

Claydon with Clattercote Newsletter

Village History Supplement

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A LIFE IN CLAYDON Part 7

Continuing the recollections of Doris Beswick nee Bloomfield who has lived most of her life in the village, beginning at the Top Lock in 1925, with her father Ted, mother Beat and four brothers. Ted was the foreman of the stretch of canal from Fenny Compton to Banbury.

Friendship

When the family moved from Top Lock to Fenny Compton Road in 1947, it was to a slightly more modern living environment. They were reduced from six bedrooms (having occupied both lock cottages) to three, but while the kitchen in the second cottage had been used as the wash house and bathroom, the new house included both a wash house and a bathroom. At this time water supply in the village was entirely dependent on wells. Residents would either throw a bucket down the well, or in more affluent households, use a pump, such as the village pump shown below.



However, in Fenny Compton Road, the family benefitted from the luxury of running water. When the agricultural labourer's cottages at no.s 1 Fenny Compton and Boddington Roads had been built, a pump house had been constructed above the local well to pump water to these cottages. The facility was then extended to the new cottages in both Fenny Compton and Boddington Roads. Although at this time the Vicarage also had running water, it had to be manually pumped to the cistern in the roof.



The shell of the old pump house still present

This meant that in addition to a water supply to the kitchen, bathroom and wash house, there was now a flushing toilet. This was felt to be a great improvement on the earth closet at the bottom of the old cottage garden.

Although the house was wired for electricity, it was to be some time before the road was connected to the mains, so the family relied on the oil lamps that they had been using at Top Lock. Cooking took place on a coal fired range in the kitchen, but this also included a back boiler to heat the water. Nevertheless, the family had brought their old tin bath with them, and when there was insufficient hot water for everyone to bathe in the fitted

bath in the upstairs bathroom, water in the copper boiler in the wash house would be heated and the tin bath brought into service.

The reduction in the number of bedrooms was no problem as at the time only Sid and Arthur remained at home. Sid was a salesman at Fosters, the men's outfitters in Banbury, while Arthur had taken over from Ted as the foreman at Top Lock.

Meanwhile Doris continued working in Bournemouth with her friend Vella (pictured right) at the home of Canon and Mrs Williams at St. Peter's Church. The friendship with Vella was to prove pivotal in Doris' life. While the girls had lived and worked at St Mary's Vicarage in Banbury they had met Ernie, a schoolboy who used to work for the family cleaning the shoes. After leaving school he joined the Royal Marines. There was no hint of romance with Ernie and Vella, but Vella agreed to write to him, to keep him in touch with life at home. On his first day in the Royal Marines Ernie met another young recruit called Tom Beswick. The two became firm friends and as Ernie was spending time writing letters, he thought that the same pastime would be good for Tom, and suggested that he write to Doris.



Doris received her first letter from Tom on December 15th 1947. It had been sent from HMS Sheffield while it was docked in Bermuda. A regular pattern of writing an average of two letters per week then followed.

The girls continued happily with their work duties in Bournemouth. They were not extremely onerous and Mrs Williams would help out too. They were saved the task of the weekly wash as it was all sent to the laundry. Mrs Williams would also cook breakfast once per month while the girls attended Communion. All three would undertake the messy task of sorting the coal for the fires. Whatever the weather, from 1st May there would be no more fires and spring cleaning would commence. The dustiest job was to throw the carpets over the clothes line and give them a good beating.

When relaxing the girls had their own sitting room, in which they were allowed to entertain their friends. Visitors included Doris' aunt and uncle from Birmingham while they were on holiday in the area.



The two friends (Doris on the left) in 2014

To be continued

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