

## OLD COTGRAVE MEMORIES

My memory of Cotgrave as a child was a sleepy little farming village with a population of about 700.

Approaching Cotgrave from Radcliffe-on-Trent, passing the Shepherds Restaurant which was then a row of cottages called "Shepherd's Houses". Coming down Main Road, the marlpit on the left which backs up to the wood on Mill Hill (where a Saxon burial ground was discovered) contained marl which was distributed all over the world — as far away as Australia. Further down Main Road, just before Mill Lane, stood the old library which was a large dark room. Mill Lane, an old cart track, finished where the first bend in the lane is now. In 1957, a mushroom farm was built there by Ray Tompkin who later owned the nursing home 'North View Nursing Home', now called Eton Park Care Home, which is at the top of the hill on Owthorpe Road going out of Cotgrave.

Back to Main Road and below the mushroom farm was Cotgrave cricket pitch. One well known figure who played for the Cotgrave cricket team was Dr Robert Runcie, who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury. His parents' grave can be found in Cotgrave cemetery, in the first part of the cemetery at the top of the path to the right. The Rector of Cotgrave at that time was the Rev. Angus Inglis, whose wife was Dr Runcie's sister. The Rector before this was Mr Chaplain, whose memorial stood in the centre of the village on the piece of grass behind the east end of the church.

Continuing down Main Road, almost opposite Mill Lane, still stands the cottage where I was born and, where previously, my Mother's family lived. Both my mother's and father's family, and my husband's family, were all old Cotgrave families. And very large families they were in those days. My father was a farm worker but his main skill was cutting and laying field hedges. He kept many of the field hedges in Cotgrave and surrounding areas in tip-top condition.

Next down Main Road is the Rose & Crown pub and, where their car park is now, there used to be a row of old cottages (up to the roadside), which were called Rose Cottages. These were demolished in 1964, the year when many of the old cottages in Cotgrave were condemned. The people were rehoused into newly built council houses, built on grassland which now forms Broad Meer, Lamplands and Green Platt. Behind Rose Cottages stood a blacksmith's shop, a saddlers and a joiners. I remember watching Mr Marriott fitting the horses with their new shoes and Mr Simpson's shop floor covered in wood shavings. Mr Hoodlass was the saddler. Opposite the Rose & Crown, down Morkinshire Lane there was Mr Sykes' cobblers shop. A strong smell of leather met you as you entered, and a counter full of shoes of all kinds, behind which was a little old man peeping over his spectacles.

On the corner of Morkinshire Lane, in around 1959, a Co-op shop was erected. This was just a tin hut and was later moved to Candleby Lane on the open grassland opposite the Candleby Lane School entrance.

Continuing down Main Road, a row of cottages stood next to Vine Farm. Again, these were demolished in 1964. The Post office, which was only 1% the size it is today, sold groceries too. Sainsbury's shop was only a small butchers shop, owned by Mr Beaumont's father and his grandfather before him.

Mr Brumpton was the other village butcher, and Mr Barlow from Cropwell Bishop came round each week in his van selling meat. Mr Branstone's bakers van, driven by Tony Howitt, also came round selling bread and lovely cakes.

On Bingham Road, just where the entrance to Thurman Drive is now, stood a fish & chip shop. Mr Fowell (nicknamed 'Badger'), owned this. Further along, opposite the Methodist Chapel, Miss Adams opened her 'Sedora Kennels' in around 1956. She bred spaniel dogs. The Post news Shop, then owned by Mr & Mrs Handley, sold papers, sweets and cigarettes. Two paper boys served the whole village. Mr & Mrs Mitchell then took over the shop and Mrs Mitchell ran a 'very tiny' wool shop within this shop.

The Scout and Guide Hall, up Chapel Yard (now Lane), was used on Saturday nights as a cinema. It was the Parish Hall then and was used for most of the village functions, wedding receptions, etc. There were a lot of old cottages between the Mitchells' house and the Scout & Guide Hall. Again, these were demolished in 1964.

Coming back on to Candleby Lane, the vet's building (smaller then), was the Doctor's surgery in around 1963. Patients queued up whatever the weather. Once inside, nothing was confidential as the conversations between Doctor and patient could be heard by others in the very small waiting room. Previously, the doctors travelled to the village from Radcliffe-on-Trent.

The ground where the Catholic Church is now, was then a garage and a bus service. 'Lewises' ran from there. It cost 3d (in old money) to travel to Nottingham.

Candleby Lane finished where the school drive is now. Beyond that was a cart track leading to the fields and woods where now stands the estate which housed the miners when they moved down from the North. My husband's family rented the field where the Cotgrave Candleby Lane School is now and kept animals on it.

Back onto Risegate, (so named I am told because a gate the access through the road and was lifted open to let people pass). There was a big transport yard there, owned by my uncle and aunt called 'Albans Transport' There was also a magnificent bowling green on part of the ground owned by Mrs Smart (now Walnut Grove). The entrance to the bowling green was on Risegate.

Next to this used to be a very ornate gypsy caravan owned by Mr Hopkins who, in winter lived in the town and spent summers in this van.

The Manor House on the corner of Risegate and Owthorpe Road, was once a monastery and is said to be haunted. Also there were two underground tunnels, one leading from underneath the Manor House and emerging at Devil's Drop (at the top of Owthorpe Road/Hill) and the other from under the church yard (on Church Lane, then called Pepper Street) emerging in the Post Office.

Owthorpe Road was then called 'The Gripps'. The left hand side of this road was mainly fields leading up to Wolds Hill (at the top of Owthorpe Road). At the top of this hill was 'Top Wood' renamed 'Devil's Drop'. In this area of woodland violets grew in abundance.

On the right hand side of Owthorpe Road stood a row of about 20 cottages (again demolished in 1964). These cottages had no water taps at all — water was delivered there each week by lorry. The toilets, situated at the bottom of the garden, and consisting of a wooden seat with a pan underneath, were emptied by lorry once a week as dustbins are today. There were no bathrooms — we just had a tin bath on the hearth in front of the fire. Set back beyond these cottages was the brickyard, the cliff face of which the soldiers used as a firing range.

Lower down the road, was a large area of allotment gardens. On to Scrimshire Lane (then called Scrimshaw Lane after a family called Scrimshaw) there was a row of cottages standing next to the building which is now the picture framing shop. This is where I used to live as a child, in one of the three cottages. We had one cold water tap and a pump in the garden. Although we had an electric light downstairs, the bedrooms were lit by gas or candle. These cottages were demolished in 1963. As a child I was able to play in the road as cars were a rarity. I collected our milk each day after school in a small can with a lid on from Wood's Farm on Plumtree Road. After seeing the cows milked, I used to watch the milk running down the coolers, and then fill my can. We often used to see a herd of cows being led through the village. I don't remember a milkman bringing milk round in bottles when I was small. I collected eggs from Mr Cox's farm on the corner of Scrimshire Lane. This is now called 'Goosegate', with houses built on it.

On to Plumtree Road now and the one village school. Everyone stayed there until they were 15 years old and left to go to work. Then in 1955 children of 11 years old and upwards were transported by bus to Dayncourt School at Radcliffe-on-Trent — unless they passed the '11 plus' exam and moved onto grammar school. In Cotgrave Church School there were only three teachers, including the Headmaster Mr Atkin. The other two teachers were Miss Taylor and Miss Fox (later to become Mrs Kitchen). Nature walks were a treat to look forward to most weeks. Everyone at the school had to sit at their desk all the time and chatting was not allowed. Punishment was the cane, slipper or ruler and, although I never saw it, kept behind the big book cupboard was a 'Cat of nine tails' (a stick with leather straps on the end). The blackboards were on easels and the desks had 'inkwells with 'dip in' pens.

The Rector took quite a few of the morning services in school and taught us religion. Mr Wakefield was the rector of Cotgrave after Mr Inglis left and it was he and his wife who did so much in those days for village activities - Brownies, Choir, Sunday School and Bell Ringing, to name but a few. The Bell Ringing Master was Mr Les Henson and many a happy hour was spent playing Christmas carols and other music on the hand bells and, on Sundays, the church bells. The old tree stump on the churchyard used to be a big walnut tree — the walnuts were very popular with the Sunday School children!

Many lovely large trees have been sawn down, probably because they were old and unsafe, or just because they were in the way of the new village that began growing around us with the development of Cotgrave Colliery.

Dorothy Albans (nee Sheppard) 2014

Born 1944