

# *Rowell Heritage*

*The Rothwell Arts & Heritage Centre Magazine*



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**Rothwell Heritage.  
Issue 9**

We are dependent on advertisers because their financial support is vital to the funding of this newsletter. Your contribution however, is equally important so if you have anything you wish to submit for inclusion in future issues, please send it to either the manager or the editor at the address below.

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I hope you enjoy this edition of Rowell Heritage I would like to thank all our sponsors and contributors for their support.  
*Editor*

**Cover Picture:**  
*The War Memorial*  
G Davis. 2009

## **Rowell Market**

The historic market town of Rothwell has enjoyed a Monday market for many years. The produce on offer is of excellent quality but more customers are needed to support the stall holders. There is lovely fresh fish, fruit, vegetables, plants, clothes and household goods on offer.

Be part of history and support Rothwell's Monday Market.



## **Medieval Evening** **Friday November 6th at 7:00 pm.**

**There will be a Medieval Evening at  
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## **An Amazing Evening of** **Clairvoyance** **with Dennis Binks**

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refreshments included.**

***Deadline for January - February issue is  
Friday 11th December 2015***

***Please note that while we take every care to be  
accurate, no liability will be accepted should any  
of the contents of this magazine be incorrect.***



## Cycle ride to visit the graves of Rothwell men who died in WW1

by Andrew Clark



Andrew & Nicole at the  
Basilica of Notre-Dame de Brebières, Albert.

Each year I take off and ride my bike somewhere around Europe for my two weeks holiday, generally camping each night, usually in a bona fide campsite although I have had to resort to the ditch occasionally (but don't tell my wife). When it came to deciding what to do this year, my daughter Nicole came up with the idea of visiting all the war graves of the men of Rothwell who died in France and Belgium during World War 1, most of whom are named on the town's war memorial. She also volunteered to join me for the trip during the summer holidays. As Nicole is a Leader with the 2nd Rothwell Scout Group, we thought we would also try to raise some money for the group by getting sponsored. We would lay a cross of remembrance at each grave or memorial on behalf of the Scout Group and record our visit. This is a brief account of our journey.

### Planning

Before every trip a lot of planning takes place. This time was no exception. The first job was to find out where all these soldiers were buried or commemorated. Luckily for us, this hard work had already been done by a team from Rothwell Heritage Centre who had put together a book called 'The Faces Behind the Names', providing details for all of those on the town's memorial and also for some of those who for whatever reason are not on there. With this book to hand, the next step was to get the maps out and start plotting our routes. Part of the planning also involves having someone at home with maps, internet and credit card, finding campsites and the occasional hotel when need be (this is my wife). We decided that because of the distances that would need to be covered, the journey would have to be broken down into several trips. We started with the ones that were further out (3 trips) and then finally worked out those that were closer together which we would do in one big trip during the summer with Nicole joining me. I must add that the company I work for provided me with a lift out to France in one of their lorries for the first two trips and helped me make all of this happen. The number in brackets that appears after each cemetery/memorial name, refers to the total of men interred or commemorated there.

### 1st Trip, March 2015 (7 days 732km)

This trip started just south of Boulogne, off the A16 motorway. My first stop was the Etaples Military Cemetery (2) then on down the coast road past Dieppe to the cemetery at Etretat (1). After this it was on to the largest Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in France, St Sever at Rouen (4). From there I covered the longest distance between cemeteries for the whole trip, just under 200km through Paris to the La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial (1). After this it was a very hard and hilly 70km to the Soissons Memorial (1). The weather was not kind on this trip as it rained continuously, but really what did I expect in Northern France in March?

### **2nd Trip Easter 2015 (3 Days 160km)**

With a couple of days off over the Easter holidays, I jumped on board the firm's lorry with my bike and got dropped off where I had finished in March, a place called Roye just off the Lille/Paris motorway and where the CWGC New British Cemetery is situated. I managed to visit another 9 cemeteries during this trip before the lorry picked me up again and it was back to work.

Cemeteries visited were Caix British Cemetery (1), Vadencourt British Cemetery, Maissemy (1), Templeux Le Guerard British Cemetery (1), Villiers-Faucon Communal Cemetery (1), Dantzig Alley British Cemetery, Mamaetz (1), Bernafay Wood British Cemetery, Montauban (1), Beaulancourt British Cemetery, Ligny-Thillois (1), Flesquieres Hill British Cemetery (1) and Cambrai (1).

### **3rd Trip June 2015 (3 Days 160km)**

Luckily my wife, Joan, needed a short break so I suggested Reims with a stop off at Albert on the way back for a little bike ride. After making sure my wife was well hydrated with champagne, we arrived in Albert and over a few days managed 8 cemeteries and checked out the campsite that would be our first stop for our summer trip (no camping for Joan)!

Cemeteries visited were Corbie Communal Cemetery (1), Dive Copse British Cemetery, Saily-Le-Sec (1), Meaulte Military Cemetery (2), Carnoy Military Cemetery (2), Hem Communal Cemetery, Somme (1), Hedauville Communal Cemetery (1), Doullens Communal Cemetery (2) and finally Maily-Maillet Communal Cemetery (1).

### **4th Trip August 2015 (10 Days 662km)**

This was the big one. It started in Albert in the Somme on the 13th August and we working our way through all the major battlefields (Arras, Vimy Ridge, Neuve Chapelle, Ypres and Passchendaele) before heading up to the Hook of Holland to catch the ferry to Harwich. Joan drove us out to Albert and stayed in a hotel for a couple of nights, riding with us on our first day before returning home to man the phone.

On our first day we visited Thiépval Memorial (6) where we were stopped by a French TV crew who were filming a documentary and asked us to tell them our story.....fame at last! We then went to two other cemeteries, Warlencourt British Cemetery (1) and Regina Trench, Grandcourt (1). We also visited Poziers Memorial which encloses the British Cemetery (6). There we got caught in a thunderstorm with hailstones the size of mint imperials. Once this stopped we headed back soaked to the campsite at Albert.

The next morning was the start of the proper road trip. We loaded up our bikes and set off. This was the first time Nicole had ridden her bike whilst it was fully loaded! We headed for the Vis-En-Artois Memorial and British Cemetery (8), stopping at Achiet-Le-Grand Communal Cemetery (1) on the way. We camped near Vis for the night and the next morning after a wet start it was off to the Arras Memorial (8) followed by Duisans British Cemetery at Etrun(1), Neuville-St Vaast (1) then Vimy Memorial (1). There were two types of weather on this trip - pouring rain and roasting hot - no middle ground.

We had booked a hotel in Lens for this night and after well earned rest in a proper bed, set off the next day visiting 8 cemeteries covering 80km, criss-crossing our way towards Bethune where we had another night in a hotel thanks to my wife at home organising it. Cemeteries visited were Loos British Cemetery (5), Maroc British Cemetery, Grenay (1), Mazingarbe Communal Cemetery(1), Philosophe British Cemetery, Mazingarbe(1), St Mary's A.D.S. (Advanced Dressing Station) Cemetery, Haisnes(1), Houchin British Cemetery(1), Saily-Labourse Communal Cemetery (1), Pernes British Cemetery (2).

From Bethune Town Cemetery (1), we headed to Guards Cemetery, Windy Corner, Cuinchy (1), Le Touret Memorial/ Military Cemetery (5) and Erquinghem-Lys (1) then up towards the Belgian border where we camped at Armentières.



The next morning, we crossed the border into Belgium to the Ploegsteert Memorial (3), then back into France for Trois Arbres Cemetery, Steenwerck (1), and again back to Belgium for the Military Cemeteries at Lijssenthoek (1) and Brandhoek (1). Then it was on to Ypres where we camped for two nights as there was quite a few to do around there. We had a scare at Ypres as according to the book, Walter Henry Liner should have been commemorated on the Menin Gate (7) but we could find no record of him. I could not believe it, after all the planning we had lost one! Whilst I sat with my head in my hands, Nicole took over and rang Joan, and with the help of the internet we discovered he was at Tyne Cot (3) our next stop. A plate of chips settled my nerves and we were away again. We visited Bedford House Cemetery (1), Perth cemetery, Zillebeke (1), Menin Road South Military Cemetery (2) and then cycled up the Belgian coast the next day to Nieuwpoort Communal Cemetery (2).

With our last cross laid all that was left to do was to point the bikes towards Holland for the 160km ride to catch a ferry.

In total we were on our bikes for 23 days covering over 1800km. We placed 120 crosses, and visited 41 cemeteries and 14 memorials. We had 3 punctures, 1 cracked wheel rim, went through 4 sets of brake blocks and made no end of cups of tea whilst sitting in bus shelters out of the rain. We met some characters along the way including the Australian who gave us a few laughs and £20 towards the Scouts. There was also the French gardener who worked in St Sever Cemetery in Rouen with 1200 graves but who was still able to take me straight to the grave of Private Jack Charles Copson.

A big thank you to the drivers at my firm: John, Jeff and Roger who dropped me off and picked me up at various motorway junctions in France, fitting it into their working day. Thanks also to Dan at Brampton Valley Cycles who services the bikes and to Joan who kept track of us, booking accommodation when needed and most importantly sorting out the ferry home. Never was a sight more welcome! A big thank you of course, to Nicole, who before this trip had only clocked up a few hours on her brand new bike. "Chapeau!" as they say in the Tour De France.

Finally the Rothwell War Memorial will never be the same to us. The names are now faces and places. To all of them thank you. You will never be forgotten.



**(Left)** War graves at Loos Cemetery. This picture also shows the book 'The Faces Behind the Names' published by the Heritage Centre which was used as a reference by Andrew and accompanied him on his journeys.

**(Right)** A photo of one of the wooden crosses placed by Andrew & Nicole at all the graves they visited.  
Pictures: Andrew Clark.

**Editors' footnote:** This was an extraordinary achievement and anyone reading the story is welcome to get in touch for further information. Andrew and Nicole not only placed individual crosses to mark the lives of these brave men, they also took photographs. If anyone would like a picture of the resting place or memorial of their relative, please contact me at: [editor@rothwellheritage.org.uk](mailto:editor@rothwellheritage.org.uk) or simply hand in a request at the Heritage Centre and I will get in touch with Andrew on your behalf.

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Are you a collector looking for something new to add to your collecting hobby, or are you new to collecting and looking for ideas?

Collecting some items can be a problem with regard to housing and display, particularly in modern homes where space can be at a premium. So, in this article we are looking at Victorian Hat Pins, of which there are many types and which also have the advantage of not needing a large space for display/storage.

Here at the Heritage Centre we have a small collection of hatpins, probably Edwardian rather than Victorian, but they will give you an idea of the variety of styles that can be purchased from antique fairs and shops.

The period between the 1890s and the 1920s saw the peak of their popularity as both a useful and a fashionable object and was helped by actresses such as Lillie Langtree and Lillian Russell, who liked to wear large elaborate hats without bonnet strings.

Pins vary in length and style with some stems reaching 10 or 12 inches around the year 1910. As well as being a fashion item, pins were manufactured in a basic form using a white or black bead and were known as the 'working girl' hatpin.

The high end of the market saw the use of a large range of materials including for example, gold, silver, emeralds, mother of pearl and ivory. There were a number of manufacturers and those of you who watch 'Bargain Hunt', as I do, will have seen mention of Charles Horner. Another notable manufacturer was Louis Tiffany.



These pictures show examples of the wide variety of pins. Enamel was also a popular material and was often used to create insect and butterfly pins.

*'Hatpins spanned many styles including Baroque, Greek Revival, Egyptian Revival, Oriental influence, Arts and Crafts, Art Nouveau and even Art Deco.'*([www.collectorsweekly.com](http://www.collectorsweekly.com))

The use of hatpins declined and *'during World War I around 1914 when Europe became embroiled in war, resources became very critical and metals for use in the jewellery trade were cut back. Hats were smaller, hemlines came up, hatpins became smaller and military buttons became popular. So, you'd have the buttons of your sweetheart made into hatpins.'* ([www.collectorsweekly.com](http://www.collectorsweekly.com))

I hope that this brief article has been of interest. There is plenty of information on the web, including the site from which I have included the two quotations.





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*A 1927 picture of the Co-operative Industrial & Provident Society shop in Bell Hill.  
From the collection of Diana & Trevor Smith*

### **GROWING UP IN THE 1950s**      *by Mary Cox (nee Martin)*

At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the men who were lucky enough to survive, returned home to their wives and families. Then the babies arrived, - demobbed babies they were called, and later in life they became baby boomers. I was one of these children and all through my school years our classes were much larger than before - or after. At one point I was in a class of 46 children.

Growing up at that time we had very few luxuries in life due to rationing, but as children we knew no difference and we made do with what we had. My father had an allotment down Rushton Road where he kept pigs and poultry. He also grew all the fruit and vegetables we needed, so we were well fed.

In the home we had open fires and in the winter as it got colder, the insides of the windows were covered in frost and ice which made beautiful patterns. Mum would sit so close to the fire to keep warm that her shins were permanently mottled purple. The flooring was linoleum with rag rugs scattered here and there. These rugs were made by Mum and my older sisters. They cut old clothes into strips which were then hooked into sacking material. It was a painstaking job but the end result was colourful and warm. We also had old army blankets on the beds to keep us warm.

I remember one winter, word got about that a tree had fallen in a field off Glendon Road. Some of the women, my mother included, went off with empty prams to bring back logs and branches to burn on the fire to save coal.

Nothing was wasted, unlike the throwaway society we live in today.

## **Trainspotting in the 1950s/1960s**    *by David York*

There was nothing better than escaping from reality by sitting on a railway station platform with not a care in the world and taking in the sights, sounds and smells of passing steam locomotives hauling their carriages and freight wagons, or to be sitting on a bicycle propped up against a wooden fence down a bridleway, overlooking a railway cutting in the spring sunshine. You'd escaped from your parents, escaped from school, escaped from dreaded games and from school bullies. Total bliss - if only for a short period.

Added to this, for me (a potential accountant), was the fact that all these locomotives had numbers and many had stunning names like Amethyst, Samson, Atlas, Cyclops, Dreadnought, Warspite, Indefatigable, Furious and Thunderer, which made it all the more exciting. Each of these locomotives belonged to its own home which was called a shed and most towns and cities had one - well, cities had more than one and they were very large. These sheds were coded and all the locomotives bore this code on a shed plate at the front on the smoke-box door along with the loco number plate. Take Nottingham, for instance: 16A was Nottingham (Midland line), 16D was Annesley (on the Great Central) - alongside the Nottingham coal pit of the same name, 18A was Toton - a huge Nottingham freight marshalling yard, and 18B Westhouses was alongside Blackwell Colliery near Nottingham. Local shed Kettering had the code 15B.

A publisher called Ian Allan had brought out a pocket-size, hard wearing book for just 10s 6d (just over 50p in today's money) which contained all of the 21,000 or so UK train numbers (mainly steam engines) and their names neatly divided into classes and regions with details of the locos' wheel arrangements, power and weight. Alongside this you could also buy for 2s 6d, a loco shed book which had all the numbers and shed codes for each loco, plus, also for 2s 6d, there was a loco shed directory which had details of how to get into each locomotive shed - usually along a cinder path. In gricers (trainspotters) terms, getting around a shed was called 'bunking'. It was because of this home shed arrangement that you only managed to see certain locomotives on your local track so familiar sighted ones would become 'common crates'. There would be rarities - locos that you wouldn't even dream of seeing. For each loco seen you would underline it in your 10s 6d combined volume book. Soon you'd have most of the common ones and then each new one seen would become a 'cop'. To get more 'cops' you'd have to travel far and wide which was another exciting part of the hobby and because you shouldn't really be trespassing on railway property, it made each shed visit an adventure, where you might finish up being clouted around the ear for breaking the law!

You're probably thinking - what's the point? After all, you could just underline any old loco number, but that would be like a twitcher recording birds he'd never seen. That wouldn't amuse Bill Oddie! It just didn't happen because you would simply be cheating yourself and your mates so that shed visits would be a waste of time.

I managed to see some local rarities - 72005 Clan McGregor seen at Kettering at 8.20am on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1961. By the name alone you can tell it shouldn't have been any further south than the Pennines. Here it was however, running two hours late on the Scottish sleeper. Then in June 1961, Jubilee 45693 Agamemnon of 67A Corkerhill shed in Glasgow was on the 4.20pm Sheffield to St Pancras. How did that happen? These rarities just made your day.

Travel was cheap in those days and often if you were of short stature you could get by on half fare. It was only 9s 3d (just under 50p in today's money) to get a half fare cheap day return ticket from Kettering to London St Pancras. I was tall so would duck down at the booking office to appear smaller and got away with it many times! You also had the choice of where to sit - unlike today where you need to avoid those seats where they've been allocated in advance. There were also more second class seats back then.

The best trip I went on was to London with my cousin Alan Woolston. We met up at St Pancras, crossed over the road to Kings Cross and asked a number of spotters if they were interested in going around some sheds. Alan had permits to some sheds on this day but you required a certain number of individuals in order to be



officially let in. We went round 34A Kings Cross with a permit and then 81A Old Oak Common (easy to bunk, so no permit). On this occasion however, they had built an 8ft concrete wall so we had to scramble over it - there were already footholds chiselled out by spotters! 1A Willesden was also easy to bunk - you just had to walk along the canal bank to get in. 73A Stewarts Lane though, was rather dangerous as it was surrounded by electric rails but we had a permit for this shed and had a guided tour, and we also visited 73B Bricklayers Arms with a permit. We tried 70A Nine Elms - a huge Southern region shed, but as usual the security guard was on patrol and he was a vicious man!

There were also school trips. Kettering Grammar had a Railway Club and I can remember that they organised coach trips to Swindon and its Works, Worcester and Liverpool.

All in all trainspotting was a good hobby with plenty of adventurous days - similar to today's football away trips that get you travelling all over the place for matches.



*King James 1 at Old Oak Common. (Photo: David York)*

**Notes :** 6011 King James 1 . Built April 1928. First shed allocation Old Oak Common. August 1950 shed allocation Wolverhampton, Stafford Road. Double chimney fitted March 1956. March 1959 shed allocation Wolverhampton, Stafford Road. Last shed allocation Old Oak Common. Withdrawn December 1962. Covered 1,718,295 miles. Scrapped by Swindon Works.



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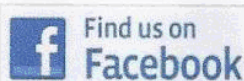
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## THE ELEVEN PLUS EXAM

*by Helen Chapman*

In the fourth year of the Gladstone Street Junior School, all children took the Eleven Plus examination. This exam was created by the 1944 Butler Education Act and was abolished in 1976 to be replaced by a 'comprehensive system'. The exam took place for me, when I was in Mr. Woolston's class. Most of our class work during that year was geared towards the 11 Plus examination. This exam determined whether we would go to the Greening Road School (it was not called Montsaye School then), the Central School at Kettering (a technical school), the Kettering High School for Girls or the Kettering Grammar School for Boys. The actual exam was taken in the school hall – this lent an air of seriousness to the situation as we had never taken an exam in there before. Also the invigilator, who timed the exam and told us when to start, was a teacher from a different school, whom we didn't know. There were two parts to the exam. The first half was taken early in the spring term and about 40% of children failed this first part. The second section was taken later in the school year.

I remember that we used a book called 'First Aid in English' as an English text book and in this were proverbs, similes, opposites, synonyms, males/females/young, irregular singulars and plurals, words that sound the same but have different meanings etc. We had to know things like – goose (male) gander (female) gosling (young); as white as... (snow); too many cooks...spoil the broth). We were tested on these regularly. We had to know parts of speech and punctuation and were also regularly tested on our spelling and comprehension. All of the above were incorporated into the English section of the Eleven Plus examination. As part of our exam, we also had to write a 'composition' - we had a choice of about three topics and had to write a story about one of them. I remember clearly that for my 11 Plus, I wrote about an adventure at a fairground.

Maths, in the fifties, was very complicated as these were the days before decimalisation. We had to know all the tables for imperial weights and measures, for example: the number of ounces in a pound, the number of pounds in a stone, the number of stones in a hundredweight and the number of hundredweight in a ton! Learning so many different tables was a very complex business. Do you know how many pints there are in a gallon or how many yards there are in a mile? We regularly did very difficult calculations involving money – for example: **how much change would I have from £1 if I bought eggs costing 2/6d, biscuits costing 1/7d and a tin of peas costing 1/3d?** (Bear in mind that 12d = 1 shilling and 20 shillings = £1). Problems, such as: **an aeroplane uses 200 gallons of petrol for a flight of 300 miles. How far could it fly using 80 gallons? Or - a motorist leaves home at 10.30 and drives at 34 miles per hour. He stops for lunch from noon to 1.30 and then continues his journey at 30 miles an hour. How many miles has he travelled by 5pm?** Mechanical arithmetic involved sums such as **multiply 7,498 by 469 or subtract £3.13s.8d from £5.00 or 591 divided by 3.**

As part of the Eleven Plus exam we also had a general intelligence paper which involved numerical codes; recognising and completing a series of shapes; word completions, for example – find one letter that completes both words **THI\_ ECK**; filling in the missing number, for example: **48(6)8, 49(7)7, 63( )7**; making jumbled letters into words, for example – **ERBDA= \_\_\_\_\_** or making sense out of a jumbled sentence; and completing number sequences, for example : **7, 16, 34, 70 \_\_\_\_**.

Mr. Woolston gave us a very good grounding in the skills needed to pass this exam and we practised past papers very frequently. In the fifties, Gladstone Street School had an excellent record of children passing the Eleven Plus and going to the Kettering Central School or to the Grammar or High Schools. However, if a boy or girl was 'borderline', he or she was called for an interview at the prospective school and a decision was made following the interview.



The Eleven Plus exam made a huge impact upon children's lives in those days. It was deemed very, very important and most children were extremely nervous about taking the exam, suffering a few sleepless nights beforehand.

I am glad that those days of taking exams are now behind me!

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Below is an account of the opening of the assembly hall. **Northampton Mercury, 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 1934.**



**M**ONDAY marked for Rothwell the fulfilment of a dream the town had cherished for 30 years, when the handsome assembly hall which has been added to the Gladstone-street Council School was formally opened.

The extension, which has cost £1,774, plus £89 10s. for the installation of electric lighting, will allow the school's curriculum to include such studies as handicraft and domestic subjects, and the work has been carried out by Messrs. Thompson and Sons, of Irthlingborough.

It has been arranged that Sir A. R. de Capell Brooke, chairman of Northamptonshire County Council, should perform the opening ceremony, but owing to the illness of Lady de Capell Brooke, Sir Arthur was unable to attend and his place was taken by Mr. S. J. Lloyd, chairman of the County Education Committee.

Mr. H. Smith, chairman of the Rothwell managers, presided, and was supported by Mr. and Mrs. S. J. Lloyd, Mr. A. E. Elkington (chairman of the Elementary Education sub-Committee of the County Council), the Rev. Canon J. Mallory (vicar of Rothwell), the Rev. W. H. Hore, the Rev. A. G. Whittard, the Rev. Canon Smalley Law (Thorpe Malsor), Lady Cullen, of Ashbourne, Mr. A. D. Jones, Mr. A. Briers (headmaster), Mr. A. F. Austin and Mr. J. W. Smith (former headmasters), Major C. J. C. Maunsell, Major Howard Green, Messrs. J. L. Holland (county secretary for education), H. Cross (vice-chairman Rothwell Urban Council), Mrs. M. Chamberlain, Messrs. A. Tyldesley, J. A. Liner, E. A. Buswell, Mr. and Mrs. L. F. Barlow, Messrs. Parker, Mitchell, and Woodhead (H.M. Inspectors), Dr. and Mrs. G. Gibbons, Mrs. Sarjeant, Mrs. Fulford, Messrs. A. E. Sarjeant, T. Feakin, and W. Taylor (managers), Mrs. Smith, Mrs. and Miss Thompson, Miss Foster (Kettering), Mrs. Briers, Miss Greenhead, Mr. C. Rowlatt, Adjutant Holloway and many others.

After a hymn, "O God our help," Scripture readings were given by the Rev. W. H. Hore and prayers by Canon Mallory.





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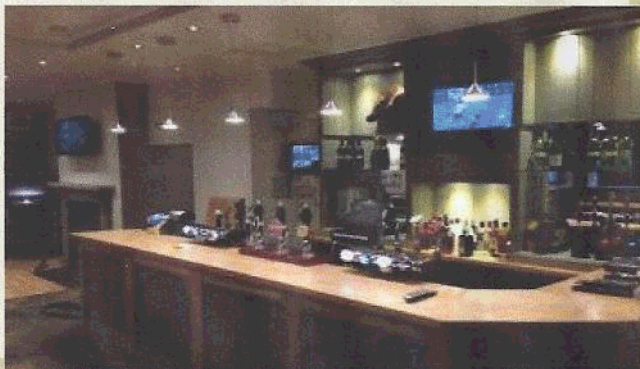
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## WARTIME MEMORIES

*by Janet Bassett*

I first attended Victoria Infant School in Rothwell. It had two entrances, one for the girls and the other for the boys. Both had separate cloakrooms just inside the entrance. There were three classrooms and a hall which could be divided in two when necessary and there was a study for the Headmistress.

My first teacher was called Miss Harris. I can't remember the lessons that we were taught but I can remember the exciting stories that were read by Miss Harris. There was a lovely sandpit and various toys and games that we were allowed to play with. The hall was also used for exercises which took place on straw mats and after our exercises we were allowed to lie down on these and relax. On Sundays, there was a Sunday school which was held in the upstairs part of the Market House building which used to be the library. It was run by Miss Warren who was also the librarian.

Home life had various rituals. Monday was washing day and on Tuesday the ironing was completed. Meals always followed the same pattern with a roast and Yorkshire pudding on Sunday. The remainder of this roast was sliced and placed in a dish with onions and potatoes and surrounded by a suet crust for Tuesday. Any leftover meat was minced and turned into a cottage pie and there was always fish on Friday.

In the evening my mother taught me to knit and crochet. Sometimes an old hessian sack would be opened flat and we would make peg rugs from any scraps of material from old clothing. In our front room we had a good size snooker table on which we played billiards using three balls, - one white, one black and one striped. Scoring was by cannoning the white ball into the others using the cushion.

When I was eight, I caught measles and when my father came into my bedroom I asked him to turn the light on but he said that it was daylight. The measles had left me temporarily blind. My sight gradually returned but I was left with poor vision in my left eye.

After Victoria Infant School I went to Gladstone Junior School and at nine o'clock the teacher would blow a whistle for us to all line up in classes and march into the school hall for assembly. At Gladstone we were taught the usual lessons but the boys were taught woodwork while the girls did cookery. Physical training was also included with the boys playing football and the girls playing rounders and hockey. We were allowed to walk to the swimming pool at the recreation ground for swimming lessons.

Close to my sixth birthday, war was declared. In our house the news bulletins at midday and six o'clock in the evening were listened to very attentively by the family and there was much discussion and speculation on Britain declaring war on Germany. I remember clearly when the news came that Germany had invaded Poland and we were now at war. It was broadcast that no ringing of church bells was to take place and that these should only be rung in the event of invasion or to signal the defeat of Germany. Sirens would sound to warn of air raids and we would all go to the shelter or hide under the table.

As the war progressed, my father joined the Auxiliary Fire Service and a bell was installed in our landing window. At the time of the bombing of Coventry, it would ring so many times that it was eventually muffled and the firemen began sleeping at the old fire station in School Lane. A system was set up so that various fire brigades were used to back up the districts spreading out from Coventry in order to relieve the Coventry brigade which was under such pressure. On one occasion, Rothwell's brigade was actually in attendance in Coventry and my father told us of the devastation caused by the bombing and of the terrible damage to the cathedral.

During this time Rothwell had its own water supply and I remember that water was always at hand in saucepans and kettles since it was often rationed during dry spells. While at school, all children were taught aircraft recognition from the various shapes, sizes and also sounds of the engines. We learnt about Spitfires, Stukas and



also the bombers. If the siren sounded we would collect our coats and gas masks and march to the air raid shelters which were built in the gardens of Gladstone Street Junior School.

The shelters were partly built into the ground and were banked with soil. They were dark, damp and very cold, often with water on the floor and there were wooden seats along the sides for us to sit on. During the school days, these gardens were looked after by the senior pupils who would plant vegetables. There was also a small orchard and a beehive so we were taught how to keep bees and collect honey.

One night, I was asleep and was woken by loud bangs and the sound of bullets firing. It was a very dark night with heavy low clouds. I looked out of my bedroom window and I saw a Stirling bomber emerging from a cloud, approaching with the inner engine on fire. The heat from the flames was causing the machine gun bullets to be fired. As the Stirling came nearer, I could see that the side of the fuselage was burning and I could actually see inside. There were two airmen, one standing close to the gaping hole and the other crouched against the far side of the fuselage. I must have been shouting "Jump, Jump" as my parents came into the bedroom and explained that the men were too low to use a parachute and too high to jump to safety. Sadly the bomber crashed with all loss of life in the fields behind the health centre. In the following days, bullets were found in the gardens of Tennyson Road and Greening Road. I then realised that the aircraft wasn't as close to home as I first thought. I learned later that the Stirling aborted its mission and jettisoned its bomb load when approaching Rothwell.

There were very few cars to be seen during the war. These were mainly owned by doctors and district nurses but due to petrol rationing they were only used to visit patients in outlying villages and farms. Milk, coal, wood and bread were all delivered by horse and cart. This was tricky in winter when the snow was on the ground and ice slides were made by the children! One year the snow lasted for several weeks and we made a slide in Nunnery Avenue that eventually stretched from the manhole cover there, right to the end of Kingsley Road. Another year the snowdrifts were so high that a plough had to clear both Nunnery Avenue and Kingsley Road to allow the district nurse to use her car. Kingsley Road was a cul-de-sac and when the plough turned round it left the snow on each side of the road so the children had great fun building snowmen and throwing snowballs. At that time Rothwell still had one farmer who used a pony and trap to deliver milk to customers, using a gill measure to transfer the milk into their own containers.

Towns would have their own gas supply and coke storage. The ovens were situated on the side of Gloucester Court in two storage tanks. One day, my father took me past the works as the smell was supposed to help make chest infections better and this was on the way to Bleakleys allotments where my dad, granddad and uncle all grew scented sweet peas to sell. Together they owned a breeding sow and reared a litter of piglets, - two of the litter were for themselves and the rest were sold to the allotment holders. As their pigs reached maturity, they would be run up the road to the slaughterhouse which was located at the bottom of New Street. The butcher had half of one pig as payment and then delivered the other half to the family. The meat would be carved on our kitchen table and then hung on a wall to mature.

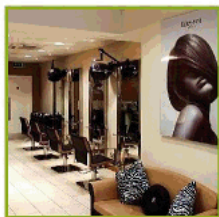
Chitlins/chitterlings (pig intestines) would then be soaked in a bath, being turned and cleaned several times. Mother would make her own lard and dripping and some of this would be given to neighbours for providing us with unwanted vegetable waste to help feed the pigs throughout the year. As war progressed, rationing became tighter and the government declared that for each pig raised, half was to go to the butcher, - my family then raised three pigs which allowed us still to have half a pig each. At the back of our house we also had vegetables and apple trees and we raised hens for the eggs. At harvest time we would gather blackberries, elderberries and other fruits for cooking, wine and jam making. Schools would encourage pupils to gather rosehips to be turned into rosehip syrup which was given to mothers with young babies and infants. Older children would help with picking potatoes for which they would be given a small wage.

At weekends and school holidays we would play in the street and became skilled at skipping and ball games. We also played with whips, tops and yoyos. Another game was called 'Dicky' and this involved using a piece of wood sharpened at both ends and about a foot long. We would use another piece of wood to hit the sharpened one

along the street and we had three strikes, raising it in the air and sending it as far away as possible. The winner would be the person who caused the wood to travel the furthest.

When the Americans came, my father worked on many airfields around the country. He worked with a machine that had a huge bucket which was higher than he was when he stood beside it. The machine was used to excavate soil ready for the foundations of the runways. My mother worked at Harrington airbase in the canteen and one day, on my birthday, the cook from the base sent a large tin of peaches plus ice-cream and a birthday cake. It was the first birthday that I had such things because they were unattainable due to the rationing, so my friends and I really enjoyed them. At Christmas, the Americans gave the local children a party and we were all given a present. Mine was a brush, comb and mirror set.

The Americans came with the cultural restrictions of those times which are shocking to us today. The white men were to be based at Harrington while the black men would be based at Desborough and they also were the ones who had to transport bombs and ammunition to the airbase. The Desborough people made the black Americans welcome and took them into their homes. Black Americans were not allowed at the same venues as white men and one incident occurred at a dance in Desborough when white and black servicemen clashed. This resulted in the military police arriving and a black serviceman was subsequently shot (reported in the local paper). Some Americans made lasting friendships with local girls and there were some scandals too. The end of the war in Europe was celebrated with the church bells ringing and a VE party but my brother was still in Singapore where the Japanese were fighting so we had our family celebrations when VJ Day was declared.



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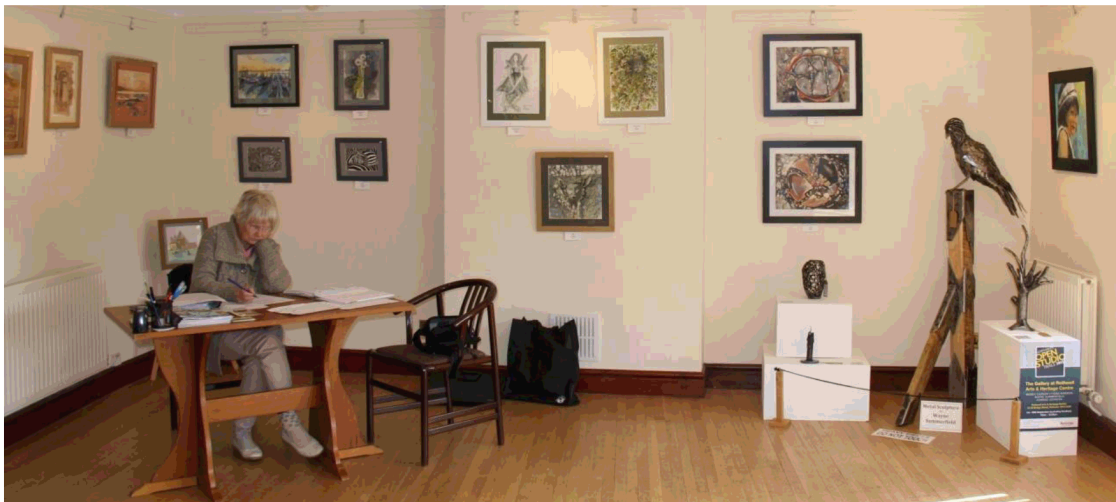
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## WINTER TALES FROM ROTHWELL PAST

by Sylvia Davis

The first big celebration of the winter months was November 5th which was marked with great enthusiasm in the town as can be seen from an 1873 newspaper cutting. Guy Fawkes Night in 1880 however, was obviously quieter since it was reported that 'although the night of November 5<sup>th</sup> was enlivened by gunpowder and bonfires, we heard of no serious accidents beyond burnt hands and singed eyebrows'. Gunpowder, petrol and pistols were regular features of these early revelries.

**ROTHWELL.—THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER** was celebrated here in the usual style. Tar barrels were rolled, and large balls made of tow and saturated with tar were kicked about the streets but the market-place was the principal scene of operations; there a large fire was kindled, though owing to the rain, not so successfully as on many former occasions; hundreds of men and boys busily employed themselves for several hours in letting off fireworks, and discharging guns, pistols, &c. Special interest is taken in the celebration here, owing to the fact that two of the Conspirators (the Treshams) resided in the neighbourhood. The market house was built by the son of the elder Tresham.

*Northampton Mercury 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 1873*

**FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.**—This was celebrated by means of fireworks about the streets, and a Guy which was prepared for the occasion was burnt in the evening in the midst of pouring rain on the Market Hill, with the aid of a large quantity of petroleum oil.

*Northampton Mercury 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 1887*

In 1891 the Northampton Mercury reported on 'the first annual supper in connection with the celebration of the Gunpowder Plot'. Forty people sat down in the Chequers Inn to a 'substantial repast provided by the committee and Mr and Mrs W. Sumpter.' Mr F. Bosworth was elected as chairman and after the meal there was an evening of songs. The Chairman proposed a toast and remarked that 'a grander display had never been witnessed on the occasion in Rothwell'.

The following year, another committee organised a lively Guy Fawkes procession and bonfire.

**GUY FAWKES' CELEBRATION.**—On Saturday evening a demonstration of a lively character was held in Rothwell. A committee was formed several weeks ago, consisting of the following gentlemen:—Messrs. G. Laywood, J. Holmes, J. Harris, E. Gilbey, R. Moore, G. Pollard, J. Moore, A. Pollard, and L. Sharman. After making a fine effigy, they proceeded in the afternoon to make a public exhibition of it by showing it all round the town, making collections to defray expenses. Each of them wore a high silk hat, black long tail coats, and white waistcoats. At seven o'clock in the evening they met at the Kettering-road end of the town, and with a waggonette and pair (kindly lent by Mr. Joseph Sumpter), they placed the effigy on the front, with one small lad each side. The promoters, nine of them, stood around in the rear end of the brake with a torchlight each, and having masks on of various descriptions, bowing and nodding to the crowd as they passed along. At the time mentioned 60 torches were set ablaze, and the procession, headed by the Rothwell Town Prize Band, marched gaily through the principal streets. On reaching the Market-hill they placed the effigy on the top of a huge mass of wood, which was burnt before a great crowd of spectators.

*Northampton Mercury 11<sup>th</sup> November 1892*

In November 1867, the town was visited by a travelling circus and such events always caused much excitement. The acts sound rather unusual but the factories were allowed to close for an hour on the Thursday and there were clearly good sized crowds in attendance.

SANGER'S CIRCUS.—This noted and highly entertaining hippodrome and circus visited Rothwell yesterday. The weather in the morning was very desultory, but as it improved towards noon, the usual procession was organised, and crowds lined the route. The town is seldom favoured with such visits, so the inhabitants took advantage of Thursday, and most of the factories closed for an hour. An afternoon performance took place, and was well patronised. The items included a kangaroo hunt, Roman chariot race, representation of the Battle of the Nile, and a member of the Sanger family (Miss Sanger) is among the artistes. There was a large attendance at the evening performance.

*Northampton Mercury 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1867*

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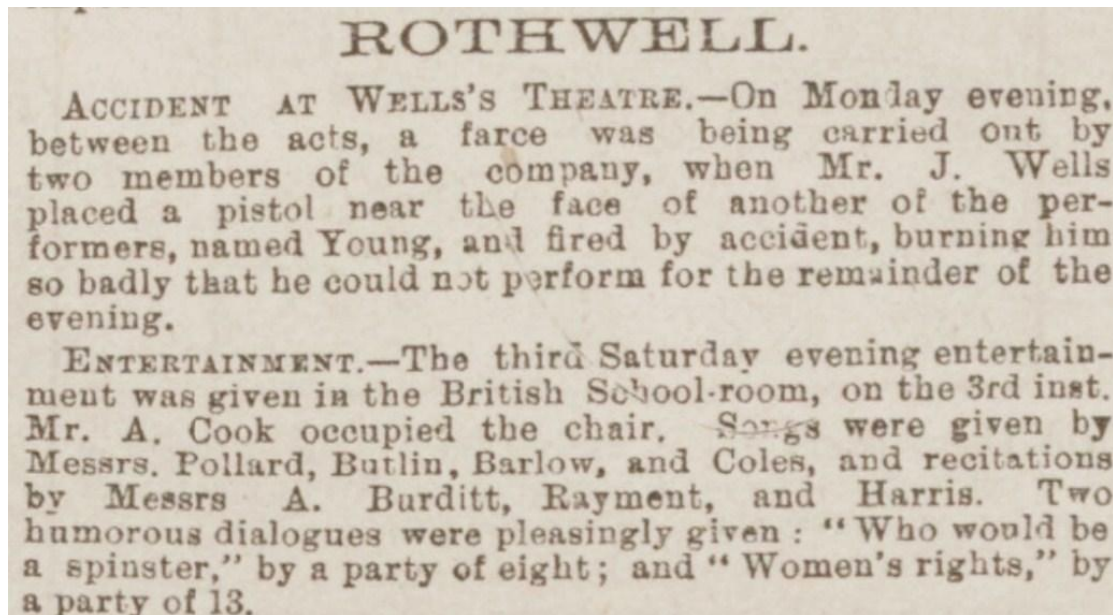


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Theatrical performances were always popular and the cutting shown below, from the Northampton Mercury, mentions a most unfortunate accident that occurred during the performance of a local play in December 1881. In the second paragraph the topics chosen for humorous dialogues sound interesting. It would be fascinating to see the scripts, particularly of the 'Women's rights' performance. It is unlikely that this would have been a very militant message in Rothwell but in the 1880s and 1890s there were the beginnings of change and the position of women had become an important topic in British newspapers and periodicals. Parliament had passed the Married Women's Property Act in 1870 which allowed married women to retain and control their earned income. Then in 1882 they gained the right to own and control their own property as well.



*Northampton Mercury 10<sup>th</sup> December 1881*

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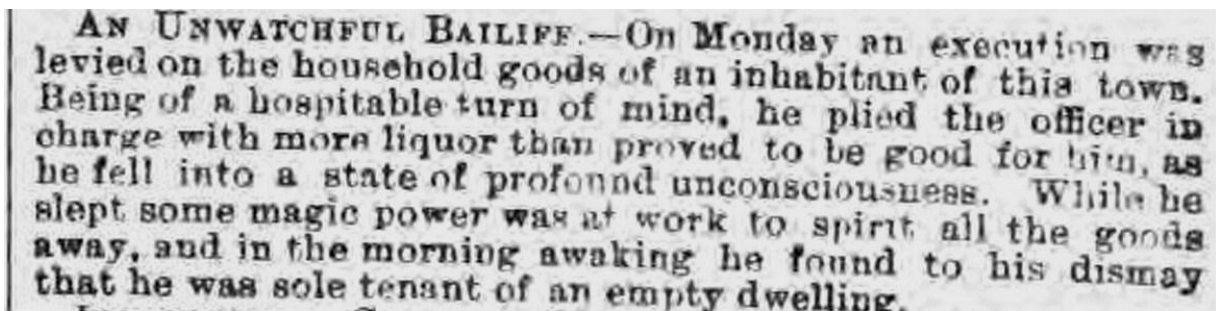


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Drunkenness, especially at times of celebration, was a regular occurrence and some well respected citizens of the town sometimes succumbed and found themselves subject to fines. The following story concerns an official debt collector who was plied with alcohol, subsequently fell asleep and was outwitted by the enterprising debtor. This anecdote was picked up by the local paper and it was obviously a source of much amusement although no names were listed on this occasion.

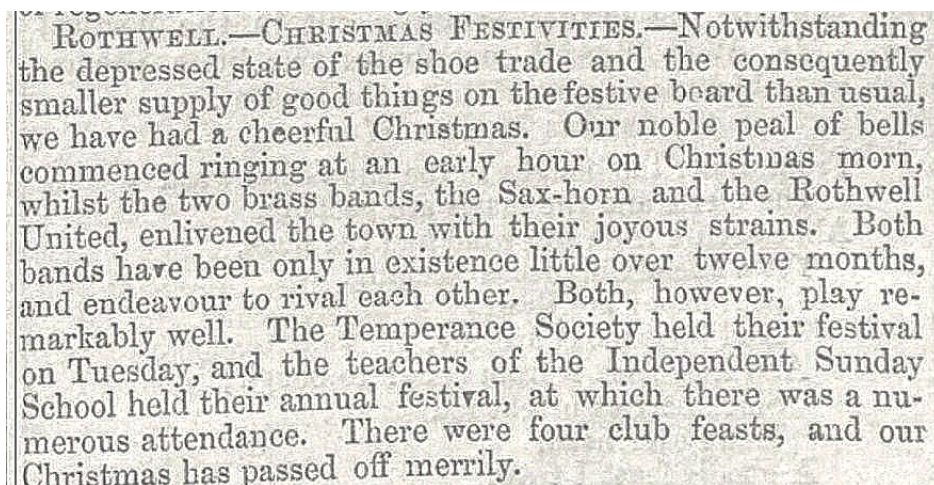


**AN UNWATCHFUL BAILIFF.**—On Monday an execution was levied on the household goods of an inhabitant of this town. Being of a hospitable turn of mind, he plied the officer in charge with more liquor than proved to be good for him, as he fell into a state of profound unconsciousness. While he slept some magic power was at work to spirit all the goods away, and in the morning awaking he found to his dismay that he was sole tenant of an empty dwelling.

*Northampton Mercury 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1877*

Rothwell townspeople celebrated Christmas over several days with the many local groups holding evenings of song and entertainment, frequently with special dinners too. Music always played a central part, there were bands parading the streets from Christmas Eve onwards and the bells of Holy Trinity heralded the arrival of Christmas Day itself. Originally, the non-conformist churches didn't treat December 25<sup>th</sup> as a special day, regarding the Christmas celebrations as rather frivolous, so they just kept to their usual meetings. George T. Streather mentions this in his book 'The Memorials of the Independent Chapel at Rothwell'. By the end of the 1800s however, all the churches took part in Christmas Day services.

The following articles illustrate the importance of the continuity of festive traditions even in hard times over the decades but it must be remembered that there were many people constrained by poverty who depended on charity for their Christmas meal. Churches and other groups raised money for aid and in the late 1880s coal was also distributed to those in most need.



**ROTHWELL.—CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES.**—Notwithstanding the depressed state of the shoe trade and the consequently smaller supply of good things on the festive board than usual, we have had a cheerful Christmas. Our noble peal of bells commenced ringing at an early hour on Christmas morn, whilst the two brass bands, the Sax-horn and the Rothwell United, enlivened the town with their joyous strains. Both bands have been only in existence little over twelve months, and endeavour to rival each other. Both, however, play remarkably well. The Temperance Society held their festival on Tuesday, and the teachers of the Independent Sunday School held their annual festival, at which there was a numerous attendance. There were four club feasts, and our Christmas has passed off merrily.

*Northampton Mercury 29<sup>th</sup> December 1860*

A report published in 1879 shows how the many and varied events continued right through to the New Year. The display of 'a series of dissolving views' illustrating the Franco-Prussian War may seem incongruous now but these were the newly developed magic lantern slides and would have generated considerable interest at the time. The 1893 article mentions the different town bands and all the church services as well as activities that ranged from a jumble sale to skittles, dance competitions and a waxworks tableau.



**CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES.**—On Christmas-eve the annual festival of the Good Templar Lodge and Band of Hope Tent was held in the British school-room, when the usual indoor games and pastimes were kept up till a late hour.—On Thursday, the 26th December, the usual treat was given to the children of the Band of Hope. The young people greatly enjoyed themselves, and an added interest was given to the occasion by the presence of some former members of the band, who had come to the town for a temporary visit.—On Friday, the 27th, the teachers and scholars of the Wesleyan school gave an entertainment in the school-room, the chair being occupied by the Rev. H. Gibson, of Kettering. In addition to the delivery of recitations and the singing of a number of sacred melodies, a series of dissolving views was exhibited during the evening, illustrative of the Franco-Prussian war, life on ship board, Mrs. Sewell's "Mother's last words," &c., the president furnishing the descriptions of the same. There was a large attendance, and the entertainment was much appreciated.—On Monday, the 30th, the annual supper of the Odd Fellows was held, when a convivial evening was spent, and the usual business of the lodge transacted.

*Northampton Mercury 4<sup>th</sup> January 1879*

**CHRISTMAS.**—On Christmas Eve merry peals on the church bells heralded the news, and during the evening and early morning the Albion Band, Town Band, Mission Band, and Salvation Army Band paraded the streets, playing Christmas carols, hymns, and anthems. On Sunday evening the Rev. H. Butler, at the Congregational Chapel, preached from the text, "He will save His people from their sins"; and the choir sang the old Christmas hymn, "While Shepherd's Watched," to the tune "Nativity." A special Christmas service was held at the Wesleyan Chapel on Monday morning, the preacher being the Rev. Irving Armstrong. The parish church was nicely bedecked with evergreens and flowers, and the services during the day were conducted by the Rev. W. S. Parker. On Tuesday the Salvation Army held special services and a tea. The Town Band on Tuesday arranged for a meat tea and soirée in the Odd-fellows' Hall, which was followed by a duet contest; and on Wednesday, under the same auspices, there was a rummage sale, skittle competition, waltz competition, and singing contest, when prizes were awarded. On Wednesday a public tea was held at the Congregational School, which was followed by a lime-light exhibition, Mrs. Jarley's Waxworks, tableaux, etc., and was well attended.

*Northampton Mercury 29<sup>th</sup> December 1893*

A difficult situation faced Rothwell councillors during the lead up to Christmas 1903 when the newly appointed captain of the Salvation Army arrived from Nottingham and was then diagnosed with smallpox which was a deadly disease. Chairman Frederick Barlow in his usual decisive style, hurriedly erected an isolation unit in which to transfer the patient. Unfortunately, due to the captain having been greeted by so many people, others had already been affected and Rowellians, particularly in the New Street area where the Salvation Army Barracks were situated, had to be quarantined and stopped from going to work.



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**SMALL-POX.**—The inhabitants of Rothwell are in a state of alarm owing to an outbreak of small-pox. Three weeks since a new captain of the Salvation Army went to Rothwell from Nottingham, and after being there 14 days was found to be affected with the disease. Prompt measures were at once taken by the Urban District Council. Under the instructions of the Chairman, Mr. F. Barlow, a wooden structure, a temporary isolation hospital, was erected near the waterworks in the night, and the case was at once isolated. Unfortunately a great number of the Army people had been to see the captain, as he had been unwell ever since his arrival at Rothwell. These have all been stopped from going into the factories, and it was hoped the disease had been successfully kept from spreading. On Saturday, however, a woman who had been to see the patient fell of small-pox. She was at once isolated. Mr. F. Barlow issued an order on Saturday closing the Army Barracks. The street and houses near have been disinfected, and the strongest measures have been taken to prevent if possible any further spread of the disease.

*Northampton Mercury 11<sup>th</sup> December 1903*

The Northampton Mercury of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1904 recorded the survival from smallpox of the Salvation Army captain. He had written personally to the Council thanking them for the treatment in the isolation hospital which had enabled him to recover from 'the dreadful disease'. The Council in turn proposed a vote of thanks to Dr More, Dr Chapel and the surveyor for all the help they had given and for preventing a more general outbreak.

A medical emergency had also affected the town during the Christmas of 1901 when an outbreak of measles, another dangerous disease at the time, caused the school to remain closed until well into the middle of January.

New Year's Eve was a special time, marked by the watch night services at the different churches. There was obviously a slow news day in 1902 however, when the local paper included this

**SINGULAR INCIDENT AT A ROTHWELL  
MIDNIGHT SERVICE.**

The midnight service at the Parish Church, Rothwell, on New Year's Eve ended in a somewhat ominous manner. The old year's service had been finished, and merry peals ushered in the New Year. It was then arranged to sing Jackson's "Te Deum." The organist was on the point of starting, when quite a sensation was caused by all the lights going out, due to a faulty meter. The congregation dispersed as well as the partial darkness allowed.

*Northampton Mercury 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1902*

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There was also a tradition which has long been forgotten and that was the Plough Monday procession. This took place on the first Monday after Twelfth Night (January 6<sup>th</sup>) and it marked the resumption of agricultural activities after the Christmas break. Farm labourers toured the area, dragging their plough and collecting money. They were often accompanied by musicians and would sing and dance. Faces were blackened with soot so that the participants couldn't be clearly identified. This custom was most prevalent in East Anglia and the East Midlands but had died out in Rothwell by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

PLOUGH MONDAY was kept by the plough-boys, who were very numerous this year, and whose box rattled frequently during the day. There seemed to be better behaviour than upon some former years.

*Northampton Mercury 15<sup>th</sup> January 1881*

PLOUGH MONDAY.—A few boys with blackened faces and bright ribbons, asking to "remember the poor plough boys" composed the only celebration of the ploughmen's festival at Rothwell.

*Northampton Mercury 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 1888*

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## CALL-UP OR GREAT CHANCE FOR COMEDIAN ?

WHEN 18-years-old Jim Smith, Kettering-born comedian, signed a contract to appear in TV's "Variety Parade," he understood the programme would take place before he would be called to do his National Service.

But his call-up papers arrived a few days ago telling him to report at Cardington on December 30—and the programme is on January 2.

So a copy of the contract, and a request for a deferment for four days, has gone to his future Commanding Officer. Jim Smith will use his TV chance to do a skit on his own call-up and will actually get "called up" while watched by millions.

### CLEVER COLLIE

Starring in the show is Rusty, a two-and-a-half-years-old collie, who was bought from a farmer for a few pounds and can add, subtract, choose flags and select colours.

Jim Smith was a Carroll Levis discovery, appearing in the first Levis show at the Savoy Theatre, Kettering, in March, 1952. His home is at 23, Jubilee-street, Rothwell.

Carroll Levis has a high opinion of Smith's capabilities, and has spoken of him as "another Norman Wisdom."

*Northampton Mercury 24th Dec 1953*

Finally.....

We couldn't finish the year without a little mention of our own Jim Smith, better known of course, as Jim Dale, who celebrated his 80th birthday in August. He also visited the Heritage Centre in April to meet the volunteers and view the room dedicated to his career.

In future issues we are planning to include articles about other notable Rowellians who have made their mark in the wider world.

As the Editor of this magazine I would also be extremely grateful to receive contributions for inclusion in future issues. Articles, photographs or even just anecdotes in note form would be most welcome. We will be only too happy to produce an article for you.

We still need more volunteers at the Heritage Centre because we would love to be able to open for a couple more hours each day. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to join our team.

On behalf of everyone at Rothwell Arts & Heritage Centre I thank you for your support and send best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.



# ROTHWELL CONSERVATIVE CLUB

Tel. No—01536 710324  
WWW.rothwellconservativeclub.co.uk  
rothwellcons@btconnect.com

The Club provides excellent facilities for Members, IA Members and their Guests

New members are most welcome. Please contact us for details.



## TRESHAM HALL

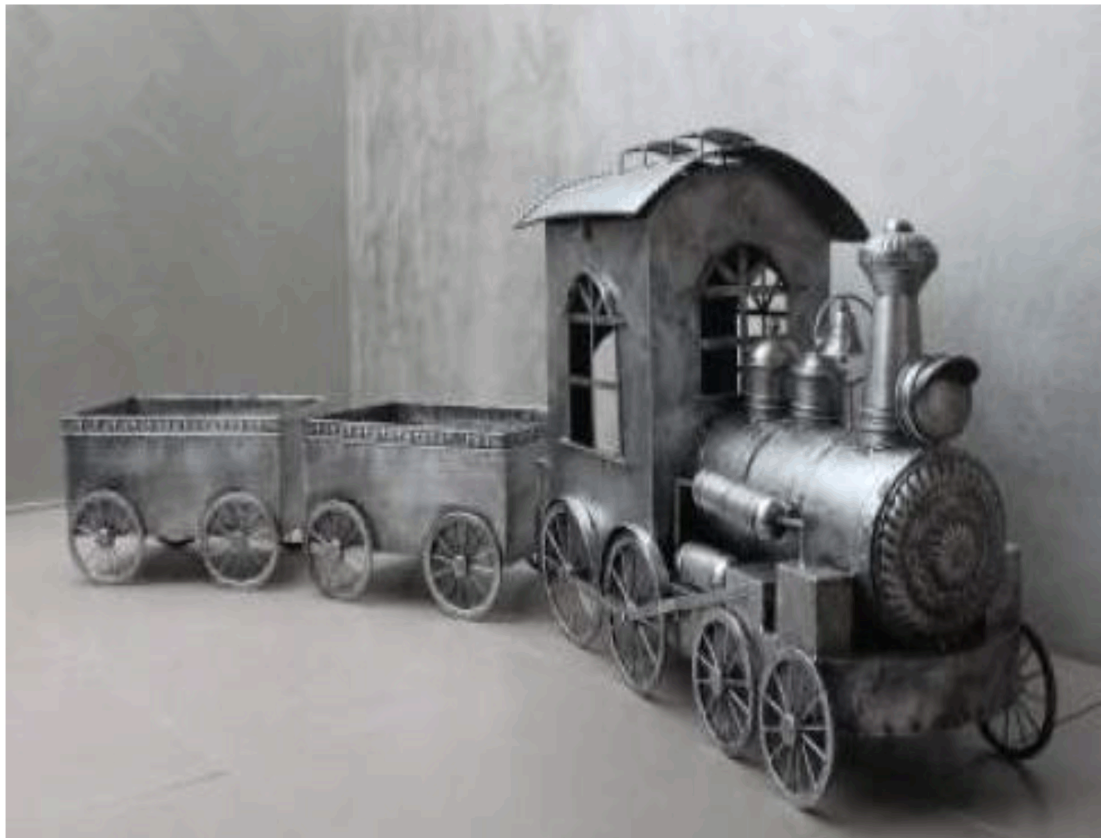
On the first floor of the Club is the renowned Tresham Hall which boasts one of the finest dance floors in the district.

This is for hire at a very reasonable price which includes a licensed bar and a well fitted kitchen.

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Why not look at our website for available dates in 2015.





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## Opening Times

10.00-4.00 Saturday ~ 9.00-4.30 Tuesday to Friday