the job. Next I got an interview with a Mr Miller who did architectural work for Dormans who were expanding their factory at Littleworth after the war. He asked me if I would be willing to work half time for fifteen shillings a week. I had to accept, as there was no unemployment benefit at that time. I stayed there for a few months.

My friend Edith Parson told me that she was leaving her job as a dental nurse to Mr. A.E. Henry, a well-known dental surgeon in Stafford, who had built up a thriving practice. His father was the headmaster of St. Leonards School in St. Leonards Avenue, Stafford. Although I had no experience in the nursing aspects of the work there was a certain amount of office work required. I went along for interview and was offered the job at twenty-five shillings a week.



Laura Dutton in 1923 aged 21 with her bike by Mr Fletcher's blacksmith's shop.

After a difficult start we developed an excellent working relationship and I stayed working for him for the next four years. During that time I became engaged to Jack Husselbee. My usual half-day break was on a Thursday afternoon but often I was asked to work my afternoon off when clients like the Countess of Lichfield and her family from Shugborough Hall were due to have treatment. There would be no other patients attending that afternoon. I liked Lord Lichfield very much but not his wife. His name was Thomas Edward Anson and he was the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Lichfield. I remember their daughter Lady Betty Anson was beautifully dressed as a child. Little Lord John Anson their son had polio and his parents were very concerned about him. The Ansons' governess and chauffeur were very nice people. Miss Akroyd, housekeeper to the colonel who lived at Bishton Hall, was a frequent visitor to the practice for dental treatment. When she heard I was to be married she asked for my address and later I received a registered parcel from her containing two cut-glass salt cellars with silver rims as a wedding present.



Laura Dutton in her dental nurse's uniform circa 1923.

Photo courtesy Philip Husselbee and probably taken by John Beech.

Mr. Henry was a generous employer who often took Jack and I on outings in his car a Bentley Tourer. We often went touring with him in Derbyshire and we frequently visited Smedleys Hydro at Matlock where we would have a splendid tea.



Laura with her friends on a picnic at Seven Springs, Milford on Whit Monday 1920.

L to R: Lily Pierce, Ted Winn, Harry Pierce, May Pierce with Laura Dutton behind.

Sometimes as a reward for extra work I did Mr Henry would take us to the theatre in Wolverhampton. I left Mr Henry's employ to get married.

On 6th June 1927 I was married to Jack Husselbee at Walton Church.



Laura and Jack Husselbee on their wedding day June 6<sup>th</sup> 1927.  
Photo Laura Husselbee

Our only son Philip was born on July 7, 1930. When Philip was a toddler we used to visit John Beech in his home next to our parents. His house was full of beautiful wooden toys that he collected and he used to let Philip play with them. I have a photograph of Philip sitting in a large wooden toy train engine. Milford Common was a popular place to visit in the summer and we would go there with Philip.





**Laura Husselbee and her son Philip at Milford circa 1931**



**Philip Husselbee circa 1932 as a toddler with one of John Beech's toy engines.  
This photo is probably one of the many taken by John Beech**

My parents left Walton in 1932. Lady Salt by that time had died in her London home and her family decided to sell Fletcher's and my parents' cottages. Mr William Edwards, a farmer in Baswich Lane, bought our cottage saying he wanted it for a farm labourer to live in and gave a notice to quit to my parents. He did not have a farm labourer living in it after my parents left to live at No 6 Silkmore Lane, Silkmore, Stafford. It is now No. 13. Sadly, six years later, my mother died aged 63 years. My parents had lived in the cottage at Walton for thirty-one years.

John Beech died on December 4th 1951 and left the following bequest published in the Staffordshire Advertiser: "Memorial Seat - a new seat for Weeping Cross Garden of Remembrance has been purchased from a small legacy left to the vicar, Rev W Merlin Davies, for the purchase by the late Mr John Beech in memory of many happy days spent nearby. It is to be erected shortly." In 1990 the seat was still there.

Jack and I celebrated sixty years of marriage on our Diamond Wedding Anniversary on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1987. Sadly Jack died just under a year later on March 15, 1988 aged 87. He is buried in the churchyard at Abbots Bromley.

### FOOTNOTE

Mrs Husselbee liked her independence and continued to live on her own at Nursery Farm, Heatley near Abbots Bromley. She could not be persuaded to go into old people's home. Neighbours, friends and family helped her to attend a number of clubs in Uttoxeter and the surrounding area including a club for the Deaf on Thursdays 11 a.m to 3.30 p.m., a club for the Blind on alternate Mondays 11 a.m. to 3.45 p.m., Abbots Bromley Evergreen Club on the other Mondays 1.30 - 4 p.m. But after a fall at her home where she lay overnight helpless on the floor of her kitchen she gave in to pressure from her son to go into a retirement home in Abbots Bromley. Fortunately she did not suffer any serious injuries in her fall. She fell near the fridge and was able to help herself to food and drink. Sadly Laura's son Philip Husselbee died on June 17, 2000 after a short illness. He is buried at Blithfield. He was 69 years old.

Laura Husselbee died on July 25, 2001 aged 99. She is buried in the churchyard at Abbots Bromley.



Some older Walton residents at the Down Memory Lane meeting at Walton 1991.  
Albert Fradley, Marjorie Knight, nee Malpass, Laura Husselbee, nee Dutton, Ann Bates, nee Northwood, Bill Dawson  
Photo Jim Foley.

In 2014 Beryl Holt, Chairman of Berkswich Local History group reported that the seat paid for by John Beech "was in a terrible state and the plaque has suffered some damage. Working with the local borough Councillor we acquired a new seat but the plaque would not fit on it due to the curve of the design. It is now on a seat opposite The Springs, Walton on the Hill near the entrance to Walton Lodge so as Baswich House has gone, it is close to where John Beech ended his days. At the moment, until everyone is aware of the plaque, we have put up a little notice saying who John Beech was and where the plaque has come from".

## Blacksmith who chose a red hot cure for sciatica

IN these days of technological advance in the world of medicine, a story has come to light which suggests that 'new methods might not always be the most effective ones.

Late in the 19th Century a blacksmith from Walton-on-the-Hill was so tortured by sciatica that he resorted to a method of cure so drastic that it was only ever considered for use on horses – the use of a red hot iron drawn across the affected area to "kill" the nerve.

In his bed suffering from a bad attack of sciatica, blacksmith Thomas Fletcher summoned a Doctor Weston, from Stafford.

On his arrival the doctor jokingly referred to the very primitive method of curing horses suffering the complaint – only to hear Fletcher beg for him to use that treatment.

Doctor Weston tried to make Fletcher see reason but the blacksmith was adamant. He would suffer anything to be put out of his agony. Finally the doctor agreed to the "shock" treatment and drew a red hot bar TWICE across the affected nerve as Fletcher lay unflinching.

The blacksmith's sciatica was completely cured, with only two livid scars remain-

ing to remind him of his ordeal, and he lived to the ripe old age of 98. Mr Fletcher's grandson, Mr Lewis F. Foster, lives at Sandon Bank, near Stafford.

Reference to this remarkable tale can be

found in a book entitled "The Friendship of Can-nock Chase," published in the 1930s (now out of print). A copy of the book can be found on the shelves of the reference section in the County Library.

The accompanying pic-

ture was taken around 1895 and shows Thomas Fletcher, sitting in cart, and his apprentice Ben Tooth. The photograph belongs to Mr Tooth's daughter, Mrs Winnie Hubbert, of Sherbrook Close, Brocton.

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# Signalman's Diary

## Third book of reminiscences out

**T**he old adage "Out of small acorns mighty oaks grow" is certainly true of the recording of reminiscences in villages near Stafford.

Jim Foley is currently Area Youth

and Community Education worker at Walton-on-the-Hill. But while teaching at Walton High School Stafford he invited fourth year pupils, as part of a community project, to invite people to talk about their memories of Walton.

That was in March 1990. About 25 people turned up, brought old photos and reminisced about the past — which was recorded by the pupils on video.

### Reprinted

From that stemmed a book of memoirs by octogenarian Mrs Laura Husselbee (nee Dutton) Down By Jacob's Ladder, published in October 1991 and twice reprinted; and in September 1992, a book from Mrs Marjorie Knight (nee Malpass) Before the Houses Came, was also very successful.

(Two local history groups have also evolved: Phoenix 50-plus and Berkswich Local History Group.)

Now comes a third, well-illustrated book, a collection of memories of from Brocton, Milford and Walton. There are 10



•Samuel Woods, plumber and decorator, with Bill, Rita and George Woods, outside the rear of the old Walton Post Office.

contributors, and the reminiscences are collated by Jim Foley.

Harvey Samuel Woods, born in 1932 in the old Post Office in Walton village, recalls the setting up of Walton Garage after the First World War and — during the Second World War — his father building up engines for Spitfires and testing them

at Aero Alvis in Stafford.

He recounts the wonderful parties held by the servants in the Servants' Hall at Walton Bury when the Allsopps were away on a grand tour of Europe.

Joan Pickerin (nee Robinson) explains the derivation of the name Walton-on-the Hill: "It is said that a signpost by the

village school with the name Walton on the Hill was made by Lady Salt to direct visitors to her home.

"It would appear that over the years people began to think the sign post referred to the village and so it became known as Walton on the Hill. It is only the older residents who now know

the village as Walton."

The book, price £3.50, is available from Bookland in Stafford, and newsagents in the Brocton, Milford and Walton areas.



Baswich Church, STAFFORD.

Baswich Church, Baswich Lane, Stafford where Laura's Dutton grandparents are buried in the churchyard.



Jack Husselbee



Laura Dutton

New Lane, Walton 1920



Laura's parents out for a Sunday walk with friend Emily Green in 1918.



Laura Dutton in 1922





