



Look Back at Langham

The items in this publication originally appeared in
The Langham News between 1989 - 1991.

Mrs. Rita Duffin, aged 87 wrote her reminiscences in a very
clear hand in an exercise book. They appeared in The
Langham News entitled "Mrs. Duffins Notebook".

Tony Wright, not only put Langham "On The Map" but also
produced the delightful drawings.

Anon we now know to be Audrey Hubbard.

George Weston and Ben Walker recounted their memories
to Julian Jenkins who produced them in written form.

Look Back at Langham was published in October 1991 for a
village history exhibition of the same name by Mike Frisby.

Gillian V. Frisby

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The editor of The Langham News

The Bells in the Steeple

Rita Duffin

The Church bells were quite important in our lives. They rang for half an hour before morning and evening service, including the five-minute bell for the laggards. They rang out for weddings; they tolled for funerals; also the day of death, one for a child, two for a female and three for a male. On the death of important people a muffled peal was rung the following Sunday. They rang six weeks before Christmas, once a week, and for Christmas morning service. They rang the old year out and the new year in.

The church clock ruled our own clocks; it chimed the quarters and struck the hours.



Our Theatrical Life

Rita Duffin

When Mrs. Dawson lived in the Old Hall, she organised some good concerts, her family being theatre people. Also the school children performed pantomimes. I remember well *"The Ten Little Nigger Boys"*, *"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs"*, and *"Cinderella"*. They ran for three nights, and a party at Christmas followed - a huge Christmas tree, with good presents for every child in the village.

After the First World War, we got our concert party together, called *"The Blue Bottles"* - our opening tune being *"Where do the flies go in the Wintertime?"*.



Naming Orchard Road

Rita Duffin

"*Old Orchard*" was a dear little field with a footpath through from Middle Street (now Well Street) to Back Side {Lane} (now Manor Lane), belonging to Mr. Herbert Hubbard of The Berries (now Cotton Cottage). He grazed it in summertime with a few bullocks. It had three pear trees in it, from which we often "scrumped" a few. Sometimes, on a Saturday morning, I would walk with my father through it to the field opposite, where the reservoir was situated. It supplied the Brewery with water, and my father being the "*Brewer*" for over 50 years, inspected it regularly.

Also in Old Orchard was a barn in which a supply of coal was stored, in World War I, by order of Mr. Owen Smith of Langham Hall, and on Saturday afternoons the cottagers went in with wheel barrows and trucks to fetch their weekly ration of coal. Mr. George Ruddle supplied his employees, and this was very much valued owing to the shortage.

When the councillors came to name the road, I met them, and asked if they would please include the name "*Orchard*". Mr. Cyril Squires of The Limes agreed, and it was called "*Orchard Road*" in 1964.

May Day

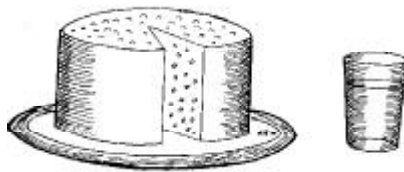
Rita Duffin

May Day was a gala day for us. We had a holiday that day. The girls collected flowers together for a garland. It was organised by the school, and a queen was chosen.

We paraded around the village and Ranksborough Hall, singing; after dinner we went to Barleythorpe, where the housekeeper for Lord Lonsdale would reward us with cake and lemonade.

The year I was queen, the lady from the Old Hall lent us her donkey and cart and, being a chilly day, she placed a white fur cape around my shoulders.

Tea and sports, and scrambles for sweets, finished off our day.



The Parish Room

Rita Duffin

The Parish Room was an attic kind of room, above an outbuilding attached to the back of the then vicarage, up a wooden staircase - a much used room. On Sunday morning from 10 to 10.30, was a scripture half-hour for toddlers, who then went on to Church service 11a.m., and were allowed to leave before the sermon.

On Mondays from 12 to 12.30 the Vicar sat there at a table and marked the club cards - a clothing club into which one could put 1/- or 6d a week. It was due out in January and was spent at H.E. George's of Oakham, who gave a shilling in the pound discount. Also there was a Pig Club, saving for next winter's bacon.

Our Girls' Friendly Society met from 5 to 6 p.m., run by a dressmaker and a farmer's daughter every Monday evening, and they taught us to sew and make useful garments. We had an annual sale, the money going to the Girls Friendly Society fund, Church of England, which helped girls who had to leave home and go into service. It kept in touch with them, so that they were not neglected or lonely.

Langham Feast

Rita Duffin

This was a big occasion for most of us. It was midsummer, the church was decorated and hay strewn on the floor, this being an old tradition dating from when a lady was revived from fainting by the smell of new-mown hay. She donated a piece of land and a charity was formed.

A cricket match was arranged for the next day, teas and refreshments helping the fun; and there was a dance in the evening. This was held in the dining-room of the Noel Arms, with piano and fiddles, and in later years it was in the Institute (now the Village Hall). Home made wine and cheesecake were served in most homes to the families.

The fair visited the village, always in Nourish's Feastfield, now called "*Fairfield Close*".



One Summer Day

Rita Duffin

It was a warm midsummer's day in 1917. I talked with Mr. Eric Munday about this one, and he said *"Yes, I remember it well."*

We were both thirteen years old. It was the dinner hour and we were at home, when the noise of a plane going over (a very rare thing to happen) made us prick up our ears. When we realised it was very low and coming lower, in trouble, we ran out to watch. We were madly excited as it came down and landed in Sharrad's Field up the Burley Road. We were all so busy examining it and touching it, when we realised that another one was coming down - no doubt to help his friend - but all their efforts failed to get it up.

Eventually a message was sent, no doubt from Harewood House (the residence of Mr. George Ruddle) and another plane came down with repair parts.

Fancy, three biplanes down in one field! When the propellers started turning we all stood behind to let the wind nearly take us off our feet.

We all played truant that afternoon from school, but we were not punished - only had to write a composition about it.

Life has changed enormously since those days, but I'm grateful for good memories and friends to share them with.

The Harvest Festival

Rita Duffin

The Harvest Festival was an important feature in the village life, the village only being about a third of the size it is now.

We proudly took our fathers' gifts of vegetables and produce; most people had a good allotment in those days and there was no shortage of gifts.

The children collected rose-hips and conkers, which they threaded on long strings to festoon the pillars and hang from the gas lights. The church would be packed, with more chairs being brought in. The choir sang anthems.

On the Monday evening following, all the produce was auctioned in the school, the proceeds going to the church fund. A vicar from another village would help officiate in the service.

The auctioneer on the Monday would be Mr. Dick Baker, a born comedian, providing a very entertaining evening.



A story for the children

Rita Duffin

When I started at school more than eighty years ago, Langham School was the bungalow now standing at the school corner.

We only had the small, square yards at the back of each school for our playgrounds, but we could run and play on the road as there was no traffic then - only the occasional horse and cart. So we chalked our squares on the pavement to play "*Hopscotch*". We skipped with our ropes, the boys played with marbles and could spin their tops, all on the road, and we played "*tick*" across the road.

One day, though, there was an accident; a boy was knocked down by a horse and cab, and he bore an ugly scar across his forehead for ever afterwards. His name was George Gosling and he was eventually killed in the First World War (his photograph is in Langham Church with all the other boys lost in that war.)

After the accident, a piece of land was presented to our school by Lady Ancaster to make a playground. It was a portion of Mantles paddock, of Yew Tree Farm, and it had a good boarded fence about five feet high all round with stout double doors to lock at sunset and open at sunrise. It was gravelled with lovely gravel - lots of nice pebbles in it. I loved sorting them out and playing with them.

Our mothers got busy fund-raising to furnish it; we had two good seats, two seesaws - one for the small children

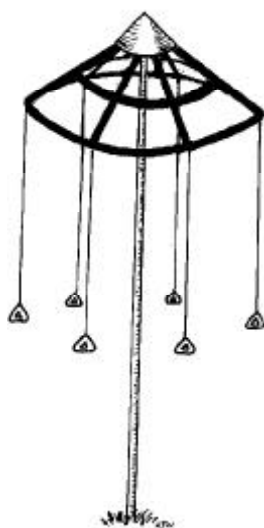
and one for the older ones - but our pride and joy was the "*Giant Stride*". This consisted of a tall pole about twelve feet high with a metal umbrella-shaped top, and with six ropes attached, fitted with handles to hold onto. We took long skipping strides, and when

it got revolving around well we could swing out, making real giant strides.

I've never seen another in my life. I remember searching Wicksteed Park with my own children, but although there was every kind of swing we never found a "*Giant Stride*".

The playground was opened with pomp and sports, and we won prizes. I won a book all about farm animals - I was seven years old.

The present school has grown from that, and now takes up the whole of that paddock.



The Rifle Range

Rita Duffin

It sat squat in its field an the Melton Road - alas now all built on. I've watched all our field surroundings go like that. Well, the Rifle Range was the highlight for many men, with competitions, etc., around the county.

I remember my father winning many times, and showing us his trophies. Several enamelled medals I gave to my grandsons, and they wore them on chains around their necks. Another was a silver horseshoe which my daughter wore on a silver chain. I gave my eldest grandson a silver spoon an his christening day, and there are still three silver teaspoons in existence, all engraved with "*E. Bryant*" and the years when he had won them.



Mr. Richard Westbrook Baker

Rita Duffin

He was called '*Dick*' Baker in the village, a typical English gentleman and sportsman who served in the Boer War.

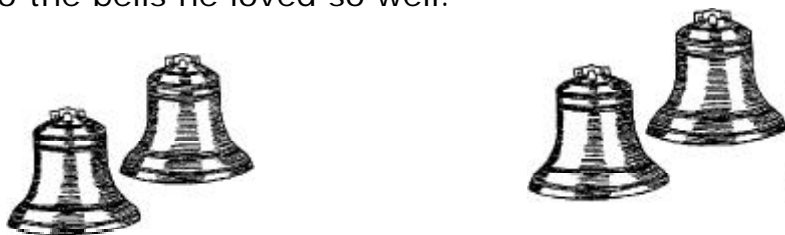
He was born and bred in Langham and was often alluded to as "*the village squire*". He lived in Briggins Cottage.

His grandfather built the brewery in about 1864. The family at that time lived in the Old Hall. Also he built the row of eight cottages known as brewery row, for the workers. His father hit on hard times and the property dwindled.

Dick loved the church bells, and when a lad, I understand, he rang out tunes on them. A staunch churchman, he sang in the choir regularly. He was the auctioneer for the sale of harvest festival produce, with lots of wit and jokes.

I remember the choir suppers, where he was the life of the party; a great comedian, and he also sang well, such songs as "*Boiled Beef and Carrots*" and "*The Grandfather Clock*".

He died suddenly in 1920, aged 64, and was buried near to the bells he loved so well.



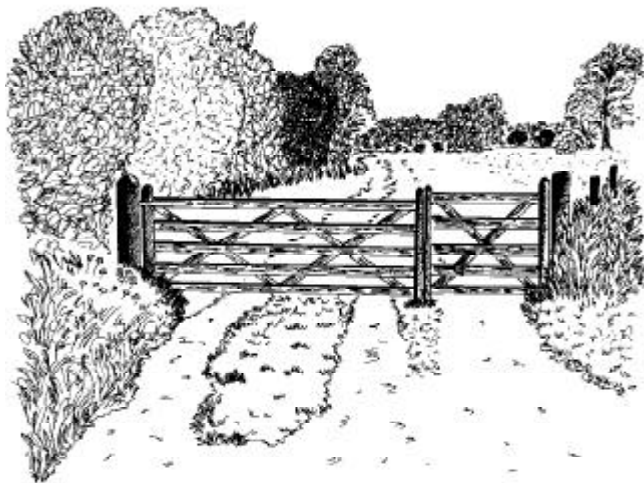
A Day Spent up the Pastures

Rita Duffin

Everybody loved the open pastures where the cows grazed free. We'd take food and water, and stay up there all day, playing at "houses", "shops" etc., under our own favourite trees, making luscious-looking mud pies trimmed with hips and haws and pretty leaves. We'd jump the dykes and fish with a net and a jam-jar.

The gates on the Cold Overton Road would be manned by the boys on hunting days, and they would gather pennies thrown to them by the mounted horsemen and ladies. Mill Hill is at the top, where we gathered wild flowers and looked for totty grass and birds' nests.

At 4 o'clock the farmers fetched the cows home to milk, but odd ones were milked on the pastures and we would often get a drink of milk, straight from the cow.



Old School Row

Rita Duffin

The "*Old School Row*" was a row of five white, thatched stone cottages, standing where "Old Hall Cottage" stands now. In the first one lived an old couple with their deformed son; he had a humped back and his legs were useless. He had a wooden hut, where he did little repair jobs and framed pictures for his living. His name was Elijah. On Sunday evenings, just before service at church, the big doors would be opened and a ramp put to the step, and in would rattle Elijah. He managed his chair excellently, dashing forwards then reversing smartly to the back of the church.

In the second cottage was Elijah's sister with her husband, no children. In number three was a very old lady I used to thread needles for, and sometimes run errands, like a message for one of her rabbits to be killed for her Sunday's dinner.

Number four family worked at the brewery, and at number five was a large family also employed at the brewery. They had a dog named "*Rattler*", and one day during a thunderstorm a thunderbolt came down the chimney, singeing the hair off Rattler's back as he lay under the table. It then passed out of the open door.

Two more thatched, stone cottages stood in their gardens and had orchards. In one was an old friend of ours whom we visited often; she alluded to one of her apple trees as her Butter apples, but I've never come across them since. We used to have tea in her

rose-garden, and one day I sat on a bumble-bee that, too, lives in my memory. In 1965 my stepsister spent Langham Feast weekend with me. We visited the Old Hall gardens and had tea, and the gardener took pictures of us standing on a mound which he said was the rubble from the old cottage. There were roses in bloom around, and I have the pictures now.



Putting Langham on the Map

Tony Wright

While we can never be quite sure when someone actually put quill to parchment or pen to paper to direct friends or business to Langham, one thing that is certain is when Langham first appeared on an officially recognised map.

The foundation of regional map making was laid in the 16th Century under Queen Elizabeth I. With the reformation and dissolution in 1536, lands owned by monasteries were either confiscated or redistributed to a new landed gentry who wanted plans to establish title to the estates as soon as possible. Furthermore, with invasion frequently expected, plans of the countryside and cities were also needed.

One response by the Crown and government, along with the influence of William Cecil (Lord Burghley) who was Lord High Commissioner and Secretary of State, was to commission Christopher Saxton to carry out a survey of the country.

The result of his endeavours was the first National County Atlas which he duly published in 1579. Rutland appeared of course but, because of its size, had to share a page with some of its adjacent counties.

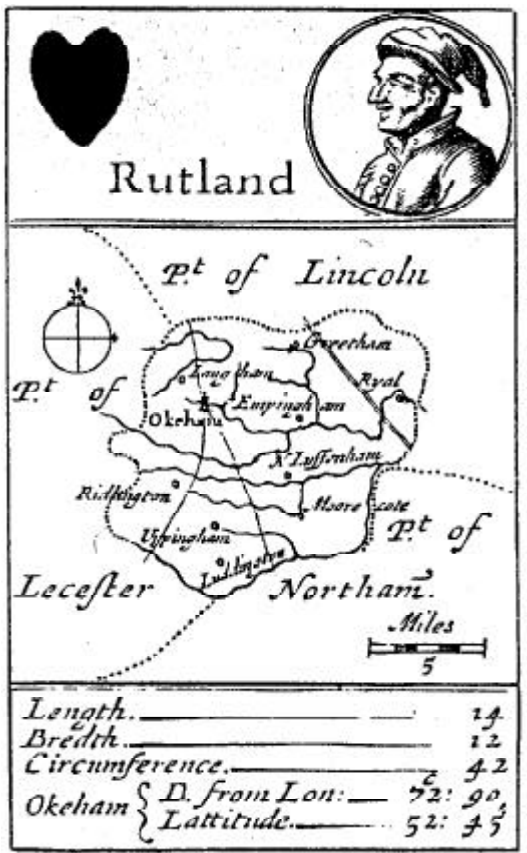
Langham with a symbol indicating that it had a Parish church, was now officially on the map. Our near neighbours of Ashwell, Berlythorp and Burlye also featured although the spelling of the latter two was not

as it is today. Indeed in those days names were not consistent, and varied from map to map.

During the next few years many cartographers took up the new demand. Among these was William Camden who first portrayed each county as an individual map. However, his spelling did not improve as Berleythorp now changed to Berkthorpe! In 1611 John Speed brought out his first edition map of Rutland, and it was at this time that Rankesborowe Hill appeared for the first time. Maps were now developing fast and by the 17th Century there was a need by travellers and the post to have a clear indication of roads. It was John Ogilby who produced the first series of road maps as a series of strips or scrolls in 1675. The scroll containing Langham showed it to be 96 miles from London. Langham was depicted with a stone bridge over the brook, on the road from Oakeham to Melton, at a point near Cold Orton road. At Berleythorp a wood bridge over a brook was shown near where a road from Burley to Braunston crossed. Rankesburow Hill also featured.

From this time the representation of roads became increasingly important and they were added to those plates by Saxton and Speed still being used. Indeed we have to thank Ogilby for the statute mile of 1760 yards being generally accepted, as up to then three different lengths of English mile were in use. Ogilby's measurements were later used also for setting up of milestones along the post roads.

Finally, in 1676 Robert Morden produced not only maps but a set of playing cards with a miniature map of a county on each card. Rutland was the Knave of Hearts and out of ten villages and towns portrayed, yes, you've guessed it, Langham was on the map.



The Changing Face of Langham

George Weston

George Weston adds to Langham's history from 1900. He went to Langham Old School before his father moved to farm at Braunston Hill.

Subsequently, when George was serving in the 1914-1918 war, his father returned to Langham to take over Woodlands Farm. The farmhouse is where George still lives, in Westons Lane.

George's mother sang in the Church choir and his uncle, Ben Steel, was the local baker. Ben's bakery was at the corner of Church Street and The Rookery, and his *cottage-crust* was his speciality.

Tom Munday's butcher-shop was in Weston's Lane, next to the farm house. It was quite small, and eventually (about 1900) moved across the bridge to the cottages abutting the Old Hall, which were larger premises. Cecil Papworth worked for him, and the made pork pies in the traditional regional lines. When the business moved to the new premises, it came under the ownership of Mr. Owen Smith, who lived in the Old Hall (he had previously lived in Langham House). Later in 1910 Cecil Papworth started his own shop, making pork pies, in a cottage which stood in part of what now is the Wheatsheaf car park.

George Weston joined the Leicestershire Yeomanry in 1913 as a volunteer. The members of this force were all sons of farmers and tradesmen. They were in the Rutland troop (there was also a Melton troop, Gadsby

troop and the Belvoir troop, making up the squadron). All were mounted infantry, not cavalry. In 1914 they were called up to full-time service and went to France in November 1914, where they were attached to the 1st and 2nd Life Guards. Although these soldiers were mounted, the horses were always left behind the trenches in the care of some lucky soldiers of the troop, while the other soldiers went into the trenches for their turn in the firing line. Having survived the War, George was discharged on 1919.

George returned to assist his father and, a couple of years later, to take over Woodlands Farm, a holding of approximately 50 acres. At first George had 10 cows, the odd pig and some chickens. Eventually there were 20 cows to be milked.

Farm land spread around the outskirts of Langham, was mainly owned by Lord Gainsborough who let about 20 small holdings. As Mrs. Duffin wrote earlier, there were 80 pastures (or cow-commons) on Cold Overton Road, each of 1¼ acres, and every holding was allotted 5 commons to graze their cows (the holders were termed "*Commoners*"). The common pastures were enclosed and had three gates, the east gate being near the house now known as Pasture Gate. A boy was employed, mornings and afternoons, at a wage of £1 a year, to bring the cows down to the gate, where they would be milked or taken on to the farm holdings.

The cow commons were rested each winter and a meeting of Commoners decided the dates when the

pastures were to be closed and opened. Some of the holdings were small (5-10 acres), while others could be as much as 50 acres. The smaller holders often also had other jobs on farms or estates, or took on sub-contracts as hedge-cutters and ditch-diggers.

Apart from village customers, the milk was sold in bulk at 6d per gallon, to Mrs. Stafford-Smith who lived at Green Cottage (next to the post office in Church Street). She took the milk, by float, to Oakham Station en route for London.

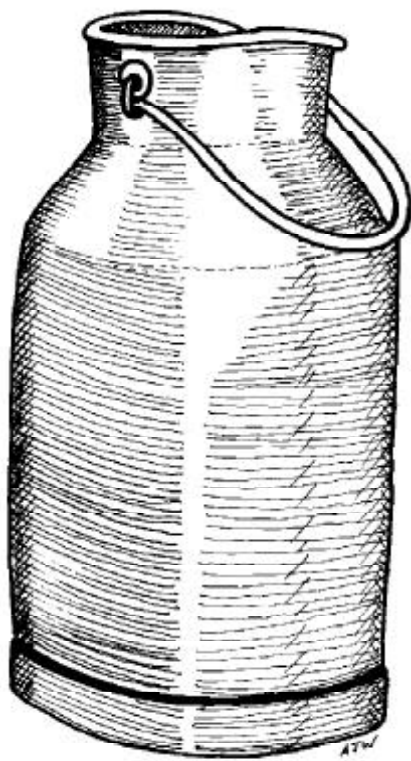
All milking had to be done by hand in those days; there were no hygienic milking parlours as we know them today, nor milking machines to make life easier for the farmer. The whole family had to turn out to help with the twice a day process.

Langham smallholders had the opportunity to buy their farms when parts of the Gainsborough Estate were sold by auction. George bought his farm at that time and worked it until he retired. (He is now 94 years old).

You will have read the earlier account of the Langham Feast celebrations each year. They were lively occasions; everyone enjoyed the entertainment, which lasted a whole week. George remembers the regular inter-village cricket game. The men and boys even stopped haymaking to play on the match. At that time it was nothing to find that the workers had disappeared, and when the farmer asked where they were he was told, *"Oh, they have gone to play cricket."* Whereupon

the farmer also would down tools and go over to the game.

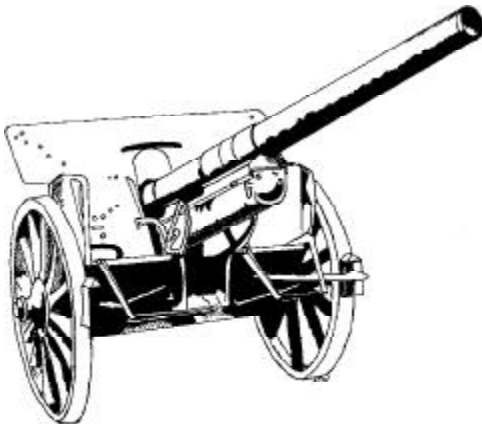
Langham Feast Week was a time for playing cricket and drinking; and the Oakham Band would be there to play to them. A good time was had by all. It was a week to remember for the rest of the year.



The Gun

Anon

Recently I told my husband that I was going to post a letter in the pillarbox near *"the gun"*. Both of us being *Langhamites*, he knew what I was talking about. Then I remembered it's nearly 50 years since *"The Gun"* stood on the green at the junction of Well Street and Melton Road. Why and how such a large German gun from the First World War should be brought to Langham has always puzzled me; but at least I know where it went - during the Second World War with iron railings and gates to be melted down and used in the war effort. The iron railings outside the Old School were spared. I was a pupil there at the time, reading on the veranda when the men came to take them away. They looked at the school children and decided to leave the railings for our safety; but our favourite plaything, *"the gun"* went. Its barrel was shiny from the children swinging on it over the years, and its wheels were embedded in grass. I'm sure there must be some photographs of it. I do not have one, but I still have fond memories of *"THE GUN"*



Ben Walker Remembers

Ben Walker

Ben came to Langham in 1915 and was still at school when "The Gun" arrived in Langham, very soon after the Great War of 1914-1918.

People seemed to think that the gun was used by the Germans in the Great War, but it was probably British, and redundant at the end of the war. It was originally presented to Oakham, and Ben believes it was sited in the Market Square; but Oakham didn't want it, and a team of men dragged it over to Langham.

The gun was resited in the "Square", which was a piece of ground behind the Wheatsheaf, on the crossroads intersection of Church Street and Bridge Street. It was placed opposite Mr. Reuben Steel's house and was an unfortunate reminder of the war to that family because the son, Gussie had been invalided out of the services with a leg disability and was still on crutches. So the gun was moved to the front of the Old School, facing the Oakham-Melton Road. Apparently the foundations are still there.

The school children really enjoyed having a gun in the playground. It was still a working gun with a long barrel and a breach capable of being opened, and showing a firing pin etc. The kids had great fun fighting the Germans all over again; until the inevitable accident happened. One day a boy's thumb was trapped in the breach and badly gashed. The gun was too dangerous to remain in the school playground and so it was removed,

yet again, to a new site on the green at the end of Well Street, beside the well-pump. This was an appropriate site because it was adjacent to an old rifle-firing range which had been established on the Ranksborough field, on the other side of the Oakham-Melton Road.

There the gun stayed. It was still played on by the village children but presumably was made safe from causing further injury. It was eventually taken away to be melted down to provide metal for the armaments of the Second World War.