

John Ogle – August 2016

I grew up in Cotgrave during the post-war period – 1945-1960. My family first lived at Cotgrave Place, where my Grandad worked for the James. We then moved to 10 Candleby Lane, a Victorian house with fireplaces in each room and an outside toilet and hand pump from the well for water. There was a large garden, with apple trees, chickens and a pig sty. Later we moved to a modern house in Mensing Avenue. The village of Cotgrave, then was a small, close community, largely given over to farming and to a number of small-holdings. Some people were also employed at the local garage, which was just round the corner from where we lived in Candleby Lane. Everywhere there were orchards, growing apples, pears, cherries, walnuts, etc. As boys, we used to go scrumping and, as long as you didn't overdo it, most people didn't mind. It was just accepted as part of life. We also used to help on farms and, if the farmer thought we were doing something really useful, he would pay us. One farmer allowed us to go shooting rabbits (with air rifles and a 0.410) on his land – which we took home and sold round the village. There were also shooting butts up the hill near the brickyard (off Owthorpe Road).

I went to the local school where discipline was strict – if you misbehaved, you were given a sharp whack with a cane across your non-writing hand and it really hurt. There were just three teachers. I played football and tennis. Music was important for me and we listened to the radio a lot. I remember the first television set in the village – it was in a house at The Gripps and most people from the village were invited to go there to watch. The screen was only about ten or twelve inches across and people crowded as close as possible in order to see the picture, which was black-and-white, not colour. Life was lived almost entirely within the confines of the village. There was a bus service into Nottingham but my mother took me there only very occasionally – no more than once every two-to-three months. There were two butchers in the village and a vegetable van came round so we could buy our food easily enough. I can remember there being a blacksmith near the Rose and Crown pub, a wheelwright and a joiner. There was, too, the Post Office exactly where it is today. I remember the weather being much worse than it is today – lots of rain and snow. The village was regularly buried under feet of snow, sometimes being cut off for days at a time. There were frequent floods in the village (Candleby Lane and Risegate), too, because there was no proper drainage system. There were several ponds and streams which don't exist today. It was normal to see horses and cattle along the village roads, resulting in a ready supply of manure but there was no problem with keeping the roads clean – everyone who had a small-holding or allotment was only too keen to collect it. Also, because there was rather little traffic, the roads were generally kept in good order – relatively few potholes or puddles. There was relatively little crime in the village but it is strange that the only local policeman should live not in the village, but along Plumtree Road, in the row of houses beyond the Clipston turning. He was hardly 'on the spot' if any kind of emergency should occur!

Houses were heated by coal fires and there was a coalman in the village. Alternatively, people used paraffin heaters, there being a ready supply of paraffin from a pump at the garage in Candleby Lane. There was no gas supply in the village. Outside toilets were the norm and they could be wickedly cold in winter. They were emptied every week by the local council. There were few bathrooms – mostly we bathed in a tin bath in front of the fire. Later, of

course, when we moved to the new houses in the Mensing Avenue/Green Platt area (built during the 1970s) we had modern indoor facilities.

When I left school I took an apprenticeship at AVRO Aircraft Co at Langar, learning how to service aircraft and this led to a career in engineering, finishing up as a health and safety adviser. Like many other young people I was obliged to find work outside farming – there was only a limited demand for farm workers. The village was expanding but the number of farms remained constant, there being only a fixed amount of land.

The coming of the mine obviously represented a major change to the village but there was very little animosity between the villagers and the mining community. Indeed, the increasing population meant that facilities within the village necessarily improved to meet the new demand and village people were duly appreciative. As the mining estate expanded the Miners' Welfare developed and they organised events such as cabaret acts and lots of people from the village used to go to all kinds of events. The miners used to come down to the village pubs, especially the Manvers Arms and the Rose and Crown. They did use the Miners' Welfare but they liked the village life so they used the shops etc- - whatever was available within the village. As we were growing up there was a youth centre, which was at the back of the Methodist Chapel and they used to have music in there. I used to take records. Up Chapel lane there was a large building which had snooker tables and we used to play snooker there. Eventually this became a Scout Hall and a cinema. As the miners' estate developed the Precinct was built and people were pleased to use the larger number of shops there. From the Council point of view, I don't know if there was a Village Council. I know the Council evolved and I believe it was Woodward's, who were dog breeders, who moved up - I think she got involved with something to do with the village but I can't recall - it may well have been just the farmers who organised things. As the estate expanded I can remember going up to parties on the estate – we used to go up there and I, actually, met my wife at the miners' hall – she happened to be the Cotgrave Carnival Queen – she was on the Carnival Float which paraded down through the estate and the village. So there were many activities – they put a bowling green in and villagers could access those if they wished. There was also a football ground for the pit – the original ground was on the tofts, which was East Acres, then it was behind the marl pits on Mill Hill, then it was moved to Pease Hill, next to Pease Hill drive. The football pitch moved all over the place – the cricket pitch was buried under the pit and I can't remember where the cricket pitch was after that. So there were activities between the villagers and between the miners. It all evolved and things came to a bit of a head when the mine was scheduled to close. There were problems with water ingress and they had to concrete certain areas. One of my relations lived on Ring Leas and actually worked at the pit. He said that, when the miners' strike came, because they hadn't the staff to keep things going, the mine got flooded and that caused a bit of animosity between the miners and the mine-owners. The fact that the mining community was split virtually between Yorkshire and Cotgrave didn't go down well and a lot of miners wouldn't discuss the strike. And I suspect that there are still issues between some of the miners. Over the years, the village evolved and every bit of land was built on and other people came to Cotgrave – and because the miners had got redundancy payments some of them moved away from Cotgrave. They had the money to move to other areas – their jobs were not there anymore so, if they wanted work, they had to move. The alternative was to retire. Relations between the village and the miners was originally very good – it was only after the strike that things started to go a little bit

wrong. Most of the miners will not discuss the strike, even to this day – you just don't get people talking about it. There was no animosity in the village about the strike – most of the village people were farming people and their jobs were still there – there was a job that had to be done – but it wasn't the nice old farming village it had once been, where you could jump into people's gardens if you wanted to go scrumping – no-one minded as long as you didn't overdo it – they accepted those sort of activities. Mill Hill – there was the Saxon graveyard found when they developed the properties there. I believe there were 103 bodies found there and a lot of grave goods. There was another grave found which could have belonged to the Miller or his associate. The original wood, which was a Girl Guide camp, is still there, the access points are still off the main road, near to a library which used to be at the bottom of the hill. When you went up Mill Lane, there were big ash trees – all of those have disappeared as have a lot of the hedges and ponds which used to be in Cotgrave. There was a pond at Baker's Hollow which used to have a lot of daphnia – people in the village used to keep tropical fish. As lads, we used to take jars and collect daphnia which we took to the people who kept tropical fish. It saved a journey to Nottingham. During the war period people did various things – my mum went to work at Tollerton aerodrome, which was part of the war effort. Lots of planes flew in and out of Tollerton, hence the crash at Cotgrave Place when people lost their lives. I have a photo of mum at Tollerton, wearing a boiler suit. People had to diversify during the war and you tended not to be wasteful with food – it was 'waste-not want-not'. Grandma and mum used to say if you didn't eat it you went without. Everything was rationed which accounted for the fact that many allotments were developed. You also went out to collect blackberries, walnuts apples and pears – it was nice to live in such pleasant surroundings. Of course, there was habitat loss – there used to be barn owls in the old barns that got demolished, there were tawny owls at the top of the hill, there were lapwings at the top of the hill and there was a gallop at the top of Wolds Hill, which is still there. Behind the wood where Eton Park is there's still a gallop which runs from the road towards the wood and then there's a turning point and the stud at the top of the hill is where the horses used to come from. The fields round there were fenced with a rail, fastened onto posts, so if the horses ran into them they didn't harm themselves. The Manvers Estate ran all the way from Holme House right up into the forest. As lads, we walked up into the forest and, one day there was a shooting party with pheasants laid out on the track. You could get from the top of Wolds Hill – there was no barrier. You could walk, take bicycles or ride a horse, you could take a car down to the cross-roads – the farmer had it blocked off and when you got to the cross-roads it wasn't just a cross-roads – there was a track across the field which was covered in gorse and you got linnets up there and yellow hammers. So there was quite a bit of natural stuff near Cotgrave and the lane at the top of Wolds Hill went across to Clipston – it was called Heral lane and also went out towards Owthorpe and Kinoulton. You used to get all those birds along that way, too.