



Another Look Back at Langham

Two booklets were produced in 1991 for the *"Look Back at Langham"* exhibition. Some of the material contained in this publication was written for that exhibition and used as textual display. David Tew's contributions were taken, with his permission, from his booklet *"Langham and Barleythorpe in Rutland, its History, Church and People"*. Many of the recollections included here were first published in the *"Langham News"*.

"Another Look Back at Langham" is a miscellany of factual, researched information and of memories. Memories vary, so there may be discrepancies within the volumes but we hope that you agree that this adds to the charm of reminiscences of village life.

We thank all our contributors:

Margaret Catchpole (nee Hubbard) was born in Old School Cottage (now Old Hall Cottage) in 1908 and lived in Langham until she went into service. She returned to Rutland in 1949.

Ben Walker's memories of Langham span eighty five years. He came in 1915 and is still here.

Maurice Cocking came to Langham in 1939 to stay with his aunt in Old School Cottage "to escape the attentions of the Luftwaffe over South East London".

Sadly, Archie Shelton died soon after his memories were recorded. He is buried in Langham Churchyard where his head-stone reads " Arthur (Archie) Shelton who loved this village."

Gillian V. Frisby

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Relics of Bronze and Iron Age man, and of Romano-British people, have been found in Langham Parish: but the village as we know it today must have been established by Anglo Saxon invaders, who formed a settlement in the forest prior to the Norman conquest. The name "Langham" is Anglo Saxon meaning "the long village".

The earliest houses in the village (which would have been little more than hovels) are thought to have been in the area near Weston's Lane, on the north side of the churchyard. The village then spread east and west on either side of a meadow by the stream. Probably at that time, the low-lying area near the stream would have been too marshy to build on.

The countryside would have been well wooded and the village fields extended outwards as the trees were felled and the forest cleared.

In the early middle ages the people of Langham would have lived in humble single storey houses, half timbered or made of rubble stone, or more likely with mud walls, thatched. Very likely they would have farm animals at one end of the house and the family at the other. These hovels must have been a remarkable contrast to the tall stone church, even though this itself may have been thatched before the clerestory was added.

The earliest houses now standing probably date from Elizabethan times when increasing prosperity caused a great rebuilding to start all over England.

In Anglo Saxon times the people of the village would probably all have been tenants, either of the Lord of the Manor of Oakham, or of Westminster Abbey. After the Norman Conquest, and in return for the right to cultivate strips of land in the open fields of Langham, they would have to perform work on the lord's own land.

This system of agriculture began to change after the Black Death in 1348-9 when a very large proportion of the population of England died of the plague and the shortage of labour led to demands for higher rates of pay.

There was never a Parliamentary Act to "enclose" the open fields of Langham but it seems likely that this happened in 1604 when Jeffrey Bushey of Barleythorpe wrote to the Receiver of Westminster Abbey to the effect that the Lord of the Manor was enclosing 500 acres of arable land.

Almost all the land after 1600 belonged to the Noel family, though some was "copyhold". This gave the tenant the right to leave the land in his will, sell it or mortgage it without consent from the Lord of the Manor, though a fee would be charged for each transaction.

In 1925 copyhold land became freehold.

That Common land was still in use in the early part of this century can be seen from the records of The Pastures. This land was to the south of Cold Overton Road and The Pastures committee decided when the fields were to be stocked, the rates for mowing thistles, other maintenance work and the payment for fetching the cows.

Allotments

Don Mantle

Richard Westbrook Baker who lived at the Old Hall and was steward for the Gainsborough Estates is probably best known locally for building the Brewery but, a very enlightened man, he had great concern for farm labourers and poorer people. It was he who introduced the idea of allotments in this locality, to alleviate poverty after the "enclosure" of common land had removed many villagers' rights to keep livestock and grow food. Many were hard put to feed their families since their food consisted mainly of vegetables they could grow and the pig which they kept to provide meat in the form of bacon. (Very few could afford butchers' meat).

The provision of allotments ensured that each holder could have enough ground, not only for growing vegetables, but for growing a little corn to feed the pig. This was, of course, harvested by hand, with sickle or scythe. Mr. William Nourish would set up his threshing tackle in his yard for one or two days each year to thresh the corn grown by the cottagers on their allotments.

Gardens

Gill Frisby

Cottage gardens would have produced vegetables for the table, and a newspaper report from September 1915 records Langham's first Vegetable Show. It was held on Miss Finch's lawn and this lady hoped that the Show would become an annual event. It did - though it ceased in the 1940's. The Village Show's revival took place in 1977 and now includes flowers, cookery, wine and junior exhibits.

The Parish was the most ancient form of Local Government in Europe and in England and has been used for some civil purposes since the 8th century. Under Elizabeth I it became responsible for Poor Law administration.

The civil functions, as distinct from the church, grew haphazardly. The civil parish and the church parish were, and are, separate entities and had, and have, separate functions. So haphazard was the growth of these functions that before 1894 it was common to have up to six properly constituted bodies to carry out duties in the same village. These authorities included the Incumbent, Churchwardens, Overseers and the Vestry.

The Local Government Act of 1894 regularised the situation and Parish Councils were formed to deal with all civil matters. The 1894 Act stood the test of time and it was not until 1972 that another Act gave wider powers to the Parish Council.

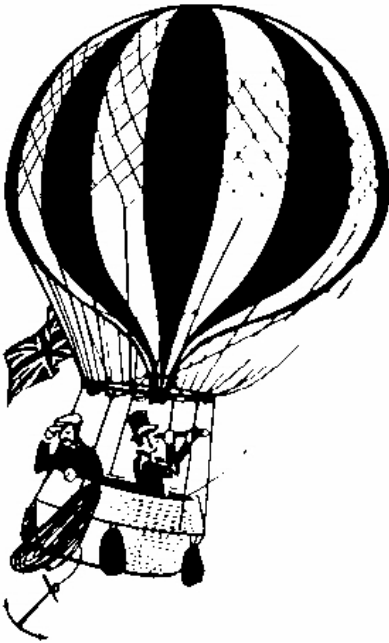
Langham's first Parish Clerk was William Almond. He held that office for twenty three years and was paid £3 per annum. (His successor only received £2!).

It was the duty of the Parish Council to elect a Parish Constable each year. William Hubbard held this office from 1899 until 1916. From 1917 until 1927 the office was held by William Edgson. The payment was one pound and one shilling.

The Parish Council elected Overseers of the Poor until 1927 and is still responsible for electing the trustees who administer the ancient village charities.

In 1899 the Council's expenditure was £6.2s.0d. In 1990 it was around £4,000 and by 1998 £13,000.

In the 18th century, the changes in English Society associated with the Industrial Revolution began to affect the village. Means of transport improved - the Nottingham to Kettering Turnpike passed through the village and a tollgate was set up at Langham, let to the highest bidder each year.



The Oakham Canal passed through the Parish between 1802 and 1847, and after 1847 the Midland railway replaced the canal; though there was never a canal wharf or railway station in the parish.

A forerunner of air transport arrived unexpectedly in a field between Langham and Ashwell in the shape of a balloon on 17th July 1862. The occupants, Henry Coxwell, a dentist and professional balloonist and Dr. James Glaisher F.R.S., a pioneer of weather reporting, had set off from Wolverhampton gasworks (the balloon filled with coal gas) to investigate the upper atmosphere. At 26,000 feet, they saw The Wash in the distance and thought it best to

come down quickly. They also came down rather heavily, breaking many of their scientific instruments. Mr. E.G. Baker, of the Old Hall, on whose land they had fallen, gave them lunch and drove them to Oakham railway station.

A Zeppelin passed over Langham on Sunday night, 5th March 1916. It dropped its bombs near Thistleton.

In 1931, Mrs Emma Palmer, together with four of her sons, moved from Cold Overton Road to 11, Bridge Street. Her husband, William, had been killed in the First World War and she was left to bring up the remaining six of her seven sons by herself.

A workshop already existed at 11, Bridge Street and had been used by Mr. Johnny Fawkes as a cobbler's shop.



Three of the brothers, Len, Fred and Harold, set up, on a part time basis, the cycle repair business, also dealing with motor bikes and cars (and anything else mechanical or electrical). About 1936 they built the little shop on the roadside which remains unchanged today.

During the war the sons were all away on military service or essential war work and

Mrs Emma Palmer remained in the house with Harold's wife, Harriet, and their two children, Jean (who lives there now) and Barbara. Fred had set up a charger for accumulators and Harriet kept this going throughout the war. (Accumulators were two volt rechargeable batteries used for wireless sets - if you don't remember the old days!).

After the war Harold returned and kept the cycle repair business going on a part time basis while working at the Brewery, and later keeping the grocery shop in Well Street (which recently closed). Eventually he retired but still maintained the cycle repairs and paraffin sales until his death at the beginning of 1986.

Jean, his daughter, and her husband Roland, now operate the cycle business, still on a part time basis, and expect to continue for a long time to come.

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| 16th July 1880 | Floods up to the Church Doors and in homes. |
| 8th October 1880 | Floods in the Rookery. |
| 15th August 1884 | 97 degrees Fahrenheit in the shade. |
| 20th July 1900 | Severe storm - hail as big as bantam eggs. |
| 2nd December 1910 | Floods. |
| 2nd February 1912 | 20 degrees Fahrenheit frost recorded. |
| June 1923 | Fires needed in the school. |
| March 1947 | Severe snowfalls. |
| 1976 | Summer drought. |
| February 1979 | Severe snowdrifts. |
| 1980 | Gales. |
| April 1981 | 4" snow - no electricity for five days. Homes flooded. |
| 11th January 1982 | Minus 23 degrees Centigrade recorded. |

The Thunderbolt

Margaret Catchpole

We often got thunderstorms during summer. In June 1914 our house was struck by lightning. My elder brother was looking after us and made us sit on the sofa whilst he watched the storm in the doorway. A ball of fire came down the chimney, it scorched the dog sitting under the table as it went out through the door. My brother was not hurt but we were terrified. The wooden handles on the steel sharpener and meat saw, hanging in a cupboard, were split; the lids of the tea and biscuit tins were fused on by the heat; the glass cake stand was sliced through the middle; the ornaments from the mantle shelf were on the floor, broken and the thatched roof was on fire. The neighbours helped by throwing buckets of water on it until the fire brigade arrived from Oakham. We had to go to school with no dinner. My sister was so frightened of thunder for the rest of her life, she would often hide in a cupboard.

At one time there was a plentiful supply of water under Langham so that most houses had their own well or pump or shared with a neighbour!

There were a number of public pumps of which two remain. Another one was in Well Street, which was still there in 1961.

At many houses water was piped from the well to a hand pump in the kitchen, with a to and fro motion - difficult to prime. One memory is "as a girl having to pump for ages when my sister was having a bath". Some houses had large tanks in the ground, ten to fifteen feet in diameter, to store rain water from the roof: two of these are known still to exist. Fifteen existing wells have so far been found, some with pumps. Others were filled in either for safety reasons or because of pollution.

At some date after 1925, water was supplied from the Owen-Smith farm to some houses, at first from a tank on Manor Farm fed by a wind pump, and later from a reservoir on the hill north of the farm (which still exists), fed by another wind pump. An electric motor-driven pump came later, pumping from a bore hole. In 1954 residents of Langham paid £1 a year for the supply.

The reservoir was also connected to another reservoir on Manor Lane which supplied the Brewery. Piped mains water was finally installed to the whole village in 1956. One villager recalled "the thrill of walking downstairs first thing in the morning and being able to turn on a tap instead of having to go out to the well for a bucketful".

At the same time as piped water was installed, mains sewerage came to Langham. In the earlier days houses had cesspits, which caused problems with pollution of the wells because of direct leakage into the underground water. There must also have been seepage into the brook which "sometimes caused a stench".

A system of using pans collected daily by the Scavenger or 'night soil' man was instituted in 1910. A superintendent was appointed in 1911 at an annual salary of £2. The scavenger was paid £1.10s.0d in the 1930's.

On the Green in Well Street where the pump stands there were two wells. One was used for domestic purposes, having a hand operated pump to draw the water, the other used a rope and bucket. This well was for general use, such as providing water for boilers of steam wagons which travelled along the adjacent road, and for watering horses and cattle - the farmer would fill a water-cart or a churn and transport the water to the animals in the fields and on the commons. There was a man from Burley who regularly filled his water cart and sold the water where supplies were difficult to obtain, at a penny a bucket.

In 1921/22 there was a terrible drought and a consequent shortage of water. The village had such a short supply that the domestic well was capped and locked at night. The key of the lid was kept by Mrs. Williamson, who lived on The Green, and the man responsible for the capping and control was

Mr. James Alderwood, who was also the registrar of births and deaths, the sanitary inspector and the school inspector, among other functions. He went about on a Matchless combination motor cycle and could be heard long before he was seen - which was just as well for the truants, who disappeared from sight when they heard him coming.

The ridge between Langham and Whissendine (called Overhills) had a pond which never ran dry. It supplied water for the reservoir in Manor Lane. That pond also supplied the water used by the Brewery.



Hospital

Archie Shelton's Memories as told to Julian Jenkins

Archie Shelton was born in Langham in 1906 and lived here until his marriage. His father worked for twenty seven years for Lord Ranksborough and Archie, like others of his generation, remembered "The General" as a very kind man, particularly recalling the chocolate bought for the children at Mrs Jannet's shop. Archie also had cause to be grateful for the generosity of Lord Ranksborough as, when he contracted Polio at the age of twelve, hospital treatment was provided at a cost of twenty seven shillings and sixpence a week.

The hospital was at Baschurch in Shropshire and Archie lay on his back for six months with a curvature of the spine and twisted pelvis. He had an operation on his leg and a calliper fitted. Although conditions were very spartan the tales of his stay are laced with humour (quite unprintable!).

He had to return to the hospital at three monthly intervals, and on the final occasion, insisted on travelling alone. He caught the train at Oakham at 9.00 am., changed stations at Birmingham, changed again at Shrewsbury and reached the hospital at 6.00 pm. The return journey was equally arduous, the final stage being on the "paper train" from Leicester which brought the Leicester Mercury to Oakham.



Ranksborough Hall

Shortly after his stay in hospital, Archie had a lucky escape. His mother tried to persuade him to go on an outing to Fort Henry at Exton but he stubbornly refused. Tommy Swingler, whose father farmed at The Manor, had bought a horse and brake, and a group of ladies paid a shilling to be taken on the trip. All went well on the outward journey but, having loaded his passengers back into the brake for the journey home, Tommy, instead of turning in a circle, tried to reverse and catapulted the ladies out of the brake. Apparently they were none too pleased and the village nurse sustained a damaged shoulder.

Tommy sold the horse and brake and bought a brand new Ford car with a canvas hood. Cars were a rarity in Langham and the boys of the village took great delight in this vehicle. Archie recalled watching, with his brother, Bob Revell and one of the Palmer boys, as Tommy manoeuvred the car into its specially constructed garage after an outing.

The advice "*Stand back boys*" from the driver proved to be well justified. A mix up with the brake and accelerator sent the car straight through the end of the garage.

The Coach and the Donkey

Ben Walker Remembers

The village was full of characters during my childhood. Tommy Swingler's parents used to run Manor Farm around 1912 but Tommy seemed not to have the desire to farm. Restlessly he used to try this and that. He decided to run a horse-drawn bus from Oakham to Melton. The idea was good: he had many passengers on board for the first journey. He got as far as Leesthorpe but the coach ran away with him on Leesthorpe Hill and eventually tipped all the passengers out. That was the end of that venture but Tommy decided to provide a parcel service to Melton. He bought a donkey and collected his first load of parcels. It took him three and a half hours to get there on his first trip and a bit longer to get back. It was obviously not a viable activity and was discontinued.

Tommy Weston (George's father) bought a Morris Cowley tourer and after some tuition from Victor Revell ventured forth with Hilda and Mrs. Weston to Burley on the Hill. Part way up Burley Hill, Tommy missed the gears and the car went into reverse. He apparently shouted to his passengers "*Jump for your lives, it's a death trap!*" - duly they all jumped, driver included. The car was reportedly stopped by a passer by.

A favourite place to watch the world go by was "The Bank" on the corner of the Oakham Road and from this vantage point Archie and Gussie Steel witnessed another transport incident.

A gentleman who lived in Oakham had a lady friend in Langham (talk of the village it was at the time) and she was often seen riding pillion on his small motor cycle, probably a Velocette. He had made a seat, complete with a cushion, and rests for her feet. On this particular occasion, the lady was waiting for her gentleman to transport her to Oakham. He arrived, stopped and waited for her to get on. This she normally accomplished, not by throwing one leg over the motorcycle, but by straddling the bike from behind. Unfortunately, this time the driver did not wait to ensure that his passenger was securely seated and with a cry of "*Off we go then*", headed towards Oakham leaving his lady, legs astride in the middle of the road. He reached Barleythorpe before realising his mistake.

The whole spectacle and ensuing argument left Archie and Gussie rolling round The Bank in uncontrollable mirth - in fact, Archie still could not tell the tale without laughing after all those years!

"Lily" was Ruddle's Foden Steam Engine, used to transport beer to Leicester. Arthur Bryant, the brewer, was Lily's first driver and was followed by Alf Gandy and then George (Rozzer) Fawkes, who was Archie's uncle. Lily used to be steamed up to leave the brewery, very noisily, at three am.

Archie once had the chance to accompany Uncle George on a special Saturday afternoon trip to Market Overton for an emergency delivery. The journey, on the back of the engine with three or four barrels of beer, was a rather bumpy one. This, combined with the effects of the smoke and the refreshment of a glass of stout on arrival, was too much for young Archie. He returned home in the evening feeling "poorly", spent Sunday in bed and struggled to school on Monday.



Everyone knew everyone, including the village "bobby", Mr Foyle, a kind family man, who had eyes in the back of his head as we thought, after we had climbed over someone's wall to taste the gooseberries or raspberries or pinch a few apples or plums. Somehow they always tasted better than ours but if caught by the "bobby" the boys got a smack round the ear and the girls were told, "I shall speak to your father".

We were brought up to work from an early age - running errands for the elderly; fetching and carrying buckets of water from the pump for neighbours; cleaning out the pig sty or hen house and gardening. We girls helped in the house, cleaning; baking; darning; needlework and knitting but we always found time to play games. Hopscotch; marbles; jacks; skipping; hoop rolling; leap frog; spinning tops and getting into mischief. We never heard of being bored.

Sunday was a special day. The joint of beef and Yorkshire pudding was taken to the bake house, along with others, for Mr Mantle (later Ken Hale) to cook. I think the charge for this was one penny. The dinners were collected a few minutes before one-o'clock. In summer, visitors would arrive in the afternoon, usually on bikes, and leave after tea. We children spent most of Sunday at Sunday School, morning, afternoon and evening.

Good Friday, weather permitting, after church service and dinner, down to the allotment to plant potatoes. Later we would take a can of hot tea and a large bag of hot cross buns to be consumed sitting under the hedge. Hopefully the sun is shining - another lovely day! Easter over we shall be gathering sticks and wood for the fire. After tea it will be gardening. Two and a half roods on the allotment on the Burley Road, a large, lock-up garden in the village and our own piece of land on Melton Road. We also have a large piece at home - half vegetables, half flower garden.

After the gardens are set and seeded it is spring cleaning inside and out. We start with the bedrooms. Everything is cleared except the bedstead. Crockery and small furniture taken down to be washed, cleaned or polished. Drawers cleaned out. Feather beds put into new or clean ticking or covers and placed on two or four chairs, depending upon size, and left in the sun until evening, then made up. Meanwhile the room will have been decorated if needed, lino scrubbed and polished, bedstead cleaned and polished ready for the bed to be made up. A lovely smell of beeswax. In two weeks life will be back to normal.

May Day was a holiday. The night before, we picked the garden flowers and put them in water. Early next morning we made our garlands. If flowers were scarce, we bunched them on a walking stick and knocked at the door saying, "Please can you remember the May Bush". We were given a half-penny or a penny, depending on how many children had already been. One year was special. Mrs Dawson, who lived in the Old Hall, had the chosen May Queen and her attendants in the donkey cart. The rest of us walked behind through the village to Ranksborough Hall. I remember it was a lovely sunny day and most of the girls were dressed in white.

We learned to ride a bike by hiring one from Rowett's for six pence per hour. Having learned to ride, we hired a cycle to visit relatives. We were charged for mileage not time. A day out six miles away cost one shilling.

But walking was really the order of the day. From Langham to Burley Woods we ventured. From spring to autumn, flowers in the hedges, honeysuckle, wild roses, trees in flower. Later we picked the hips, haws, conkers and walnuts. But springtime was best. Burley Woods was a carpet of bluebells, violets, cowslips and primroses. In the fields were bleating lambs, rabbits and hares. We listened and we watched the many kinds of birds and hoped to hear the cuckoo. We poked the hedges to find a bird's nest. We looked in the pond for newts, tadpoles and frogs. We forgot all sense of time - only when thirsty and hungry we found our way home.

Harvest

Harvest was an exciting time - we watched the corn being cut and reaped. After it was carted away and stacked we were allowed on the field to glean. At half-past nine we were ready to go. Sandwiches packed; bottles of tea made; babies bottles of hot milk wrapped in a towel; nappies; hessian aprons with large pockets for the ears of corn we picked up. An assorted bag of bits and pieces packed in the pram with baby.

Off we go - each child carrying a sack for their gleanings - I loved it! At midday we stopped for our snack. Mothers would be feeding their babies and gossiping while we went around the hedgerow blackberrying, then back to work until four o' clock.

We trundled home with our sacks on our backs - happy, tired, hands and legs scratched by the stubble; ready for dinner which had been left in the oven. A stew in the big brown stew jar and a rice pudding. Fruit pies and turnovers made the previous day. When Nourish's thrashing machine arrived at the farm, we were there to watch. It was fascinating to see the corn filled sack at one end of the machine and bundles of straw at the other ready to make the corn stack. It was always an interesting day watching a hay or corn stack made and topped.

The smell of new mown grass! Soon it will be hay making. If Dad is helping Mr Squires, we shall be taking cans of tea and sandwiches. Sitting in the hay having tea.

Smells - so many. The horse manure on the roads we gathered into buckets with a small shovel for the garden, especially the rose trees. The old fashioned roses smelled beautiful.

Cow pats from the cows brought down from the Pastures to the milking sheds. All over the village roads, smelly and messy. Sheep droppings were less of a nuisance, usually only on market days.

Ruddles' brewing days had a lovely smell of malt - we could smell that all over Langham.

Another smell was Mantle's bakery. We went in for a loaf of bread or buns and watched the baker bring out the bread tins with his long shovel. If we bought a cottage loaf we pulled the top off, cut or broke a piece of the lovely crusty bread off and spread it with fresh farm butter.

The blacksmith's forge in Well Street was another smell - a lot different. The blacksmith made the shoes for the horses brought in to be shod. The red hot metal in the fire was gripped by a very long pair of pincers then put on the anvil and "clanged" by the large hammers into shape to fit the hoof. It was plunged into a bucket of water and then placed on the hoof and the nails knocked in. At this point, I always felt sorry for the horse but was told it felt no pain. It usually stood quite still during shoeing.

Sheep dipping in the Washdyke on Ashwell Road was another smell and an exciting thing to watch, especially when the sheep refused to go into the water. A few choice swear words we heard from the man and the sheep got a whack and a good push in.

The Great War

Ben Walker Remembers

The Great War was on when I was a child. Various memories are conjured up of that period. My father was farming, which was a reserved occupation; he was, nevertheless, in the Volunteers (like the Home Guard of the 1939-45 War). They wore khaki battle dress and assembled in the Institute (Village Hall). The squad was drilled by George Ruddle.

The First World War brought shortages of food, and rationing was introduced. Tidd's shop, where the Post Office is now, and Mr Tidd introduced a substitute for dripping. Everyone rushed to buy, and my mother made some pastry with the dripping. Anyway, that was the intention; the resulting pie was just like concrete. It turned out that the substitute was mainly potato and gravy salt.

The Great War

Margaret Catchpole

Two things stick in my mind about the 1914/18 war. The evening service would be packed and extra chairs were needed. The bereaved families, dressed in black, friends and neighbours wearing black arm bands and ties. (Was the telegram going to someone's door good news or bad?) The dedication of the War Memorial, with the fallen heroes names on, and the Confirmation service conducted afterwards was another sombre occasion. I was, that day, confirmed. Village life went on more or less as usual.

As far as I know, the Saturday bow and arrow wars between the occupation forces of London and the Langhamites have never been documented! The Old School Cottage (now Old Hall Cottage) was our main bastion and battlefield, although skirmishes did occur in the surrounding lanes. I field marshalled the Londoners. We called ourselves "The Archers" and our salute was similar to the Russian clenched fist and bent arm. We took our name from our skill in first selecting a particular almond nut in the garden of Old School Cottage and then detaching it with all the skill of Robin Hood. Alas, "The Archers" were long ago disbanded and the almond trees are there no more.) It was the Davenports who generalled the village forces - John and Charlie, aided by the Poles.

Eggs were hard to come by. In 1942 they were. One a week was the ration. If you were lucky. But there was a solution. Pig-swill! So when the bucket was full one trotted off, out of Old School Cottage gate, turn left, up past Squires and Fanshaws, turn left again, down the lane, right over the bridge, right up the track to Williamsons' farm. "Penny or an egg?" "Take the egg please!" Thus we were well nourished in wartime Langham.



I remind myself there was a supplementary supply in the form of moorhen eggs. In the field far across from the old Scout Hut there was a pond. (Suddenly I remember dragonflies). There we would repair with tablespoons tied to long, bamboo canes and lift the

eggs. If we were lucky! These provided our mothers with cooking eggs. For cakes! How we lived off the fat of the land - and the lakes!

Mick Burdett and Ben Coulson were among those who played their part in Langham School's Dig for Victory. Their plot, made available by Mr Owen Smith of the Old Hall, was a piece of land off Manor Lane. Mick and Ben, with their school mates, marched through the village carrying their spades and forks under the command of the indomitable Dolce Ellingworth.

Seeds, be they potatoes (cut in half for economy) or carrots were counted out equally and with military precision. On many occasions the work was brought to an abrupt end by the sound of the air raid siren, whereupon everyone returned to school and the air raid shelter. The return journey was no orderly affair, the young gardeners always outrunning Miss Ellingworth.

The Evacuee Who Stayed

Susan Lesiakowski

The youngest of seven children, Tony Parrott was evacuated to Langham in 1939. He travelled with his sister Kathleen from Walthamstow, London, but was split up from Kathleen who went to live in Cottesmore and later returned to London. Tony went to live with Mr and Mrs George Fowlkes who had no children and brought Tony up as their own. When the time came to return to London, Tony was settled and did not want to leave Langham. He attended the special school classes for evacuees in The Institute, affectionately known as "The Tute" (now the Village Hall but always "The Tute" to Tony) and moved on to the Central School in Oakham (VCC). Tony spent many a happy hour telling "wartime tales" of Langham - some we had to wait to hear "until we were older"!! When he wasn't up to boyish pranks and being chased by Sgt. Ted Wright, the village policeman, he delivered bread for Ken Hale.

He left school, at fourteen to work for Mr and Mrs Owen Smith on Manor Farm Estate. He did his National Service with the Royal Horse Guards based in Windsor and also spent some time in Germany. He married Betty and after a few years living in Melton Mowbray, Tony returned to Langham with his family and remained here until his untimely death in 1997.